

APPENDIX B.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE WORKING OF THE LOCOMOTIVE DEPARTMENT, 1898-99.

SIR,— Locomotive Superintendent's Office, Wellington, 22nd May, 1899.

I have the honour to report on the working of the Locomotive Department for the year ending the 31st March, 1899.

The locomotives, carriages, wagons, vans, cranes, tarpaulins, machinery, and general plant have been maintained in good working condition, and various improvements have been effected to both locomotives and rolling-stock.

The following new locomotives were provided during the year :—

Description.	How charged.
Two Class U locomotives (passenger type), built at Addington ...	Additions to open lines.
One Class WA locomotive, built at Hillside ...	"
Ten Class U locomotives (passenger type), imported from America ...	"
Six Class WA locomotives, imported from America ...	"
Two Class WA locomotives, imported from America ...	Westport Harbour Board.
Four Class WA locomotives, imported from America ...	Working expenses.

Four old double Fairlie Class E locomotives—one of which has been in service since 1872, and the three others since 1875—have been written off, and have been replaced by four imported WA locomotives.

One Class D locomotive has been disposed of to the Public Works Department.

During the year the tractive power has been increased 15·98 per cent., of which increase 12·51 per cent. has been charged to additions to open lines, 2·21 per cent. to working expenses, and 1·26 per cent. to the Westport Harbour Board.

The new locomotives, locomotive conversions, and boiler renewals in hand in the workshops, and the new locomotives under order from Great Britain, will further increase the tractive power by 11·01 per cent.

Even with this addition to the tractive power, it is necessary to provide at once more locomotives of the Class U type with 4 ft. wheels, to enable the engines in service to be withdrawn for repairs as they become due.

The replacing of old types of locomotives with modern types, and supplementing the present locomotive stock, demands serious consideration.

The additional train mileage—viz., 302,225 miles—worked during the year has taxed the resources of the Department most severely.

I again direct attention to the urgent necessity that exists for providing that the permanent-way and structures be made suitable for carrying more powerful engines than have hitherto been in use.

The Class U and WA engines built by the Department, and the engines of the same type imported from America, are giving satisfactory results.

The increase in the rolling-stock already made, and that in course of manufacture, renders it necessary that further accommodation for the proper maintenance of the stock be provided at the most important workshops.

It is essential that more carriage stock be provided, so that the vehicles can have proper and regular attention.

These conditions equally apply in respect to the wagon stock.

Carriage-sheds should be available at all important centres.

In my last report I strongly urged equipping the engines and rolling-stock with an automatic continuous brake. I again most strongly urge that effect be given to my representation.

The increase in business, the constant demand for accelerated train-services, a heavier ton mileage, steep gradients, and numerous stoppages, renders it imperative that ample brake-power be provided for controlling trains at all times.

To further the commencement of this most important work the following scheme is outlined, so as not to unduly strain the finances in any one year.

The cost of equipping the whole of the rolling-stock may be estimated at £275,000, and could be extended over a period of about seven years. Of this amount not more than £60,000 would be required the first year, and not more than £35,000 per annum until the work was completed.

It would be most expedient to first equip the Auckland Section, Wellington-Napier-New Plymouth Section, and Hurunui-Bluff Section. To do this completely it is estimated it will cost about £250,000. This expenditure could be spread over a period of, say, seven years, and, so as to derive as quickly as possible the value of the continuous brake, it would be best to first equip the engines, carriages, brake-vans, and horse-boxes, and simply "pipe" the wagons.

The lighting of the principal workshops by electricity is a work of considerable urgency.

The following additions have been made to workshops during the year ending 31st March, 1899: New smiths' shop, Petone; additional shop, Petone, for signal and interlocking work; new shop for boiler machinery, Addington; new engine-house, Addington; new smiths' and boiler-shop, Hillside; new engine-house, Hillside; paint-shop, Hillside, extended 40 ft.; new springmaker's furnace, Hillside; two new scrap furnaces, Hillside; new timber-shed erected at East Town; new springmaker's furnace, East Town; addition to smiths' shop, Greymouth.

The following additions to plant have been made during the year: Two portable hydraulic riveters, one 10-cwt. steam-hammer, two slide-bar surfacing-machines, one Rawlinson's patent