

1914.
NEW ZEALAND.

REPORT OF MR. T. RONAYNE, RETIRING GENERAL
MANAGER, AND OF MR. J. HENRY LOWE, C.E.,
ON CONDITION OF NEW ZEALAND RAILWAYS.

Laid on the Table by Leave of the House.

SIR,—

Wellington, 31st October, 1913.

I have the honour to submit for your information a report on the working of the New Zealand Government railways for the twenty-eight weeks covering the period 1st April to 11th October, 1913.

The mileage of line open for traffic on the latter date was 2,851 miles, as against 2,842 miles for the corresponding period of the previous year. The revenue amounted to £2,042,594 16s. 3d., against £2,019,556 3s. 11d.—an increase of £23,038 12s. 4d. The expenditure amounted to £1,513,173 17s. 8d., against £1,403,139 11s. 3d.—an increase of £110,034 6s. 5d. The net revenue was £529,420 18s. 7d., against £616,416 12s. 8d.—a decrease of £86,995 14s. 1d. The expenditure per cent. of revenue was 74·08, against 69·48—an increase of 4·60 per cent. compared with the preceding year. Although the variation in percentage of expenditure is considerable it is not unusual, as in the earlier parts of the financial year many essentials have to be provided for, and the early requirements of one year differ materially from another. Hence the results of operation cannot be determined accurately until the close of the year; but it is, however, safe to say that the higher rates of pay and other improvements in the working-conditions of the staff will result in an increase of expenditure and an advance in the percentage of cost to revenue.

The total number of passengers carried was 6,358,595, against 6,128,701—an increase of 229,894. Season tickets issued numbered 148,022, against 139,867—an increase of 8,155. The number of parcels, horses, carriages, and dogs carried was 684,914, against 673,506—an increase of 11,408. The total number of cattle, calves, sheep, and pigs carried was 3,285,290, against 2,799,845—an increase of 485,445 head. The total goods tonnage was 3,253,180, against 3,293,705—a decrease of 40,525 tons. This decrease resulted from a falling-off of 115,305 tons in the grain traffic and of 385 tons in timber. Chaff, wool, firewood, merchandise, and minerals show increases aggregating 75,165 tons.

The receipts were adversely affected by the smallpox epidemic, which necessitated the imposition of severe restrictions and materially reduced the volume of passenger traffic. Labour unrest also became very acute, and ultimately culminated in strikes of considerable magnitude, which caused dislocation of trade and heavy loss of traffic to the Department. Despite the pressure to which they were subjected, the Railway staff remained loyal and did excellent work, frequently under very trying circumstances, in connection with the transport of men, horses, and equipment required to assist in maintaining order.

The increase in expenditure was caused by advances in the rates of pay under the Classification Act of 1912, which came into operation on the 1st April, 1913, and also by the fact that I had, in anticipation of the labour difficulty, taken the precaution of laying in large stocks of coal at various depots in order to enable the Department to carry on its operations and meet its obligations to the public in the event of a crisis arising. The wisdom of this action was made apparent during the acute period of the strike, as at no time was there the slightest danger of the train services being in any way curtailed or upset for want of coal.

During the period under review I submitted for the consideration of the Government a revised scale of pay for members of the First Division of the Railway service, and for the juniors employed in the Second Division. Amended staff regulations, modifying and improving the conditions of railway employment, and providing for concessions to superannuated members and