

TIME-TABLE.

On the 14th December last a full time-table on the pre-war basis was brought into operation. Coincident with this, issue of holiday, school, and other excursion tickets was reinstated, and the running of Sunday trains resumed.

The restrictions imposed on passenger and goods traffic during the period the curtailed time-table was in operation resulted in the accumulation of some 12,000,000 ft. of timber and considerable quantities of other non-essential goods. Special arrangements were made to clear up the arrears with the least possible delay.

TRAIN ACCIDENTS.

On the 14th May a goods-train got out of control when running on a down grade leaving Hihi-tahi, and was derailed near Mataroa. Thirty-two wagons were wrecked. Both the driver and fireman were scalded by escaping steam. The driver, I regret to say, subsequently succumbed to his injuries. On the 21st February ten wagons on a goods-train were derailed at Opapa, seven wagons being badly damaged.

RAILWAY IMPROVEMENTS.

The amount expended during the year in connection with works authorized by the Railway Improvements Authorization Act, 1914, and charged to Capital Account was £78,818. The total expenditure on the scheme up to the 31st March was £635,265.

It was estimated in 1914 that the scheme which was to provide accommodation and facilities that were at that time imperatively necessary to enable the Department to deal efficiently with the traffic would be completed in five years. The intervention of the war, however, has prevented any material progress being made, and as a consequence the Department is now in a position of having to deal with greatly increased traffic with out-of-date and inadequate facilities.

During the five years 1915 to 1920 the revenue has increased by £1,647,030, and there is every indication that this rate of increase will be maintained. It is therefore imperatively necessary that the railway-improvement scheme of 1914 should be vigorously pushed on.

The Department could find regular employment for at least five years for 2,500 suitable men.

ROLLING-STOCK.

In consequence of the difficulty of obtaining the necessary material and the depletion of the staff during the war period, the building of new rolling-stock was greatly restricted; and, as the arrears cannot be made up by the manufacture of locomotives and wagons in the Railway Workshops of the Dominion, arrangements have been made to invite tenders for the construction of twenty-five locomotives and 2,500 wagons from abroad, and also to invite offers from manufacturers within the Dominion for the building of an additional 500 wagons. A contract has also been let to Messrs. A. and G. Price for the construction of twenty locomotives in their workshops at Thames.

HOUSING OF STAFF.

Considerable difficulty is experienced by the staff in obtaining house accommodation, especially in the North Island, where the shortage of houses is very acute. With a view to overcoming this it has been decided to enter upon a large housing scheme and to provide houses for all permanent members of the Railway staff. Land has been acquired in various centres, and an up-to-date factory will be erected at Frankton Junction, where timber will be cut to standard and the complete house will be sent to the locality in which it is to be erected. In addition to dealing with the timber for houses, the factory will be capable of turning out timber suitably cut for other railway purposes; and as soon as its own urgent requirements are met in regard to houses the Department will be in a position to supply other Government Departments with house material cut to size. Apart altogether from the economy in erecting factory-cut houses, the number of houses that can be built in a given time will be greatly increased as compared with the ordinary method of building.

A number of houses are now in course of erection at Kaiwarra,

I have, &c.,

R. W. McVILLY,
General Manager.

The Hon. the Minister of Railways.