

to persons desirous of travelling first class. These rates will generally be less than those in force hitherto, and it is hoped therefore that they will bring about a much larger holiday traffic. The mileage rate to be charged, being uniform throughout the colony, will soon become familiar to the public.

As might naturally be expected, after the change in administration, many more concessions have been asked for. These have been fully considered, and, when the granting of them would have been against the public interest, they have been courteously but firmly declined. If the numerous concessions asked for had all been made the revenue would have been affected to the extent of many thousands a year. Some additional works and conveniences on the lines and stations have been asked for and granted, but very many more have had to be declined. An approximate estimate has been made of the probable cost of carrying out the various works asked for during the three months ended the 31st March last, the sum-total of which exceeds £100,000.

Honourable members will have remarked the very general complaints at the indifferent results achieved by the present almost obsolete system of lighting our railway-carriages, and will be pleased to know that it has been determined to introduce the system of compressed gas now in operation on the London and North-western, Great Eastern, Lancashire and Yorkshire, and other important English railways. (At the commencement of 1894 over 52,000 carriages were fitted with the Pintsch compressed-gas system.) I am advised that it is the most successful system for trains such as we have in New Zealand. The cost of introducing the improved light will not be extravagant, but to serve the three main systems of the colony will require three gas-generating plants.

It is proposed to initiate the new system on the principal section of all—viz., the Hurunui-Bluff Section. So far as I can gather from the reports placed before me the expenditure will be about  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per light per hour under the new system, with fifty per cent. more light, as compared with  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per light per hour under our present system, whilst I am positively assured the light will be all that can be desired.

Many economies have been effected in the cost of administration since the Government assumed charge.

The expenditure on "additions to open lines"—which means increasing the usefulness and capabilities of the lines, adding to the public conveniences, and enabling the cost of working to be reduced—is on the increase, and a larger vote than was granted last year will be required this year.

The workshop expenditure will also increase, as there is much important work in the shops that must be done, and as the age of the rolling-stock increases this work must be expected to attain still larger proportions. A very large proportion of the machinery in several of the workshops is gradually becoming obsolete, and from time to time, as funds are available, the same will be replaced with machinery of a modern and up-to-date type. One heavy engine has recently been built at the Addington Workshops, and five others are in hand. Three of these engines are intended to run the express traffic on the Christchurch-Dunedin line, but they will be too heavy to run on the present bridges and the 40lb. rails which still remain in portions of that line. At the present time none of them could run further south from Christchurch than Ashburton, and at the present rate of relaying the line with 53lb. steel rails and strengthening the bridges it will be two years before they could be run through to Dunedin. It is to be regretted that money is not available for an earlier completion of this most desirable work, for with the heavier engines the cost of haulage would be much less.

Our locomotive boilers are becoming older, and consequently require increasing attention in the matter of repairs and renewals. The Locomotive Superintendent estimates that within the next five years 40 new locomotive boilers will be required, of which 10 are already in hand. The cost of completing the 10 in hand and providing the additional 30 will probably amount to no less a sum than £18,000. This refers to boilers required for renewals only, and does not include any boilers required for new locomotives which may be built. A return