

1924.

NEW ZEALAND.

NEW ZEALAND RAILWAYS.

PROGRAMME OF IMPROVEMENTS AND NEW WORKS.

 REPORT BY THE HON. J. G. COATES, MINISTER OF RAILWAYS.

MR. SPEAKER,---

In submitting to honourable members a complete survey of railway improvements I may remind them that in 1914 a scheme was authorized for the purpose of bringing the system up to date and able to meet the transport needs of the community. At that date the railway facilities were admittedly inadequate, but the war with its larger obligations intervened, demands for facilities became more pressing and varied, and it was felt that nothing short of a further comprehensive survey, backed by complete and exact data, would enable a programme to be evolved and carried out which would meet the very extensive requirements of the system.

In drafting a programme of works for the development of our railway system I have endeavoured to lay aside all political considerations based on the rivalry of different geographical areas or the pressure of organizations whose chief function is to advocate expenditure without regard to the financial resources of the Dominion or any proper sense of perspective as to the relative claims of various items of railway-improvement.

In presenting this programme of works I have allowed no influence to operate other than the strict test of the merits of each proposal as ascertained by statistics under such headings as the following:—

- (a.) Cost of dealing with traffic with existing terminal facilities as compared with the improvements proposed;
- (b.) Cost of haulage over existing lines as compared with the suggested alterations to the lines by grade-easements or otherwise;
- (c.) The economies that may be effected by introducing automatic signalling, electric lighting, shop improvements, &c.

A glance at the Chief Engineer's remarks and figures, prepared expressly for my purposes, will indicate the relative importance of each.

In one or two instances other factors than those I have mentioned above have had a bearing on the decision, and in such cases I have made particular reference thereto in the following remarks regarding the specific items.

To meet all the requirements considered desirable by the Department would involve a total expenditure of approximately £13,000,000.