

SESSION I, 23RD PARLIAMENT.

1928.

NEW ZEALAND.

THE ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATION OF THE WORKING RAILWAYS OF NEW ZEALAND

(SPECIAL REPORT BY RIGHT HON. J. G. COATES, MINISTER OF RAILWAYS, ON).

Laid on the Table by Leave of the House.

THE following is a general review giving in brief the principal features of my policy whilst holding the portfolio of Railways, and summarizing the lines along which administrative action has been taken during my term of office in dealing with the many phases of railway operation in this Dominion.

NEW WORKS PROGRAMME.

By making a comprehensive tour of the whole railway system (in 1924) soon after taking control of the Department of Railways I was enabled to come into personal touch with both the clients and the staff of the Department, and to ascertain at first hand the general requirements of the railway situation.

After comprehensive investigation I decided upon a ten-years programme of progressive new developmental work intended to give the public a service that would measure up with modern transport standards. This programme, set out in detail in my special report (D.-2A) of 1924, is well under way. Portions of the work are already completed, and these have in every case made a marked improvement in general railway-operating efficiency. The balance of the programme (with certain readjustments due to circumstances over which we could have no control) is proceeding according to schedule.

The scheme was certainly a large one, but it represented the accumulation of some years during which the railway industry, as with many other industries, had to mark time on capital expenditure. We also had an almost phenomenal change in the circumstances associated with the railway industry, a change which brought home in no uncertain way to every administrator in the railway industry here, as elsewhere, that the standard of service had undoubtedly to be raised if the railways were to maintain their position. There was at the time when the programme was adopted practically no room for doubt in the minds of those who had given serious consideration to the question that the right thing was being done in undertaking the various works, and I feel satisfied that subsequent events have amply justified the wisdom of the decision then made.

The following is a list of the major works undertaken, with particulars of their present position :—

Main Line Deviations.

Auckland-Westfield.—This line will be available for goods traffic towards the end of 1929, and for passenger traffic early in 1930. It will eliminate the need for working the great bulk of the traffic over the present heavy grades between Auckland and Westfield, and was estimated to effect an operating saving of £22,500 per annum.

Auckland New Station and Yard.—Steady progress is being maintained with this work. The platelaying is well advanced, the Campbell Point overbridge has been completed, also the new outwards-goods shed. A contract for the new station building has been let to Messrs. J. T. Julian and Sons, Ltd., Auckland. By the time this contract is completed and the new station opened for traffic early in 1930 the major part of the Auckland new yard will have been constructed.

As stated in my D.-2A report, this yard is designed to give all facilities in the layout—viz., passenger-station, local goods-yard, marshalling-yard, and engine-depot. The necessity for these improvements has been emphasized by the departmental officers for many years, the traffic having quite outgrown the existing facilities, resulting in congestion and delays to traffic and uneconomical operation. A most cursory review of the present Auckland Station and facilities must convince any one that they are wholly inadequate to the needs of a city that has grown as Auckland has done.

Morningside Tunnel, Auckland.—The objections regarding grades which have been mentioned in connection with the alterations to give a better outlet from Auckland southwards apply also to the outlet northwards. In addition, the circumstances of the roundabout route taken by the northward outlet prevents the Department giving a service to the passengers in the northern districts that is adequate to their needs. The grades make the trains slow and working expensive, while the route considerably extends the time required to be taken by passengers in travelling to and from the city.