

APPENDIX B.

ANNUAL REPORT ON PUBLIC WORKS BY THE ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF.

SIR,—

The ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF to the Hon. MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS.

I have the honour to submit the following report upon the various works under my control completed and in progress throughout the Dominion during the period from the 1st July, 1931, to the 30th June, 1932.

Table 3 above shows the expenditure on Government railways in New Zealand up to the 31st March, 1932, and also the mileage opened for traffic.

RAILWAYS.

NORTH AUCKLAND MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY.

Owing to the suspension of construction in January, 1931, the work done during the year under review has consisted mainly of clearing up and maintenance. All unused materials have been collected and brought into the main depot at Okaihau. All items of portable plant have been similarly dealt with, and these have also been overhauled and repaired. These items comprise five steam shovels, seven locomotives, fifty wagons, and twenty oil-engines; pumps, crushers, and other minor plant items.

A gang of four men has been employed throughout the year in maintaining the Rangiahua Section of this railway. The greater part of its time has been occupied, so far, in maintaining the 30 miles of fencing which encloses the railway works. A considerable part of this fencing is through slipping country and on this account demands continual repair and maintenance, in order to protect new earthworks from damage by straying stock. Inlets and outlets to culverts have been kept open, and general maintenance has also been carried out in connection with workers' accommodation, drainage, and water-supply.

TAURAROA QUARRY.

During the year no operations were carried on at this quarry. All the elevator belts and buckets have been dismantled, the buckets painted, and the belts stored under cover. Screens and outside ironwork have been painted, ropes tarred, and all plant thoroughly oiled and greased to protect it from weather, &c.

DARGAVILLE BRANCH RAILWAY.

As construction work closed down during the preceding year, operations for the year covered by this report consisted of the maintenance of the permanent-way, Kirikopuni to Tangowahine, the running of the goods service over the same length, and work involved in reconditioning plant and of looking after and disposing of stores, material, &c.

Twenty-one workmen's married quarters and nine single men's huts were disposed of by sale.

NAPIER-GISBORNE RAILWAY.—WAIKOKOPU-GISBORNE.

Construction work on this railway had ceased at the end of the year 1930. Owing to the difficulties regarding finding other employment and other accommodation, the married men previously employed were allowed to retain the use of the cottages and hutments in the construction camps. Certain social services, such as medical attention and supply of firewood, were maintained in these camps till December, 1931, when they were withdrawn.

Some work was done during the year overhauling plant and some items transferred after reconditioning. A quantity of construction material has also been transferred or sold locally.

NAPIER-GISBORNE RAILWAY.—NAPIER-WAIROA SECTION.

Putorino Section (10 m. 56 ch. to 37 m. 35 ch.; length 26 m. 59 ch.).—This section, though under the control of the Railway Department, was partly restored after the earthquake of the 3rd February, 1931, by this Department for the purpose of running ballast from Waikoau to the Wairoa Section. The balance of the line from Waikoau to Eskdale was sufficiently restored to allow a works train to operate.

In addition repairs and restoration were carried out on a fairly large scale on the Matahaura Viaduct at the request of the Railway authorities. The foundation of one of the piers of this structure was endangered by earthquake cracks in the previously solid country. Careful exploration was carried out on the northern face of the gorge about this pier by sinking shafts and piercing drives so that the nature of the cracks in the country could be ascertained and recorded. These drives were afterwards filled with reinforced concrete so that the various portions of the solid country would be firmly tied together.

Cement grout was forced into the cracks and the locality thus well strengthened.

Wairoa Section (37 m. 35 ch. to 70 m. 67 ch.; length 33 m. 32 ch.).—This section was proceeded with expeditiously up to early in October, 1931, when in accordance with the Railway Board's report, Parliament decided works were to cease. At this stage all the earthwork on the section was in such