

has proved that on balance there is great gain. A fast train at excursion fares, one day in the middle of each week, leaving in the morning and returning at night, from country stations to the nearest town, has been found a profitable arrangement, and we suggest that experiment should be made in this direction. Only by testing the possibilities of new traffic can the full value of railway facilities be gauged. In view of road motor activities, every avenue should be explored. We refer to the effect of cheap fares in another section.

Reservation of Sleeping-berths and Seats.

Reservation of seats and sleeping-berths must of necessity be concentrated in one office at the starting-point of the trains, and unless great care be taken in the registration of applications there is risk of disappointment and dispute. Tourist offices and stations receiving inquiries should make certain by communication with the central registration office that all is in order before promising a sleeping-berth or a seat. There has occasionally been some trouble in this connection. There would appear to be reason in the request that seats should be reserved for journeys of 50 miles and upwards.

Platform Tickets.

The issue of platform tickets through a machine situated in the booking office is the usual form of meeting the application at Auckland for access, by friends of passengers, to the platform, and this we recommend. The idea of issuing platform season tickets, as at Timaru, is also worthy of extension.

Collection of Tickets.

All stations being open and tickets collected upon trains means constant examination of tickets upon long journeys, causing irritation to passengers, especially at night. We recommend that at the larger stations the platforms be enclosed and tickets collected at the doors. This may mean some increase of staff at the stations, but it should be more satisfactory from a public point of view as well as to the Department. A label indicating sleeping-berth passengers' destination would also be a convenience, and obviate the waking up of passengers unnecessarily. The fares should be printed upon the tickets, as we understand was formerly the practice.

Parcels Traffic.

The parcels traffic on the New Zealand railways is a considerable one. For the year 1923 receipts were £304,306. The present method of issuing consignment-notes and waybills, as in the case of goods traffic, necessitates a great deal of clerical labour and delay, both at the despatching and receiving stations.

We are of the opinion that considerable economy would result in the adoption of the stamps system, as used in England and elsewhere. Under this system, parcels up to a determined value are not waybilled, adhesive stamps to the value of the freight being affixed to the parcels. Travelling inspectors are employed to keep a check upon the work performed, and in practice it is found that considerable advantages accrue by its use. We recommend that the Railway Department should take steps to bring this system into operation.

Goods Traffic and Trains.

As in the case of passengers, so with goods traffic the road motor has become a serious competitor of the railway. No arrangement exists at present for the collection of goods from their source or delivery to destination. It is in being able to haul goods from door to door that the strength of this competition lies. Evidence from all quarters shows a general desire to consign traffic by railway rather than by road, if for no other reason than the avoidance of damage to the roads; but the advantages offered in convenience, if not in cost, outweigh the public-ownership aspect, which is so fully recognized by traders. Without doubt the Railway Department could, by establishing a well-organized fleet of road motor-vehicles, secure practically all the traffic to the rail, the alternative being a combination on mutually advantageous terms between motor-owners and the Railway Department. We are disposed to recommend the latter course, at any rate, as a trial. If within