

Cost of Maintenance of Way, Works, and Buildings.

As will be seen from the following statement, the milage of lines open for traffic increased by 3·32 per cent. during the period 1915 to 1925, while the maintenance of way, works, and buildings showed an increase of 54·80 per cent., and the cost per mile 49·60 per cent.

Twelve Months ended 31st March,					Total Miles of Line open for Traffic.	Maintenance of Way, Works, and Buildings.	Cost per Mile open.
						£	£
1915	..	..	..	..	2,955	738,550	250
1916	..	..	..	..	2,970	740,349	249
1917	..	..	..	..	2,970	720,840	243
1918	..	..	..	..	2,993	710,655	237
1919	..	..	..	..	2,993	752,558	251
1920	..	..	..	..	3,006	837,910	279
1921	..	..	..	..	3,018	1,053,049	349
1922	..	..	..	..	3,030	1,111,883	367
1923	..	..	..	..	3,037	1,040,892	343
1924	..	..	..	..	3,053	1,143,282	374
Increase 1924 over 1915					3·32 per cent.	54·80 per cent.	49·60 per cent.

It must, of course, be borne in mind that costs—both in respect of wages and material—have advanced very considerably since 1915.

The standard of maintenance on the New Zealand railways is a high one, and the only criticism that could be applied is that on certain of the branch lines it is unusually high. In his evidence the Chief Engineer stated that he was hoping to decrease his maintenance expenditure, at the same time keeping the line in as good a condition as it is to-day.

Life of Rails.—Except on steep grades carrying heavy traffic, the Department anticipate a life of from twenty-five to thirty years in respect of their rails.

Construction of New Lines.

The Chief Engineer, while carrying out deviations and yard improvements, does not construct new lines, this being in the hands of the Public Works Department. Having regard to the fact that that Department has the plant, equipment, and organization, and that the work is carried out on mainly contract lines under piecework, practically no day labour being used, it would be inadvisable to make any alteration in the existing arrangements.

The Chief Engineer has not until recently been consulted with regard to alignment, and is, therefore, in no way responsible for curves or gradients, or for the cost in deviation to ease grades, which is going on at present.

Expenditure Estimates.

At the commencement of the financial year the Chief Engineer forwards to the General Manager an estimate of the sum required during the ensuing year for the maintenance of track, structures, &c., and, when the estimates are passed by Parliament, an amount is allocated by the Chief Engineer to each district. In his evidence the Chief Engineer said he was not held up by the delay in the passing by Parliament of these estimates.

Permanent-way Workshops.

There are Maintenance workshops at the following centres: Penrose (Auckland District), East Town (Wanganui District), Kaiwarra (Wellington District), Addington (Christchurch District), Dunedin, Invercargill, and Greymouth. The work done at these shops is as follows:—

Carpenters' Work.—Joinery-work, fittings, furniture, &c., for buildings of all kinds; structural timber-work, such as water vats and stands, windmills, stock-yards, name-boards, notice-boards, &c.; making and repairing trollies, and velocipedes; making bridge spans, trusses, trestle piers, &c.