

It will be seen from the foregoing tabulation that the punctuality of the train services improved substantially during the year.

A résumé of the more important alterations to the principal express and passenger trains is as follows :—

The 7.40 p.m. Auckland-Wellington express was rescheduled to leave Auckland daily at 3 p.m. except Sundays. This alteration provides a seven-day-per-week express service from Auckland similar to that from Wellington.

On the Paeroa-Taneatua line the thrice-weekly express service between Taneatua-Tauranga was replaced with a fast mixed service providing connections at Tauranga with the Auckland-Tauranga express.

In the South Island the running of the through express service between Christchurch and Invercargill was restricted to three days per week throughout the whole year, with the exception that during the Christmas and New Year holidays the express trains were run daily.

From September, 1931, the running of the night expresses between Christchurch and Dunedin was curtailed from a thrice-weekly service to a Sunday night service only, which reduction resulted in a saving of 14,000 train-miles during the financial year.

GENERAL.

The Ravensbourne - St. Leonards portion of the Dunedin - Port Chalmers duplication was brought into operation on the 3rd May, 1931.

The new goods-shed and shunting-yard at Wellington were brought into use on the 17th August, 1931.

Improved Cars.—During the year the construction of sufficient new carriages of the new type was completed to permit of the Auckland-Wellington expresses being made up entirely of these cars.

BRANCH LINES.

During the past year the position regarding branch lines and isolated sections has again been reviewed, and various adjustments made where such were considered necessary.

The total operating revenue from the thirty-one branch lines for which separate accounts are kept totalled £325,939, a decrease of £74,679 (18.64 per cent.) compared with the previous year. Passenger revenue decreased by £20,220 (31.83 per cent.) and goods revenue decreased by £43,099 (14.80 per cent.).

The operating expenditure totalled £501,763, a decrease of £102,461 (16.96 per cent.) compared with the previous year.

Owing to the decline in traffic necessitating a curtailment of services, train-mileage for the year totalled 860,799 miles, a decrease of 220,290 (20.3 per cent.) compared with the previous year, and this is one of the principal factors contributing to the decrease in expenditure. Further economies were made in maintenance charges by providing motor-velocipedes for the permanent-way staff on branch lines, thus enabling reductions to be made in this staff. The expenditure in other branches was reviewed from time to time and general economies were made as the conditions warranted. The net loss on branch lines, after allowing for the feeder value, was £125,058, a decrease of £31,331 compared with the previous year.

Interest charges amounted to £451,982, a decrease of £33,530 compared with the previous year. This decrease is due mainly to the non-operation of the Napier-Putorino line during the past year, and the interest charges for this line have not been included in the branch line accounts.

The total loss on branch lines for the past year, including interest charges, was £567,040, a decrease of £74,862 compared with the previous year. This loss represents 40.9 per cent. of the total deficit (including interest) while the mileage of the branch lines was 28.1 per cent. of the total mileage of the railway system.

ISOLATED SECTIONS.

The results of operations on isolated sections are as follow :—

Kaihu.—Revenue totalled £4,073, a decrease of £1,354 compared with the previous year. The reduction is principally in goods traffic, which declined by £1,187.

Expenditure totalled £6,743, a decrease of £2,182 compared with the previous year. Train-mileage totalled 15,056, a reduction of 1,899 miles.

The operating loss for the year was £2,670, as compared with £3,498 for the previous year.

Traffic on this section has fallen away considerably, due principally to the decline in timber traffic.

Gisborne.—Revenue totalled £15,175, a decrease of £9,903 compared with the previous year. The closing of the Ngatapa Extension is responsible for a proportion of the decrease, but the closing of the freezing-works at Waipaoa and the slump in the timber industry are the principal factors contributing to the decrease shown.

Expenditure totalled £25,785, a decrease of £11,511.

Traffic on this section fell to such an extent that it was necessary to reduce the service from twelve return services weekly between Gisborne and Motuhora to six during the winter months. For the summer traffic the services were increased to nine return services per week.

Train-mileage totalled 42,863 miles, as compared with 67,862 in the previous year, a reduction of 24,999.

The operating loss on this section was £10,610, as compared with £12,218 in the previous year, a reduction of £1,608.