

The time-table to be brought into force on the 1st November will curtail materially the time occupied in transit between Wellington and Auckland (1 hour 25 minutes) and Wellington and Napier (64 minutes), and effect some improvement between Wellington and New Plymouth (30 minutes) and other stations in the North Island, but it can only be regarded as a first revision. The time-table will again be revised in a few months from the data already obtained and from actual experience of the working of the November retiming.

Additional crossing-places and some duplications are necessary, as well as regrading, before a satisfactory through train service can be run between Wellington and Auckland. In the revision now contemplated the economy in time has been mainly effected by saving time at stations and by rearrangement of the schedule so that crossings between opposing trains may be effected with less waiting-time.

The data obtained, which will be useful for future time-table revisions, brings out very clearly the extent to which the running of the so-called express trains is spoilt by stops at wayside stations for odd passengers, to the inconvenience of the majority. Stops at several stations of minor importance will have to be eliminated from the express trains before a satisfactory time-table can be presented.

The South Island November time-table will not show many alterations, the present timing of trains in that Island conforming more nearly to the standard required.

The issue of the public time-table monthly is an unnecessary labour and expense, and serves no useful purpose. The working time-table upon which the staff operate is only issued occasionally, and difficulty is experienced in noting all the monthly train alterations and keeping the working-book up to date. It is proposed, commencing 1st December, to issue the public time-table to cover four-monthly periods. A knowledge that the train services will remain unaltered during, say, the whole summer should be regarded by the public as a convenience; it will certainly be an advantage to the Traffic staff.

ADVERTISING AT STATIONS.

Trade Advertisements.

There is an entire lack of regard for appearance in the manner in which trade and other advertisements are displayed as a rule at railway-stations. In many instances the trade advertisements are a positive eyesore and a disfigurement of the station buildings, rendering them a discredit to the neighbourhood. Steps will be taken to remedy this condition of affairs as the existing contracts expire. The net revenue at present obtained from advertising contractors does not compensate for the disfigurement and damage of station buildings after due allowance has been made for free conveyance of men and advertisements and the cost of the Department's labour in fixing and removing the same. Unless the revenue from this source can be materially increased I propose to abolish altogether public advertising on railway property. If the practice is continued the method of exhibiting advertisements will be strictly regulated.

Departmental Notices.

The manner in which these are displayed at stations leaves considerable room for improvement, and I am making arrangements which will result in better publicity being given to departmental notices which affect the public, while at the same time obtaining greater uniformity and neatness of display. I hope in time to see the staff taking a greater pride in the general appearance of their stations and approaches.

TOWN TICKET-OFFICES.

Premises for a railway booking-office have now been secured in a central position in Wellington, and inquiries have been made with the object of obtaining suitable sites in Christchurch, Auckland, and Dunedin. The Wellington office will be fitted up as soon as the premises are vacated by the present tenant.

The experiment of opening town offices in New Zealand will be carefully watched, to ascertain whether the patronage warrants the expense, and the extension or discontinuance of the arrangement will depend on the results. In the large towns in England town offices are regarded as an essential adjunct to railway business, being recognized as admirable media for advertising holiday resorts and catching tourist traffic, but the circumstances there are altogether different, the distances from the centres of the cities to the railway termini being much greater and the population more dense.

A town office in the neighbourhood of Queen Street, Auckland, will be of distinct convenience when the railway-station is moved slightly farther away from the business centre of the city.

STATION BUILDINGS.

The station buildings and appurtenances have been maintained in a satisfactory condition, but it is unquestionable that the accommodation provided at many of the stations is out of date and below the standard of present-day requirements.

So far as the smaller stations are concerned, much has been done during recent years to modernize them and provide for the expansion of business out of the vote for "Additions to open lines" and out of revenue, and this practice will be continued. The funds available from these sources are, however, inadequate to meet the expenditure involved in prosecuting the works that the Department must put in hand immediately at the main centres where the business has already outgrown the accommodation. The stations and terminal accommodation at Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Palmerston North, Hastings, Lyttelton, and Timaru are altogether insufficient for present and future requirements. A loan is urgently necessary to provide funds