

Less reduction on goods traffic	...	...	£441,038
Less interest, as in 1899	...	...	539,928
For railway extension and other purposes	...	...	230,186

£1,211,152

We see a great deal in the papers about the wonderful progress of the New Zealand railways during the last few years. A very little careful study will show that as a matter of fact they have made no real progress, but rather the reverse. Of course, as our population and railway mileage increase, if the gross earnings and work done by our railways did not increase also, it would be tantamount to a large decrease.

If you compare the working of 1898-99 with the previous year, you will find that while the gross revenue increased 6·80 per cent. the working-expenses increased 8·45 per cent., and net revenue only 4·07 per cent. This appears to me to be far from satisfactory as regards revenue. As regards work done, let what follows speak :—

Comparison of work done on our railways during the years 1887 and 1899, or twelve years later :—

	1887.	1899.	Increase.	Decrease.
Population	603,361	756,505	153,144	...
Railway mileage	1,727	2,090	363	...
Passenger trips <i>per capita</i>	5·68	6·55	0·87	...
Tons carried <i>per capita</i>	2·90	3·47	0·57	...
Average passenger fare	2/-	1/9½	...	2½d.
Charge for carrying and delivering each ton of goods	6/10	7/1	3d.	...

You will note that during this period the charge for carrying each ton of goods has been raised 3d.

I think you will agree with me that compared with the progress made by the colony generally this shows a most miserable result. Considering the great increase in our population and railway mileage and facilities it means failure. As population and railway accommodation increases, not only the gross amount of work done, but the percentage *per capita*, ought to largely increase also. We, however, find that during twelve years passenger trips have not increased one per head per annum (the distance they travelled has somewhat decreased); while in Hungary, under a stage system, in a few years the distance increased 83 per cent., and the number fourfold.

With these facts, and such a prospect before us, why is it that this community, and more especially the farming and industrial portion of it, put up with the present “no-system”? I repeat my assertion: that it is perpetuated solely in the interests of a few. It is not fear of financial loss that prevents a trial. If the people in the various districts wish for any change, they must bring pressure to bear on their individual parliamentary representatives, and see that they insist on the new system being tried, and, if its full benefits are to be secured, tried while I am here to watch over it.

The more I study this great question, the more I am convinced that within three years we can double our railway revenue. I need not point out the enormous advantage this would be to this country. To run the new system on the Auckland Section for a whole year could not cost more than £28,000, even though not a single extra mile was run, not a single extra passenger carried, not an atom of extra work done, in consequence of the enormous reductions made. Is it worth this very small risk?

I am, &c.,

SAMUEL VAILE.

No. 20.

(Circular.)

DEAR SIR,—

Auckland, 22nd May, 1901.

May I solicit your careful perusal and attention to the following extracts from the *New Zealand Herald* of this day's issue. You will, I am sure, see that if this unequal distribution of the public funds is to continue, that the effect on the trade and commerce of the North Island must be very serious.

I remain, &c.,

SAMUEL VAILE.

Railway Rates.

Several correspondents have lately complained of higher railway charges being made on them here for the carriage of goods than they have had to pay in the South. Our correspondents gave the precise figures, and if their statements are not correct they could readily be confuted. Mr. S. Vaile, in another column, deals with the subject, and shows that Canterbury and Otago are getting almost the whole benefit of the reductions made in the railway charges. This policy must greatly injure Auckland, and delay the progress of settlement. It is certainly a matter for the members for Auckland districts in the House of Representatives to look into. No member ought to allow his political enthusiasm for the Seddon Government to cause him to wink at a wrong being done to his constituents. And constituencies ought to see to it that on this point their representatives do them justice, and have a care for their interests. Every part of New Zealand is far ahead of Auckland in the important matter of railway facilities. And this is likely to be the case for many years, as the Government persist in doing such works as the Makohine Viaduct by co-operative labour. But, at all events, we should insist on strict equality in respect to charges.