

Investigations into time-table services have been continued with a view to effecting economies.

The schedule loads fixed for various types of engine in service have been reviewed, and the schedules have been revised on lines that will in many cases place the Department in the position of having additional power at its disposal. Attention is also being given to engine-mileage, with the object of increasing the daily mileage per individual engine and thus reducing the number of engines in daily service.

The question of wagon requirements is also being fully gone into. Statistics, following the lines of later-day developments in general railway practice, have been adopted by the Department for indicating the true position as regards the supply of and demand for wagons, the mobility of the available wagon stock, and the turnover at each station. This will enable the position to be thoroughly analysed and the most efficient system of distribution arranged for. It is hoped that by this means much better use will be made of the existing stock, and that complaints of wagon-shortage will thereby be eliminated. Further, it is expected that the improvements in yard and track facilities, rearrangement of time-tables, and the introduction of train-control will have a marked effect on the turnover of wagons.

*Shunting and Shed Statistics.*—Comprehensive statistics relating to terminal shunting and handling of goods at the larger stations is enabling the Department to keep a close watch on the cost of these operations.

*Supervision of Train-operation.*—The supervision of train-operation has been improved by the institution under the Divisional Superintendents of regular conferences of District Traffic Managers, and also by the closer relationship of administrative officers with the outdoor operating staff by the appointment of outdoor transportation officers, who get into close touch with the staff.

In view of locomotive-operating matters now being dealt with in the Divisional Superintendent's Office, instead of in Head Office as heretofore, it was found advisable to transfer an officer from the staff of the Locomotive Branch to that of the Transportation Branch in Head Office in order to obtain closer co-operation between the Locomotive and Traffic Branches.

*Train and Wagon Control.*—Arrangements are being made to institute a modern system of train and wagon control, which should result in much greater efficiency in the use of wagons and in the movement of trains. The equipment has arrived and the work of installation is well advanced. The control system provides for a responsible officer being in continuous touch by direct telephone communication with all train movements within his district, and by this means train delays are reduced, better train and wagon loading, more prompt turn-over and higher efficiency in the use of rolling stock are attained. Two officers were sent to Australia to study a similar system in operation there with a view to increasing our knowledge of this method of train-operation.

*Tractors for Yard Shunting.*—Efforts are being made to reduce delays to trains shunting at intermediate stations. Some measure of success has been obtained by use of a tractor fitted with railway-wheels for work in yards where a fair amount of wagon-movement is necessary. One has been tried with satisfactory results at Putaruru. Two additional tractors fitted for road use have since been obtained—one for service at Feilding, and one at Ashburton. It is proposed to extend the use of these tractors as circumstances permit.

*Bulk Motor-spirit Wagons.*—The distribution of petrol in bulk instead of in cased packages by the large distributing companies in the Dominion necessitated the provision of suitable wagons for conveyance of this traffic by rail. A number of petrol-tank wagons of 5,000 gallons capacity were built in the railway workshops and put into service.

*Mail-exchangers.*—With the object of following the practice in use on railways elsewhere, experiments are being made with mail-exchanging apparatus, the intention being to introduce this system of receiving and delivering mails by the Main Trunk express trains at stations at which those trains do not stop.

The experiments being carried out by the Department are designed to arrive at a type of exchanger suited to local conditions and requirements.

By the use of this apparatus it is hoped to materially expedite mail deliveries at many points *en route* at which the railway business does not warrant an express train stop.

*Visit of Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York.*—In February and March this Dominion was visited by Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York, who made most of their journeys by rail. The programme, which involved a total of upwards of ten thousand miles of running by the pilot, Royal, and emergency trains, was carried through by the Department without mishap and in a manner which gained the warm appreciation of our Royal visitors.

#### SAFE WORKING.

It is gratifying to record the fact that the year closed without the occurrence of a fatal accident to any train passenger. With over 26,000,000 passengers carried this is a result of which the public and the staff may feel proud. The number of accidents to trains involving passengers and employees was six, as compared with forty-one the previous year. Personal accidents on the line (other than train accidents) totalled twenty less than for the year 1925-26. Shunting accidents likewise show a satisfactory decrease.

The issue of posters depicting safe-working matters and containing warnings against dangerous practices is being continued. Use is also being made of the *Railway Magazine* in the same direction.

During the year a prize was offered by the Board for the three best essays on "Safety." The response was most satisfactory, thirty-eight essays being submitted, the majority of which were of a high standard, and contained practical and useful suggestions.

The policy of eliminating the busier level crossings is being pursued. In this matter the Department is co-operating with the Main Highways Board and the local bodies concerned. The installation of level-crossing alarms, principally of the wig-wag type, is also being proceeded with.