

ROLLING-STOCK

Programmes for the building of locomotives and rolling-stock of all types have, of course, been seriously interrupted during the war years. The interruption has been felt very keenly in the case of open-type LA wagons. During the years 1942 to 1945 inclusive there would have been constructed in normal times an average of 700 LA wagons per annum, while actually none were constructed during the years 1942 to 1944, and only 130 in 1945. In recent years there has been an appreciable increase in the mileage of track open, bringing new business and tending to increase the length of haul of goods, particularly bulk lines such as lime and manure.

The railway workshops will be fully occupied for a considerable time with outstanding orders for locomotives, carriages, and wagons of various types, and in order to cope particularly with the increased lime traffic and the increase which will take place in manure traffic it is essential that an increase in the LA type wagon should be made at the earliest possible moment.

Tenders have accordingly been called overseas, and orders for 3,000 LA type wagons placed with British firms. The wagons will be shipped in an unassembled state and will be assembled here in New Zealand. The first batch of wagons should reach New Zealand about February, 1947, and the complete order should be received by August, 1947.

POST-WAR DEVELOPMENTS

During the year a number of reports on projects mentioned in last year's review have been completed and considered by the Government. Action on these reports is being correlated with and included in the planning of regional development by the Ministry of Works. The actual progress of work on the projects will depend upon their order of priority in relation to supply of man-power, materials, and finance.

In the case of the Hutt Valley electrification, the supply of materials from overseas is a matter of difficulty and uncertainty, and it was considered that the only satisfactory method of overcoming the difficulties lay in personal contact. Mr. F. W. Aickin, Staff Superintendent and Chief Legal Adviser, and Mr. P. R. Angus, Chief Mechanical Engineer, therefore proceeded to Great Britain, and have now successfully completed negotiations for the manufacture and supply of the necessary electric locomotives, multiple-unit stock, &c.

The Auckland suburban electrification also raises difficult problems, particularly as the project envisages the first underground railway in this country. The Chief Engineer (Civil), Mr. H. C. Lusty, has therefore proceeded overseas to investigate the problems entailed in underground operation and to obtain first-hand information on the latest developments in underground station layout and allied problems.

PROSPECTS

The year 1947 will be the first full peacetime year for six years. During that time, principally due to wartime influences, gross revenue has expanded enormously, the revenue for 1946 exceeding that earned in 1939 by £6,099,460, or 65·27 per cent. With the return of normal conditions—which still seem some distance away—a shrinkage