

APPENDIX B.

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

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

SIR,—

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 1st July, 1937, to 30th June, 1938.

Table No. 3 (pages 9, 10, 11) shows the expenditure on Government Railways in New Zealand up to 31st March, 1938, and also the mileage opened for traffic.

RAILWAYS.

NORTH AUCKLAND MAIN TRUNK RAILWAY.—OKAIHAU NORTHWARDS.

Rangiahua Section.—Since construction was abandoned in 1931 there has been progressive deterioration of the formation, principally through flood-damage and slipping of the very unstable country.

A proposal to complete this railway was investigated, but the conclusion was reached that the high cost of restoration and completion could not be justified, principally because the limited territory to be served can be more efficiently catered for by other forms of transportation services. It was therefore decided to salvage the permanent-way, ballast, building, plant, &c., for use elsewhere. Part of the track was accessible for salvage operations only during the summer, and work was confined to removing only such materials as could be used to immediate advantage on other works. The rails, sleepers, and fastenings were lifted from 25 m. to 35 m. 48 ch. and the material transferred to the Dargaville Branch Railway. Some 18,000 cubic yards of crushed-metal ballast were loaded with a modern powered excavator at very economical cost, and stored at convenient dumps, to be used on State highway reconstruction, for which purpose it is very suitable. Three 30 ft. and two 20 ft. plate-girder spans were dismantled and disposed of to the Railway Department. Platelayers' cottages are being removed to locations where extra accommodation for officers is necessary, and the disposal of other buildings is in hand.

DARGAVILLE BRANCH RAILWAY.

With the object of avoiding the creating of new level-crossings and of eliminating several existing level-crossings of the Kaihu Branch Railway within the Borough of Dargaville, the former route into the town, and the existing railway-station, have been abandoned in favour of a new proposal. On this new route provision is to be made for a more spacious station-yard with facilities more in keeping with the needs of the district than is possible on the present site.

While the question of routes has been under investigation work has been confined to the unopened section between Kirikopuni and Tangowahine, and to the partly-completed section between Tangowahine and Te Wharau, where the new route diverges.

The principal activity on the former section is completion of ballasting. Some 4,800 cubic yards have been placed, and the final lift completed over the major part of the length from 0 m. to 7 m. 19 ch.

Forward of Tangowahine the formation has been restored, and rails laid to Te Wharau (14 m. 56 ch.) and a base-course of quarry dust laid between 11 m. 72 ch. and 13 m. 67 ch.

Other activities include overhaul of fences, plant, bridges, and erection of accommodation. Employees as at June, 1938, numbered 106, and this number may be increased to a maximum of about 130 when formation of the Te Wharau—Dargaville Section is begun shortly.

Since construction work was suspended in December, 1930, a goods and passenger service has been operated by the Public Works Department between Kirikopuni and Tangowahine.

Tauraroa Quarry.—The output of crushed metal for the year was 32,095 cubic yards, as compared with 9,869 cubic yards and 23,570 cubic yards respectively in the two preceding years. The increase is mainly due to the Railway Department's requirements for restoring flood-damage and to the demand for ballast for the Dargaville Railway. The output to date from this quarry now exceeds 600,000 cubic yards, and it still continues to fulfil a most important function in supplying requirements of crushed metal for railways, roads, and highways. Since the taking-over of State highways