

tures, also on account of motive-power, is accounted for by the additional work done, and also by the extensive repairs carried out in consequence of serious damage to the lines by floods. Lines passing through mountainous districts such as those served by the Midland Railway system are especially liable to flood-damages, and this to some extent accounts for the high rate of expenditure on maintenance of way and works in this colony.

The increase in general charges is due to payment of rates to local public bodies. (See Appendix G.)

The extension from Belgrove to Motupiko (9 miles 18 chains) was opened on the 1st March, and up to the 31st March 325 passengers, seventy-two parcels, 210 sheep, forty bales wool, 2,300 ft. timber, 24 tons grain, 54 tons merchandise, 22 tons minerals, were carried on the extension, producing a revenue of £66. The expenditure for working amounted to £104.

#### 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND FORECAST.

As this is the last year of the present Parliament, and probably the last Railways Statement I shall have the honour of submitting to the House, it will not be out of place to place on record my views in regard to the New Zealand railways, and also to review the results of the last four years' working.

In the first place, the long-distance-transit business in New Zealand is carried on by ocean vessels and the Union Steamship Company, the railways really acting as feeders for the vessels which load and discharge at the numerous ports all along our extensive seaboard. Unlike most other systems, there is no one centre in New Zealand upon which all the railways converge, and from which they can be easily and economically controlled. The New Zealand railways consist of numerous disconnected systems, costly to maintain and difficult to administer in an economical manner. Time will doubtless rectify this, and each Island will eventually have its system of railways with unbroken connections throughout. No comparison can be made with the business and working results of our railways as compared with, for instance, the State railways of Victoria or New South Wales, each of which have one unbroken connected system, terminating in the one case at Melbourne and in the other at Sydney. Such systems command the business of distant places, thereby securing a lucrative revenue, a class of business, as I have before indicated, almost entirely carried on by sea in New Zealand. There is little inter-communication between the importing centres in New Zealand, and this brings me to a conclusion which has been forced upon me over and over again: that there is a tendency here, as elsewhere, to sacrifice local requirements and incur unjustifiable expense in running fast through services, for which our lines were never designed, and which any possible business will not support. With our numerous ports of entry the New Zealand railways are forced to live upon the local business procurable, and the ideal train services for this class of business are fast stopping-trains equipped with ample power and a continuous brake. Hitherto we have been principally concerned in providing additional power and rolling-stock to enable the department to carry the traffic; but at the same time improvements and additions to stations, station-yards, safety appliances, and the running-track are not keeping pace with the requirements of the times and increasing business. The remarkable expansion going on in the southern portion of the North Island urgently calls for increased accommodation at New Plymouth, Waitotara, Aramoho, Wanganui, Feilding, Palmerston North, and Masterton. In the South Island the contemplated alteration of the main line at Oamaru will necessitate the provision of a new through-passenger station to replace the existing station.

As the railway business expands, the weight of the trains increases, the lines become more crowded, the necessity for providing additional safety appliances is more and more apparent; and year by year it becomes more convincingly manifest that Parliament should deal with this important question in a comprehensive manner, as, in order to introduce an improved method of working, a very large capital expenditure will be required.

The provision of more powerful locomotives, additional carriages and wagons, enlargement of our stations and station-yards, to accommodate the increasing business, will also entail a very large expenditure. My officers