

of the material, which had been used for reclamation on the railway, was credited to the construction authority. The road was vested in the Wellington City Council by Governor's Proclamation dated the 17th March, 1914.

OTHER WORKS.

During the year the new Chain Hills Tunnel, on the Dunedin-Mosgiel line, was opened for traffic, and single-line working on the new line between Abbot's Creek and Wingatui new station was brought into operation on the 23rd March, 1914. Good progress has been made with this duplication, which is now approaching completion.

Other important works have been carried out or completed during the year. The grade-easement on the North Island Main Trunk line north of Whangarata has been finished, and the grade-easement north of Pokeno is approaching completion. A commencement has also been made on similar work between Drury and Paerata. The Manawapou deviation has been practically completed.

The earthworks are well advanced in connection with the Parnell Tunnel duplication, and a commencement in driving the tunnel has been made at the Auckland end.

Reclamation of land at Mechanics Bay, Auckland, has been undertaken by the Auckland Harbour Board under agreement with the Railway Department, and it is anticipated that it will be completed within the time—namely, by November, 1915.

ROLLING-STOCK.

Messrs. Price Bros. (Limited), of the Thames, delivered seven Class Ad locomotives constructed by them under contract. The firm has still six Ad locomotives to complete their original contract, and twenty Class B tender-locomotives to build under contract taken by them during the year.

The rolling-stock under construction in the railway workshops at the 31st March last comprises twenty-six engines—viz., six Class X 94-ton tender-engines, twenty heavy tender-engines, Class Wg. The locomotive programme already arranged, therefore, provides altogether for the building of fifty-two locomotives of heavy type between the railway workshops and Messrs. Price Bros. (Limited).

The number of cars under construction in the railway workshops on the 31st March was fifty-nine, and there were also seventeen bogie brake-vans, eighty-nine bogie and 1,247 four-wheeled wagons in hand.

GENERAL.

The Westinghouse petrol-electric rail-motor-car for use on suburban lines is under construction in the Petone Workshops, and when completed it will be run experimentally from Wellington until such time as practicable results can be definitely ascertained. Experiments will, however, require to extend over a considerable period before it can be definitely concluded whether the cars can be run with financial success under the circumstances existing in the Dominion.

Experiments have been made with electric alarms suitable for use on level crossings, and as the appliance designed by the Department's officers has been found reliable under actual tests, it has been decided to install the electric alarms at a number of the more important busy crossings connected with the railway system. In view, however, of the amount of expenditure involved it will only be practicable to install a given number of the alarms each year. The installations will first be made at crossings regarded by the Department as possessing the greatest claims in view of the volume of traffic passing over them or their situation in respect to view, &c.

It has been found necessary during the past year to prosecute a considerable number of motorists who have driven over railway-lines at a most reckless speed when trains have been within the immediate vicinity of the crossings. In several cases the occupants of the motors have escaped disaster by the narrowest margin, and then only owing to the vigilance exercised by the trainmen. As an additional safeguard and warning to persons using the roads that cross the railway-line the Department has intimated to the local bodies controlling the highways that it would be prepared to provide and erect notice-boards a distance to be determined in advance of the railway-crossings provided the local bodies would undertake to maintain the notices after erection. Up to the present time the majority of the local bodies have not intimated their readiness to join with the Department in providing additional safeguards for persons using the roads. This is, I consider, a matter for regret, as the altered conditions of road transport resulting from the ever-increasing number of motor vehicles used has materially increased the risk of accident.

Immediately prior to and during the time of the labour trouble considerable pressure was exerted on the railway staff to induce them to take part in the strike. The men, however, firmly declined the overtures and loyally performed their duties, at times under very trying conditions. I am deeply sensible of the value of the services rendered under such circumstances, and desire to place on record my appreciation thereof.

I have prepared a special report reviewing the railway position in New Zealand and setting forth the conclusions I have arrived at as the result of inspections and observations since I took charge in November last. This review accompanies the annual report herewith.

The Hon. the Minister of Railways.

E. H. HILEY,
General Manager.