

NET REVENUE PER TRAIN-MILE.

					s.	d.
North Island main line and branches .. .. .	..	..	..	..	2	10 $\frac{3}{4}$
South Island main line and branches .. .. .	..	..	..	..	2	6 $\frac{1}{2}$

NET REVENUE PER AVERAGE MILE OPEN.

					£
North Island main line and branches .. .. .	..	..	..	..	607
South Island main line and branches .. .. .	..	..	..	..	303

If we compare these figures with those of 1909—which is the year connection was completed between Auckland and Wellington—we find that from that year to 1912 the following were the increases :—

INTEREST ON COST OF CONSTRUCTION, 1909–1912.

					£	s.	d.
North Island main line and branches .. .. .	..	..	..	Increase	1	4	1
South Island main line and branches .. .. .	..	..	..	Increase	0	15	5

NET REVENUE PER TRAIN-MILE, 1909–1912.

					d.
North Island main line and branches .. .. .	..	..	..	Increase	9 $\frac{3}{4}$
South Island main line and branches .. .. .	..	..	..	Increase	8 $\frac{3}{4}$

NET REVENUE PER AVERAGE MILE OPEN, 1909–1912.

					£
North Island main line and branches .. .. .	..	..	..	Increase	185
South Island main line and branches .. .. .	..	..	..	Increase	83

These tables show that, though there has been a small increase in the net revenue of the South Island Main Trunk line and branches during the period mentioned, it is not at all commensurate with the enormous increase in the revenue of the North Island main line and branches. Of course, the rapid increase of settlement and the activity consequent on opening up new country will account for a certain amount of the increases in the North Island ; but the whole question requires investigation as to whether the results are due to circumstances over which the Department has no control or whether they are due to the management of the railways. In dealing with this matter, it is not in any way my intention to pit the North against the South, but I will be failing in my duty if I did not call honourable members' attention to the facts which I have mentioned. Unfortunately, the net revenue of the most profitable line in the Dominion, situated in the South Island—namely, the Westport Line—which last year returned £12 1s. 11d. per cent. on cost of construction, does not go to the Dominion, but goes as an endowment to the Westport Harbour Board under special Acts, and the Dominion at the same time is paying interest on the cost of construction.

Another matter which is engaging my serious attention is the number of accidents which occur to railway employees, especially shunters. Fortunately, during the last financial year the average of accidents, fatal and otherwise, was lower than usual, but there are still more than I think there should be. I have directed the General Manager to look closely into the conditions of shunting, and report as to whether it is possible, either by mechanical means or by a different system of handling the rolling-stock, to minimize the danger. On receipt of the report, I hope to be able to take such steps as will lead to a diminution of these accidents.