

In view of the important part railway communication and facilities play in connection with the mobilization and transport of troops and their equipment, and seeing also that the everyday operations of the railways rendered it impracticable to relieve simultaneously for camp training the large number of railway men who are within the age-limit for compulsory training under the Defence Act, a proposal to form a Railway Corps was made to the Defence Department in 1910. The suggestion being accepted, steps were taken to organize the corps, which consists of two battalions of eight companies each. Four Instructors have been obtained from the Defence Department, two being stationed in the North Island and two in the South Island. Officers have been appointed to each of the sixteen companies, and they are located in the best positions to ensure training, which commenced some time ago, being systematically carried on in a way that will make for the efficiency of the corps. The Wellington companies held a week-end camp at Gollan's Valley on the 26th, 27th, and 28th October, 1913. This was the first camp held by the New Zealand Railway Corps. Eighty men took part, and I was very pleased with their general bearing and the keenness they evinced. From personal observation in this camp and elsewhere I am convinced that the Railway Corps will be of immense value to the country in any emergency that may arise, also that the training and discipline received in the corps will manifest itself beneficially when the men are performing their ordinary avocations. The strength of the corps is now fifty-three officers and 1,860 men. Rifles and equipment for the whole of the North Island Battalion are on hand, but I considered it inadvisable to issue the arms during the industrial unrest. Equipment for the South Island Battalion has been on order for some time.

The following is a comparative statement of the traffic during the first and last years of my control of the railways:—

	Year ended 31st March, 1895.	13th October, 1912, to 11th October, 1913.	Increase.	Increase per Cent.
Passengers Number	3,905,578	13,353,773	9,448,195	242
Season tickets "	28,623	273,414	244,791	855
Parcels "	444,981	1,334,599	889,618	200
Horses "	11,185	21,890	10,705	91
Carriages "	750	2,859	2,109	281
Dogs "	23,517	55,196	31,679	135
Drays "	705	3,242	2,537	359
Cattle "	40,890	238,036	197,146	483
Sheep "	1,519,921	5,857,482	4,337,561	285
Pigs "	43,292	136,457	93,165	215
Chaff, lime, &c. Tons	36,972	234,479	197,507	534
Wool "	103,328	149,611	46,283	45
Firewood "	85,102	120,952	35,850	42
Timber "	198,578	694,675	496,097	249
Grain "	388,556	1,066,594	678,038	174
Merchandise "	377,938	867,265	489,327	129
Minerals "	857,917	2,753,904	1,895,987	221
Total tonnage "	2,048,391	5,916,480	3,868,089	188
Total revenue "	£1,150,851	£3,994,041	£2,843,190	247
Total expenditure "	£732,160	£2,815,642	£2,083,482	284
Train mileage run "	3,221,620	9,219,824	5,998,204	186
Locomotives Number	269	520	251	93
Locomotives (tractive power) lb.	1,756,178	6,754,663	4,998,485	285
Passenger-cars Number	498	1,330	832	167
" (seating-accommodation) "	17,455	55,937	38,482	220
Brake-vans Number	204	396	192	94
Sheep-wagons "	390	1,443	1,053	270
Total wagons, all classes "	8,264	19,236	10,972	133
Wagon carrying-capacity Tons	50,861	160,218	109,357	215

In conclusion, I desire to express my appreciation of the courtesy and consideration extended to me by the various Ministers of the Crown under whom I have had the honour to serve. In severing my connection with the service I am gratified at handing over to my successor the lines and their equipment in good order and condition, together with an efficient and contented staff. I am fully sensible of the loyal support given me by the rank and file of the service, and cordially thank them for their co-operation in connection with the working of the greatest of all our State systems.

I have, &c.,

T. RONAYNE,

General Manager.

The Hon. the Minister of Railways.