

Ten years hence the railway system of the Dominion will be much more homogeneous than at present. For instance, loose ends of sections like those at Dargaville, Stratford, Gisborne, Tauranga, and Westport will be linked up with the main lines. The Pokeno-Paeroa railway will be an accomplished fact, as will the northern rail outlet from Auckland, and the Westfield and Tawa Flat deviations.

All these improvements will make possible increased standardization of rolling-stock and equipment, with consequent reduction in production, operation, and upkeep costs, and favouring increased mobility for locomotives, cars, and wagons, with consequent increase in their operating efficiency as revenue-earning units.

The through line between Auckland and Wellington, with vastly improved access to the cities at either end, and intermediate grade-easements and curves-reductions made in the interests of economical and expeditious working, will be capable of providing a substantially more efficient service than is possible at present. The new terminal stations at Auckland and Wellington will greatly facilitate the handling of all classes of traffic. Passengers, in particular, will find the comforts and convenience offered thereat comparable with the best now obtainable in other parts of the world.

Electrification of lines in certain suburban areas, and the use of smokeless fuel where such is found advisable, will help to improve travel conditions in all respects. More powerful locomotives, with greater water and fuel capacity than any we have at present, will make long non-stops runs feasible on our express routes, enabling—with improved track, curve, and grade conditions—further reduction in the times required for covering the distance between our principal cities. This development will, of course, call for the introduction of slip-coaches on non-stop expresses to serve the more important intermediate towns.

Experience already gained in other countries, and to some extent in our own, proves conclusively that road services cannot do the heavy carrying-work for the country that the railways are called upon to perform. Roads, nevertheless, have a definite and important function, chiefly of an ancillary nature, in relation to the country's major transport work, and the function is being more clearly defined as costing-data become available and the working of economic laws in relation thereto is increasingly realized.

In ten years' time it may therefore be expected that a definite line of demarcation will exist between the kinds of work that railways and road services are performing (the most suitable in each case having been selected after practical and searching tests), and that there will be an absence of wasteful competition between them in their respective spheres, such competition as now exists being replaced by a sensible co-ordination of work between private operators and rail-owned services by train and road, equally applicable in its usefulness to the requirements of the most distant farm and the most crowded city area.

By that time, too, New Zealand will be vastly better known as a tourist and health resort, and on account of the attractions it offers to sportsmen.

The alternative railway routes which the linking-up of several now detached rail-heads will make possible, such as the Okahukura-Stratford route on the east and the Pokeno-Paeroa-Tauranga-Gisborne-Napier on the west of the North Island, will help to make rail tours particularly attractive for overseas visitors.

Looking ahead, it may be expected that the practice of "land cruising" by train, recently initiated in Great Britain and America, will be fully established, and in this country the Railways may look for heavy work of this kind during the summer months in routing and conveying chartered trains loaded with sightseers to the favourite rail-served resorts.

The collection and delivery of train-passengers and luggage from and to their homes or hotels by cars or buses which will be provided for at stations so that they may dock right alongside the trains, and which will be worked fully in conjunction with train services as part of the ordinary routine of railway-operating, is another development that I hope to see brought about during the period named.