

## TRANSPORTATION BRANCH.

*Train Services.*—The train services of the Dominion have been kept under continual review, and adjustments have been made wherever it was apparent that better service could be given to the community without involving undue expense.

The daylight express trains between Auckland and Wellington were run during the summer months. The traffic did not warrant their continuance beyond the close of the Easter holidays. These trains will be given a further trial during the forthcoming summer.

From the beginning of December until the end of April a fast passenger service was provided between Rotorua and Frankton Junction. The train from Rotorua left at 4.57 p.m. after connecting with the Gisborne-Rotorua motors, and arrived at Frankton Junction at 8.12 p.m., in time to give a connection with the daylight express for Auckland and with the night express trains for Wellington, the latter connection also serving Wanganui and Napier districts. The train from Frankton Junction left at 10.30 p.m., and by connecting with the Auckland-Wellington express train formed an Auckland-Rotorua night service. The usual reduction of traffic as winter approached necessitated the discontinuance of this service temporarily, but its reinstatement will be considered next summer.

To meet the requirements of the suburban passenger traffic at Auckland a considerable number of additional stops have been arranged for suburban trains, and services have been augmented in keeping with the extension of settlement.

The Department decided to give a trial to the running of a night service from Auckland to Whangarei and back. The facilities now provided enable passengers to leave Auckland at 4.5 p.m. Mondays to Fridays, and at 5.11 p.m. Saturdays, and reach Whangarei the same night, while in the reverse direction they can leave Whangarei at 3.30 p.m. and arrive Auckland the same night. The new trains also provide a fast service for parcels and goods traffic.

The Opunake Branch line was opened for traffic on the 12th July, 1926, and a train service arranged to deal with the traffic offering on that line.

The new Hutt deviation to Waterloo Station was opened on the 26th May. A double track has been provided, with the latest automatic signalling, and it is anticipated that the new line will materially assist in developing the new industrial and residential area in the Hutt Valley.

The Department purchased the buses operating between Hastings and Napier, and has arranged a suitable and efficient motor-bus service between Napier and Hastings, resulting in considerable economy in train operation.

The policy of accelerating mixed trains or replacing them with passenger services has been continued during the year, and in this connection the mixed trains previously running on the Cheviot Branch, between Ashburton and Christchurch, between Ashburton and Timaru, and on the Fairlie Branch have been replaced by passenger services, which have much improved the conditions of travel. A passenger-train now leaves Christchurch for Parnassus at 7.55 a.m. daily, and covers the eighty-five miles in three hours five minutes, and forms a connecting-link with a motor service for Blenheim. A return service, connecting with motors from Blenheim, leaves Parnassus at 2.0 p.m., arriving in Christchurch at 5.14 p.m.

An express goods-train has been arranged to leave Auckland for Frankton at 3.55 a.m. daily, connecting there with trains for the Rotorua, Thames, and Main Trunk lines.

A competitive road-motor service has been operating between Oamaru, Ngapara, and Tokarahi, and as there was insufficient passenger traffic to warrant both a rail and road service, the Department purchased the bus service and is now operating it, the train service being used only for goods traffic.

The through goods-trains instituted between Wellington and Auckland and between Christchurch and Invercargill have proved very successful, and have provided expeditious transport for goods and live-stock traffic.

*Rail-motors.*—During the year experiments with the various designs of rail-motors have been continued. One steam rail-car is doing useful work as a subsidized newspaper-train running between Frankton Junction and Thames. The other is reasonably meeting the requirements of the passenger traffic on the Kurow Branch, while the four-wheeled rail-cars are running on the Switzers and Glenham Branches. The electric storage-battery car is carrying the passenger traffic between Christchurch and Little River.

A light steam-locomotive capable of hauling a limited load is now on order, and should arrive in the course of a few months. It is proposed to place this unit on one of the branch lines.

*Reducing Cost of Operation.*—Continued efforts are being made to reduce the cost of operation, and all avenues are being explored with this end in view. The provision of more modern facilities such as automatic signalling, track-duplication, and graded marshalling-yards will assist in this direction, and such improvements are being made as funds are available.

The double track from Auckland has been extended from Westfield to Otahuhu, giving great assistance in handling the suburban traffic.

A tablet station has been opened at Kopaki, dividing the long section between Puketutu and Porootarao, which has in the past considerably hampered the working of trains over that portion of the line.

A new hump marshalling-yard has been provided at Middleton to relieve the congestion which has been a continual difficulty at Christchurch for several years. This yard has been constructed on the most modern lines, and will enable wagons to be handled more expeditiously and more economically than has hitherto been possible. Provision has been made for ample accommodation for many years to come.