

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

New Zealand Government Railways,

SIR,—

Head Office, Wellington, 31st August, 1914.

I have the honour to report on the working of the New Zealand railways for the financial year ending 31st March, 1914.

During the period 1st April to 31st October, 1913, the arrangements and administration of the lines was in the hands of Mr. Ronayne, late General Manager, who retired on superannuation on the latter date. The actual management therefore devolved on me as from the 1st November, 1913, to the end of the financial year—a period of five months, a considerable portion of which has been taken up in necessary travel for inspection purposes.

The only new line opened for traffic during the year was the Reefton-Cronadun extension of the Westland Section, 3 miles in length, bringing the total mileage of line open for traffic at the end of the year up to 2,863 miles.

The capital cost of lines open for traffic, including the steamers and plant on Lake Wakatipu, was £32,355,087.

The gross receipts amounted to £4,043,328, against £3,971,002 for the preceding year. The net revenue amounted to £1,163,005, equal to a return of 3·61 per cent. on the capital invested in the railways open for traffic, and to 3·32 per cent. on the total capital (£34,980,576) invested in opened and unopened lines.

The train-mileage advanced from 9,016,224 miles in 1913 to 9,319,268 miles for the year just ended—an increase of 303,004 miles—the cost of which was £93,426. In the North Island the increase amounted to 328,045 miles. The mileage in the South Island decreased by 25,001 miles, leaving the net increase as 303,004 miles, which represent services laid on for public convenience and to facilitate the movement of traffic. The major portion of the increased mileage is covered by services established in the Auckland suburban district, and between Putaruru and Rotorua, Taumarunui and Ongarue, Wellington-Auckland, Hastings-Napier, and on the Toko Branch and the Gisborne Section.

In the South Island additional trains were run between Christchurch and Lyttelton, Balclutha and Houipapa, and Wainahaka-Tokanui; but in the aggregate the train-mileage decreased by 25,000 miles. There was a reduction of 15,000 miles on the Westport Section, where the effect of the strike was acutely felt; 18,000 miles on the Hurunui-Bluff Section, and 2,000 on the Westland Section; while on the Nelson and Picton Sections there were increases of 8,000 and 2,000 miles respectively.

Traffic was seriously interfered with by heavy floods and slips that occurred during the months of August, October, and December. In the South Island the Outram Branch was interrupted by floods on the 14th, 15th, 16th, 25th, 26th, and 27th August; the main line between Milton and Lovell's Flat and Allanton and Henley on the 15th and 16th August. Slips caused delay to Lawrence Branch train on the 15th August, and blocked the main line near Burke's and Puketeraki on the 15th and 16th August, and again between Dunedin and Palmerston on the 25th and 26th August. The Otago Central was blocked from the same cause on the 15th, 16th, and 17th August, and was the scene of heavy floods on the 25th August, the resultant damage being of such an extent that trains could only run between Clyde and Ranfurly. The interruption between Ranfurly and Wingatui continued till the 9th September. Further floods occurred on the 30th October, blocking the line between Gore and McNab, and at Hazlett's on the Nightcaps Branch. In the North Island heavy rains caused a number of slips on the Main Trunk line between Marton and Ohakune on the 23rd October. Traffic between Marton and Taihape was suspended on the 23rd, 24th, and 25th October, but line was sufficiently repaired on the 27th idem to allow passenger-trains to run through. Further slips took place between Marton and Taihape on the 12th, 13th, and 17th December, interfering with the train services to some extent, but the interruption was not of long duration. Passengers were in all cases transhipped wherever practicable, coach services being utilized between breaks where train services were not available.

The following figures, which give the record of the late arrival of the principal trains during the year, indicate that despite the difficulties experienced from floods, slips, and other unforeseen circumstances the trains have as a whole run well up to time:—

	Average Late Arrival.	
	Minutes.	Last Year. Minutes.
Long-distance passenger-trains	1·40	1·67
Suburban trains	0·48	0·56
Long-distance mixed trains	2·28	2·58

The number of ordinary passengers carried during the year was 13,355,893, an advance of 232,014 on the previous year's business. Season tickets issued numbered 287,037, an increase of 21,778; workers' twelve-trip tickets numbered 58,367, and workers' weekly suburban-lines tickets 163,299, an increase of 4,670 twelve-trip and 14,345 workers' weekly suburban over the preceding year. Holiday excursion tickets totalled 815,267, a decrease of 149,428 on the previous year's traffic. Schools', factories', and friendly societies' excursions advanced from 133,897 passengers in 1913 to 188,987 for the year under review, an increase of 55,090.

Coaching traffic gave an increase of 71,941 parcels, but horses, carriages, and dogs decreased by 3,000, making the net increase 68,000 in items grouped under the head of "Coaching traffic."