

1914.
NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT ON NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS, BY MR. E. H. HILEY, GENERAL MANAGER.

Laid on the Table of the House by Leave.

The Hon. Minister of Railways.

SIR,—

Wellington, 1st August, 1914.

I landed in Auckland on the 24th September, 1913, having travelled out via Canada. During my three weeks in that country the Railway authorities afforded me every facility for investigating Canadian railway practice, a courtesy I much appreciated.

Mr. Ronayne retired from the General Managership on the 1st November last, and I assumed control on the same date. Since arriving in the Dominion I have inspected every section of the New Zealand railways (except the Gisborne Section, which I have not yet had an opportunity of visiting). The proposals and comments contained in this report are the result of my investigations.

Routine duties in connection with the position of General Manager have occupied a great portion of my time during the few months I have been in charge of the New Zealand railways, but it was obvious to me at the outset that the conditions and requirements of the other important centres outside Wellington demanded my immediate personal attention, as they would need dealing with in this report, consequently I have found it necessary to spend almost as much time on inspections away from Wellington as at headquarters.

The restrictions to travel resulting from the smallpox epidemic, followed closely by the dislocation of trade arising out of the waterside workers' strike, which extended from the 20th October, 1913, to the 12th January, 1914, created abnormal railway conditions lasting for some time after the cessation of the strike.

These complications rendered it extremely difficult to gauge the railway requirements for effectively dealing with traffic offering under normal circumstances. The preparation of this report had necessarily to be held over until business resumed its proper level.

The conclusion arrived at after reviewing the railway situation in New Zealand is that the system has outgrown its present organization. Established, no doubt, on sound lines in the first instance, it is evident that the rapid growth of the system and expansion of business has rendered the machinery for traffic control unequal to the demands put upon it by existing circumstances. The staff requires to be strengthened and the staff arrangements remodelled in some cases. This is particularly necessary in the Traffic branches.

The Department is short of engine-power and rolling-stock for dealing promptly with the business now offering. The terminal accommodation is inadequate at several important centres, and a forward policy is necessary in regard to duplication of congested suburban lines, regrading of main lines, bridge-strengthening, and additional signalling equipment if the traffic of the Dominion is to be fostered and handled economically, safely, and expeditiously.

ORGANIZATION.

It is apparent throughout the system that the principal officers have to spend too great a portion of their time on office-routine duties instead of being able to devote themselves to matters of principle affecting the administration of their respective branches and obtaining first-hand information as to the requirements of the wide area served by the Government railways. This is distinctly detrimental to efficient control. The officers themselves realize the importance of personally supervising such matters, but are debarred from doing this to the extent necessary owing to the fact that they have not sufficient responsible assistants to carry on the routine duties of the business during the absence of the chief officers from headquarters.