

that the electric-supply business as a whole is in a healthy condition. The average revenue received by the Government for each unit sold was 0·366d., compared with 0·359d. for last year. This increase is due to the revenue received from the retail side of the Department's business in Southland. Excluding the retail business, the average for this year is 0·337d. per unit. The average revenue per unit sold by all the retail supply authorities to consumers throughout the Dominion was 1·028d.

An analysis and summary of the operating results and other statistics furnished by each electric-supply authority reveals the fact that there has been an increased consumption of electrical energy amounting in the aggregate to approximately 14 per cent. over that of 1937. This is due mainly to intensive load-building campaigns on the part of many of the retail supply authorities, a phenomenal increase being noticeable in the electric cooking and electric water-heating side of the business.

The statistics also indicate that during the past year 17,553 new consumers have been connected at an average rate of approximately 1,460 per month, and the completed figures for the year show that the ratio of number of consumers of electricity to the total population of the Dominion (1,591,974) is 24·4 per cent., or 26·2 per cent. of population in areas supplied with electricity.

The statistical data relative to each electric-supply authority will be found in the series of tables accompanying the report of the Chief Electrical Engineer.

RAILWAYS.

Dargaville Branch Railway.—Work on this railway has been continued during the year.

When the present Government decided last year to complete this line, further surveys were made in order to ascertain the best route into Dargaville. On the previously adopted route the station-yard at Dargaville was very cramped and this route also made it very difficult, if not impossible, to eliminate a number of level crossings in the borough.

After careful investigations had been made it was decided to adopt a line running round the back of the town, eliminating thereby all level crossings, giving a very much better site for the railway-station, at a distance from the post-office of only 20 chains.

The new route is longer and somewhat more costly than the old one, but its adoption is in keeping with the modern trends in railway location, which are to keep railway-lines out of the more thickly populated and business areas and to avoid all level crossings.

Pending the result of investigations into alternative routes, work on the railway was confined to the unopened section between Kirikopuni and Tangowahine and between Tangowahine and Te Wharau where the new route diverges.

The principal activity on the former section has been the completion of ballasting, and on the latter the formation has been restored, fences overhauled, and the erection of plant, bridges, and accommodation proceeded with.

With the question of the route now decided it will be possible to accelerate construction considerably.

Paeroa-Pokeno Railway.—During the year the Government decided to proceed with the construction of this railway, which will shorten the distance from Auckland to Paeroa and the Tauranga District by about forty-four miles, and will also open up and give direct railway access to a very considerable area of land between Pokeno and Paeroa, including the fertile Hauraki Plains.

As soon as the decision to construct the railway was made survey parties were started from each end, and construction work has now actually started at various points.

Plant has been arranged for, and some of it is now on the ground. The erection of stores, offices, accommodation for staff and workmen, and all the necessary adjuncts for the speedy prosecution of the work is all arranged for and the work should soon be well under way.

Gisborne-Napier Railway.—Until February of this year excellent progress was made with the construction of this railway.