

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL MANAGER OF THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS.

SIR,— New Zealand Government Railways, Head Office, Wellington, 13th August, 1917.

I have the honour to report on the working of the New Zealand railways for the financial year ended 31st March, 1917.

The total mileage open for traffic is 2,970 miles, no new lines being taken over by the Working Railways during the year.

The capital invested in the lines open for traffic, including the plant and steamers on Lake Wakatipu, on the 31st March was £35,378,664, as against £34,857,882 for the previous year, an increase of £520,782. This represents expenditure on new works chargeable against Capital Account under Additions to Open Lines, £285,543; and Railways Improvement Authorization Act, 1914, £225,597; also £10,394 expended in the Greymouth and Westport districts, less a Public Works credit on last year's Capital Account of £752.

The gross receipts amounted to £4,800,810, against £4,548,356 for the year ended 31st March, 1916, an increase of £252,454.

The net revenue, £1,873,946, is equal to a return of 5·30 per cent. on the capital invested in the lines open for traffic, and 4·91 per cent. on the capital invested in the opened and unopened lines. These figures constitute a record for the railways.

The train-mileage for the year (9,146,331 miles) was 210,191 miles less than the previous year, but as the previous year included an extra working-day the actual decrease on the basis of an equal number of days was approximately 180,000 miles. The reduction on the North Island main line and branches was 96,000 miles, on the South Island main line and branches 59,000 miles, and the balance on the smaller sections. The goods train-mileage generally has fallen in sympathy with the reduced tonnage, but the decrease mainly represents economy effected as a result of grade improvements and the employment of an increasing proportion of heavy and more powerful locomotives. Already, therefore, the expenditure incurred in grade-easements has become productive of good and lasting results.

Heavy floods and extensive slips occurred on various lines, causing disorganization and serious delays to trains.

Owing to a slip near Mount Allan, on the Otago Central line, from the 3rd to the 7th August it was necessary to tranship passengers and mails, but goods traffic was suspended.

On the 7th and 8th September floods in the Invercargill district caused interruptions to traffic, the Kingston and Nightcaps lines being chiefly affected.

Damage to the bridge over the Manganui River near Midhirst necessitated the transhipment of passengers and mails from the 9th to 13th November. Goods traffic was suspended.

On the 9th and 10th November a slip blocked the Whangamomona Tunnel, and trains were run between Stratford and Pohokura only. A further slip caused a blockage of the same tunnel from the 27th to the 29th November.

A slip on the main line near Paerata from the 21st to the 24th December necessitated the organization of a temporary service and the transhipment of passengers at the blockage, but the Christmas holiday traffic was seriously affected and all goods traffic suspended.

In the Whangarei district floods on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th February affected the line between Waiotu and Opuā, and on the Kaikohe Branch. Through traffic on the main line was resumed on the 6th, but the blockage on the Kaikohe Branch was not removed until the 10th February. A further flood occurred on the 21st February, repairs being effected during the day.

Floods on the Kaihu Section disorganized traffic from the 3rd to the 9th February. On the 7th idem a temporary passenger service was established, but ordinary traffic was not resumed until the 9th.

Owing to floods and slips on the North Auckland line it was necessary to suspend all traffic north of Kaukapakapa from the 3rd February to the 2nd March.

On the 3rd and 4th February all traffic was suspended on the Thames line, but on the 5th passengers were able to tranship, through communication being resumed on the 6th February.

Further floods on the Kaihu line caused a cessation of traffic from the 21st February to the 2nd March, when a passenger service was established, passengers transferring at the blockage. Through traffic was restored on the 8th March.

The following figures, which give the record of the late arrival of the principal trains during the year, indicate that notwithstanding the difficulties experienced in connection with slips, floods, and other unforeseen circumstances, the trains have, as a whole, kept good time:—

	Average Late Arrival.	
	Min.	Min.
Long-distance passenger-trains	2·38	against 2·13 last year.
Suburban trains	0·36	„ 0·38 „
Long-distance mixed trains	3·10	„ 2·73 „

The number of ordinary passengers carried during the year was 14,173,115, a decrease of 28,391 on the number for the previous year. Season tickets issued numbered 355,832, an increase of 25,210. Workers' twelve-trip tickets numbered 91,909, and workers' weekly tickets issued on the suburban lines 200,303, an increase of 19,855 twelve-trip and 7,964 workers' weekly tickets over the preceding year. Holiday excursion tickets totalled 903,566, as against 900,091 last year, an increase of 3,475. There was a decrease of 7,161 in the schools, factory, and friendly societies excursion tickets. There have been no alterations in rates or fares during the year.