

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

New Zealand Government Railways,

Head Office, Wellington, 21st July, 1916.

SIR,—

I have the honour to report on the working of the New Zealand railways for the financial year ended 31st March, 1916.

The total mileage of line open for traffic is 2,970 miles, an increase of 15 miles on last year's total. This is comprised of the Huntly-Awaroa line of 7 miles 43 chains and the Ward-Wharanui Extension, Picton Section, of 7 miles 73 chains.

The capital invested in the lines open for traffic, including the plant and steamers on Lake Wakatipu, on the 31st March was £34,857,882, an increase of £724,057 when compared with the previous year.

The gross receipts amounted to £4,548,356, against £4,105,457 for the year 1915, an increase of £442,899. The net revenue amounted to £1,637,473, equal to a return of 4·72 per cent. on the capital invested in the lines open for traffic and 4·39 per cent. on the total capital invested in the opened and unopened lines.

The train-mileage for the year (9,356,522 miles) was 26,898 miles less than the preceding year. The financial year just ended, however, included an additional working-day due to leap year. Allowing for this extra day, the decrease in train-mileage is approximately 57,000 miles, representing a saving of £17,130. The saving has been effected in goods-train mileage, and is due to some extent to the decrease in the tonnage handled, but is mainly the result of economies arising from grade improvements and the employment of a greater number of heavy and powerful locomotives, enabling trains to take increased tonnage over busy sections of the line. Further economy in operating will be effected as the projected grade easements are extended.

Heavy floods and extensive slips on various portions of the system caused disorganization and serious delays to trains in June, July, September, and November.

On the 19th June a slip near Puketutu caused four and a half hours' delay to the Auckland-Wellington express and two other trains. A work-train engaged in clearing the road ran into the slip and was derailed. On the 10th July slips near Konini caused derailment of engine and two cars of passenger-train and a delay of three hours and a half. A slip near Maharahara caused four hours' delay; washout near Cliff Road, three hours' delay. On same date slips blocked the Toko Branch, which was not cleared till the 12th July. On the 11th July slips near Te Kuiti stopped traffic for several hours, causing a delay of nine hours to express Auckland to Wellington, and three hours to Wellington-Auckland express. Slips on Toko Branch caused complete suspension of traffic from the 21st July till the 24th July, when train-running was resumed from Stratford to Douglas. The portion of the line between Douglas and Pohokura was not reopened till the 29th July, and communication with Whangamomona was not restored till the 7th August. On the 21st July slips occurred between Mangaroa and Summit. On the 22nd July slips between Taihape and Mataroa delayed traffic for eight hours. On the 22nd, 23rd, and 24th July floods and slips disorganized traffic between Taumarunui and Otorohanga: through traffic was restored on the 25th July. On the 17th September and 5th, 6th, and 7th November trains on the Wairarapa line were delayed by slips and floods. On the 11th and 12th November slips and washouts at Puketutu and Porootarao caused several hours' delay to the train services. On the 16th November Rakaia Bridge was damaged by floods, and passengers had to be transferred while repairs were being effected: these were completed by midday on the 18th November. The East and West Coast line was damaged by floods near Otira on the 16th November, and passengers had to be transferred by coaches up to the 23rd November. A washout at Cass necessitated transhipment of passengers from the 17th to the 30th November. Slips on the State Collieries line near Rewanui commenced on the 9th July, and continued intermittently until the 13th December.

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

				Average Late Arrival.	
				Min.	Min.
Long-distance passenger-trains	..	..	..	2·13	1·40
Suburban trains	..	..	..	0·38	0·36
Long-distance mixed trains	..	..	..	2·73	2·09

The number of ordinary passengers carried during the year was 14,201,506, an increase of 635,734 on the previous year's business. Season tickets issued numbered 330,622, an increase of 27,710. Workers' twelve-trip tickets numbered 72,054, and workers' weekly tickets issued on suburban lines 192,339, an increase of 8,100 twelve-trip and 19,683 workers' weekly suburban over the preceding year.

Holiday excursion tickets totalled 900,091, as against 926,615 for the previous year. There was also a decrease of 16,690 in the schools, factory, and friendly-societies excursion tickets. Many annual excursions have been discontinued temporarily owing to the war, and several school excursions were abandoned this year owing to a prevailing epidemic.

The total traffic under the head of "Coaching," which includes parcels, horses, carriages, and dogs, was 1,488,806, an increase of 2,829 on the total for last year.

The total goods tonnage was 5,960,562, a decrease of 114,720 tons when compared with the previous year.