

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

SIR,— New Zealand Government Railways, Head Office, Wellington, 30th April, 1919.

I have the honour to report on the working of the New Zealand railways for the financial year ended 31st March, 1919.

The total mileage open for traffic at the end of the year was 2,993 miles, no new lines having been 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 £36,167,681, as against £36,001,432 for the previous year, an increase of £173,568. This amount includes £1,945, construction-charges on lines already taken over from the Public Works Department; £91,903, expenditure on new works charged against capital account under "Additions to open lines"; £79,375, Railway Improvement Authorization Act, 1914; and £345 expended on work on the Westland (Greymouth) and Westport Sections.

The gross receipts for the year amounted to £4,988,632, as against £4,687,700 for the previous year, an increase of £300,932.

The net revenue, £1,680,057, is equal to a return of 4.65 per cent. on the capital invested in the lines open for traffic, and 4.29 per cent. on the capital invested in the opened and unopened lines.

The train-mileage for the year (7,477,583 miles) shows only a small variation when compared with the figures for the previous year.

Train services were disorganized by floods, slips, and snowstorms, involving in some cases complete suspension of trains and serious delays in others.

On the 10th April, 1918, traffic on the Gisborne Section was dislocated by washouts and slips. The line to Matawai was workable by the 15th April, but the remaining portion of the section (from Matawai to Motuhora) was not passable till the 17th idem.

On the 20th April the line on the Whangarei Section was blocked by slips near Towai, and again between the 23rd and 28th idem by floods, damaging a bridge near Otiria. Passengers had to be transferred over the obstruction in each case.

From the 23rd to the 26th May traffic on the Toko Branch was interrupted by slips between Whanganomona and Pohokura.

On the 25th May there were slips on the line between Eketahuna and Mangamahoe.

On the 13th and 14th June the line was blocked by a washout between Waikino and Waihi, passengers having to be transferred.

On the 22nd June a slip occurred on the Main Trunk line north of Mangaweka.

On the 24th and 25th June the Waimea, Switzers, and Glenham Branches were blocked by floods and washouts.

On the 25th June a slip occurred near Kai-iwi, and on 26th idem the line was again blocked by a slip between Kakahi and Owhango.

On the 28th June two goods-trains ran into slips between Mataroa and Hunterville, a number of wagons being derailed in each case, and some extensively damaged. The line was blocked for twenty hours.

On the 29th June traffic was again interrupted by a slip between Owhango and Kakahi.

Between the 1st and 11th July traffic over practically the whole of Canterbury was interrupted by heavy snowstorms. The Hakataramea and Tokarahi Branches in Otago were also affected. Again on the 22nd July the lines in the vicinity of Christchurch and north thereof were blocked by snowstorms. The Waimea line was also affected by snow on this date, and the Otago Central Branch was blocked on the 22nd and 23rd July from the same cause.

Between the 12th and 19th July heavy storms on Lake Forsyth washed out a portion of the line on the Little River Branch. Regular traffic could not be resumed over the damaged portion of the line till the 30th July.

On the 15th July the engine of the Auckland-Wellington express train was derailed by a slip near Taumarunui.

On the 15th and 17th July traffic was interrupted by slips in the Manawatu Gorge.

On the 17th July a slip occurred on the line near Westmere.

Through traffic between east and west coast in the South Island was suspended from the 23rd to the 25th July, owing to a slip on the Midland line.

On the 1st August the line was flooded near Waipahi.

On the 6th September the engine and one car on the Wellington-Auckland express train were derailed by a slip near Greatford.

On the 7th September a washout occurred on the Toko Branch.

On the 7th and 8th September traffic was interrupted by floods between Aramoho and Okoia.

On the 19th October slips interfered with traffic near Mangaweka.

On the 24th October the Kaipara line was blocked by a slip near Ahuroa.

On the 24th and 25th October floods prevented trains running on the Kaihu Section.

On the 25th October traffic was interrupted by slips and floods near Utiku, and the engine of a goods-train was derailed by a slip north of Mangaweka. Passengers had to be transferred over the obstruction on the 25th and 26th October.

On the 8th November a large slip came down near Mataroa as the Auckland-Wellington express train was passing. The engine was derailed, several cars telescoped, and others considerably damaged. Two passengers were killed and two subsequently died from injuries received, and three others were seriously injured. The clearing of the line occupied several days, ordinary traffic being again resumed on the 14th November.

From the 19th to the 23rd November traffic was interrupted on the Nelson Section by slips and washouts near Glenhope.