

(5.) From Control
To Stationmaster, McNab.

ALTERED-CROSSING ORDER.

No. 27 to cross No. 30 at Pukerau. Correct.

Until the last message, "Correct," is received, a train should not be despatched out of its regular course.

Tarpaulins.

Complaint was made of shortage of truck-covers. The stock if fully used and correctly distributed should be sufficient. The control of these would follow the control of wagons.

Live-stock Conveyance.

Live-stock, representing, as it does, so large a proportion of the wealth of New Zealand, demands special consideration. Vehicles in which stock is conveyed should be better cleaned and disinfected than they are at present. Live-stock trains should be run at passenger-train speed and, where distances are long, detailed arrangements for attention and water should be made.

Level Crossings.

The great number of level crossings in the Dominion are a danger—as all level crossings are—as well as hindrance to the movement of traffic. Some £200,000 have been included for crossings in the proposed capital expenditure, to be spread over the ensuing eight years; this amount, however, will not go very far towards meeting the cost of bridges. At main roads in the larger towns it is desirable to obviate crossings by bridges or subways in the interest of public safety, but it is not practicable to deal with the numerous county roads in the same way. Where signal-boxes are near crossings the provision of electrically operated gates to be worked by signalmen would be a safeguard, although it would not get rid of obstruction. We have examined the latest form of automatic swinging-light warning-device, which goes as far as possible, short of physical protection, in the direction of preventing the railway being crossed by road vehicles or pedestrians when trains are approaching. Bells are also provided at some of the crossings. Short of erecting gates and building gatehouses we do not see that more can be done to give warning at crossings.

Private Sidings.

Agreements for the construction and maintenance of private sidings provide for the cost and renewal, but not maintenance, to be paid for by the grantee. An annual rental levied, it is said, to cover the cost of shunting is an addition to the cost and renewal of the siding. In the event of the siding being removed from one site to another at the instance of the grantee, the cost of such removal is charged to him. To charge a rental after the whole expenditure upon material and labour has been paid for by the grantee gives rise to resentment and a feeling of unfair treatment. We do not think that a rental, so called, in addition to the cost of construction and protection by signals, if any, should be levied. If there is anything extra in the shape of shunting services, or otherwise, that would not be performed by the Railway Department for the traffic if put on rail at the nearest station to the private siding, then the rates charged should be so adjusted as to meet the extra cost.

Weighbridges.

Some complaint is made that railway weighings are unreliable. All weighbridges and weights are tested and adjusted periodically by competent artisans under the control of the Permanent-way and Works Department. The weights are further tested by the Weights and Measures Inspectors. There should be no difficulty in securing accuracy providing the instructions to the staff are carried out faithfully. Recent legislation, we understand, provides for the acceptance of Railway weights by buyer and seller of produce. It is especially necessary under these circumstances that the selection of men charged with the weighings should be made with care, in order, apart from the need for accuracy in Railway charges, that disputes should not arise between producers and merchants.