

The two last years show a reduced mileage—roughly, 2,000,000 below the mileage for the year 1916.

The reduction in train-mileage was effected by the Railway Department curtailing the time-tables to overcome the difficulties arising through loss of men from enlistment and also to save coal. The curtailment would also diminish the amount of repairs required in the future.

A reference to the diagram attached (see Appendix B), which has been adopted from the official railway data, will show that since the 31st March, 1916, the following additions have been made:—

In wagons, an increased carrying-capacity of 9,381 tons, equal to an increase of 5·09 per cent.

In carriages, an increased seating-capacity of 2,854 passengers, equal to an increase of 4·61 per cent.

In engines, an increase in tractive power of 833,196 lb., equal to an increase of 10·51 per cent.

These figures indicate that so far as the capacity and power were concerned the stock and engines on the 2nd July, 1919, were capable of dealing with a considerably greater amount of work than they were in the year ending the 31st March, 1916, and are far ahead of that required during a similar period immediately preceding the 2nd July, 1919.

For some years the Railway Department had been carrying on a programme for building stock and engines commensurate to meet expected extensions and increased traffic. As the war progressed it became desirable to suspend this work, which was done gradually. Much material and many of the men thus released became available for the maintenance work. Some of the parts and materials which were formerly procured from Great Britain have, during the war period, been obtained from America and to a limited extent from private stocks. On the whole no serious difficulty has arisen from any deficiency.

There has been a shortage of skilled mechanics at all the shops, especially at Petone. The shortage still continues.

Mr. H. H. Jackson, who was the Chief Mechanical Engineer of the New Zealand Railways for many years, retired on the 31st March, 1919, and was succeeded by Mr. E. E. Gillon. The evidence of the latter, and of the Engineers in charge of the districts, and of the Workshops Managers, has been consistently to the effect that the rolling-stock and engines have been properly maintained and are in good and efficient condition.

Appended are Rolling-stock Returns Nos. 1 to 18, called for, showing particulars concerning essential parts required for the maintenance and repairs of the rolling-stock and engines, in support of the evidence given.

The General Manager's evidence shows that no difficulty has occurred in working the railways on the reduced time-table during the past two years arising from defective rolling-stock or engines or shortage of staff.

COAL-SUPPLIES.

Particulars of the railway coal-supplies from April, 1913, to the 2nd July, 1919, are shown on Coal Returns Nos. 1 to 8 attached.

About 260,000 tons of bituminous coal, obtained from the West Coast and Australia, and about 66,000 tons of brown coal, were required per year for the full time-table and the years ending the 13th March, 1916 and 1917; and somewhat less than this for the reduced time-table of 1918 and 1919. Brown coal, which has only about two-thirds of the heating-power of bituminous coal and which deteriorates quickly, is not kept in stock, and is usually used for light traffic. The fast through trains and heavy work require bituminous coal.

In October, 1913, the coal stock was 85,442 tons. Difficulties in obtaining coal began immediately after this, and as the war progressed the reserve stock fell with some fluctuations until by July, 1919, only 9,560 tons remained in stock, compelling the Railway Department to suspend the ordinary time-table then in operation.

The present officers consider that the stock of bituminous coal should not be less than 80,000 tons in normal times, but no written rule to this effect seems to have been made. Difficulties in getting supplies began soon after the declaration of