

much net profit, out of this lower average rate, as the railways of the other colonies can make out of their higher average rate, even though they may have to carry the goods a somewhat longer distance for the average rate which they get. The reason for this is that a large proportion of the cost of performing each transaction is a constant, irrespective of the distance carried. Nevertheless, if we are not getting so large a revenue, as we might do with higher rates, we gain a corresponding advantage in other ways, by fostering production, and industries of all kinds.

We must, however, await the growth of population before we can gain any large increase in traffic. Our railways in many cases have been carried into country without sufficient population, and cannot pay expenses in such places until settlement and production have advanced.

In addition to the information regarding railway rates, supplied in the reports of the General Manager on European and American Railways (Parliamentary papers D.—2. and D.—2A. of this session), there has also been laid on the table of the House this session a reprint of a very important English Parliamentary paper on the subject of railway-rates in the United States of America (*vide* Parliamentary paper D.—2B. of 1888).

These documents are, I think, well worthy of perusal by honourable members, as bearing on the question of our general railway policy.

ROADS.

The next subject is roads of all classes. The length of roads and bridges constructed and improved out of Public Works Fund last year was :—

Dray roads, North Island	....	....	....	147 miles.
" Middle Island	....	....	....	105 "
Total dray roads	....	....	....	<u>252 miles.</u>
Horse roads, North Island	....	....	....	235 miles.
" Middle Island	....	....	....	71 "
Total horse roads	....	....	....	<u>306 miles.</u>
Grand total of roads of all classes	....	....	....	<u>558 miles.</u>

Bridges, North Island	....	....	19 bridges, 1,337 feet.
" Middle Island	....	....	7 " 779 "
Total bridge-work in both Islands	....	....	<u>26 bridges, 2,116 feet.</u>

The total length of roads constructed and improved in the colony generally, out of Public Works Fund, from the commencement of the Public Works policy up to the 31st March last, was as follows :—

Dray roads, North Island	3,381 miles.
" Middle Island	1,213 "
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Total dray roads		4,594 miles.
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Horse roads, North Island	2,687 miles.
" Middle Island	1,197 "
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Total horse roads		3,884 miles.
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Grand total of roads of all classes		8,478 miles.
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Bridges, North Island	630 bridges,	49,576 feet.
" Middle Island	161 "	33,529 "
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Total bridge-work in both Islands			791 bridges,	83,105 feet.