

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL MANAGER OF NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS.

SIR,— New Zealand Government Railways, Head Office, Wellington, 7th July, 1908.

I have the honour to report upon the working of the open railways for the financial year ended the 31st March, 1908.

The capital cost has increased from £23,504,272 to £24,365,647. The revenue was £2,761,938 against £2,624,600, an increase of £137,338. The net revenue was £812,179 against £812,118 last year. The expenditure for the year under review has been £1,949,759 against £1,812,482, an increase of £137,277. The expenditure per cent. of revenue was 70·59 as compared with 69·06. The rate of interest on capital £3 6s. 8d. as compared with £3 9s. 1d. last year. The revenue per train-mile was 7s. 9½d., and the expenditure per train-mile 5s. 6¼d., as compared with 7s. 9d. and 5s. 4¼d. respectively last year.

The following extensions have been opened during the year :—

	M. ch.
Alexandra—Clyde	5 49
Taupoiti—Reefton	1 22
Taihape—Mataroa	5 79
Te Karaka—Puha	1 79
Kaipara Flats—Tauhoa	2 40
	17 29

The Shag Point Branch 2 10 was closed.

The total mileage added to the system was thus 15 miles 19 chains, making the total mileage open for traffic on the 31st March last 2,471 miles as against 2,456 miles at the close of the previous year.

During the year 9,756,716 ordinary passengers were carried, yielding a revenue of £835,473 and 185,174 season tickets were issued, the revenue derived therefrom being £77,505. There was thus an increase of 155,930 passengers and £12,406 revenue and 19,670 season tickets and £8,518 revenue over the preceding year.

59,194 children and teachers and 53,886 adults travelled by school and factory excursions during the year, the revenue derived therefrom being £7,604, an increase of 3,313 children and teachers and 14,103 adults and £1,089 revenue over the preceding year.

732,135 passengers travelled at holiday-excursion rates, yielding a revenue of £141,520.

The coaching and goods traffic have been well maintained during the year, and show increases under all heads with the exception of sheep, wool, and grain.

Increases.

Coaching.—Parcels, 7,636; horses, 653; carriages, 389; dogs, 5,685. Revenue, £24,963.

Goods.—Cattle, 17,720; pigs, 10,765; chaff, lime, &c., 1,451 tons; firewood, 918 tons; timber, 49,057 tons; merchandise, 45,248 tons; minerals, 184,467 tons: revenue, £91,450. Total increase in goods and live-stock tonnage, 245,612 tons.

Decreases.

Sheep, 67,901 head; wool, 7,568 tons; grain, 31,138 tons.

The train-services have been materially improved during the year. Additional trains were placed on the Auckland—Henderson and Auckland—Otahuhu suburban lines and Auckland—Frankton and Taumarunui main lines. The goods and passenger business on the Waihi line were separated as far as circumstances permitted.

Additions were also made on the Wellington—Napier—New Plymouth, Hurunui—Bluff, Picton, and Westland Sections. These extra facilities amounted to over 200,000 train-miles.

Satisfactory progress is being made in regard to the extension of the interlocking of points and signals, installation of electric tablet, and extension of railway telegraph and telephone facilities.

I regret to report that a serious train accident occurred on the 3rd August, 1907, when a goods-train with passenger-car attached, from which the engine had been detached for examination, ran back down the grade and became derailed near the bottom of the grade. The guard was killed, and two passengers and three railway employees injured.

On the 31st March Mr. John Coom, M.I.C.E., who has occupied the position of Chief Engineer to the Department since 1899, voluntarily resigned his position and retired on superannuation. Mr. Coom's service extended over a period of thirty-two years. He was closely connected with the surveys of the routes of the main lines of railway in various parts of the Dominion, and, after joining the Working Railways staff, occupied in turn responsible positions as District Engineer in Auckland, Invercargill, Dunedin, Inspecting Engineer for the whole railway system, with headquarters at Wellington, ultimately attaining the position of Chief Engineer in 1899.

Mr. Coom was a painstaking, capable officer, and he administered his branch with considerable ability.

LOCOMOTIVE.

Mr. A. L. Beattie, Chief Mechanical Engineer, reports as follows :—

The engines, rolling-stock, plant, and appliances have been maintained in good and efficient order, the details of work being as follows :—

Locomotives.—The number of engines in service on 1st April, 1907, was 398, and the number on 31st March, 1908, was 410. Twelve new engines were added to the stock; of these ten were built in