

The design of the shops provides for extension should such at any time be considered necessary. The internal capacity of the shops has been especially increased to obviate one of the greatest losses in workshop operation in the old shops—namely, that arising from a large proportion of the work being carried on outside. At the old shops, in many instances, 40 per cent. of the work has been performed outside, exposed to the weather conditions prevailing. This has undoubtedly resulted in heavy loss.

Analysis of time lost by employees reveals that out of every hundred hours shop time, eight are lost by employees for various reasons. About half of these are definitely recorded as due to sickness. Such figures are not conducive to the efficient operation of the shops from either the men's or the Department's point of view, and the conditions under which the new shops will operate will undoubtedly be a factor in improving this situation.

Provision has been made in the new workshops for building the Department's requirements in renewals and new rolling-stock. Modern practice has, from our observations of modern shops overseas, revolutionized material-handling, and the appliances and space provided will efficiently cope with our requirements and enable the Department to get its costs down to a minimum.

Another very important aspect that has been largely influential in determining the matter of improvement in workshops has been that of the welfare of the men. It is now recognized as sound industrial practice to provide for the men such advantages by way of high-quality working-tools and congenial surroundings as will make them happier in their work and better in health.

In pursuance of this idea, not only will the new workshops provide an altered outlook for the men from the point of view of congeniality as regards their working-conditions, but their leisure hours have also been liberally catered for by the provision of such facilities as social halls, &c. The health of the men has been safeguarded in such matters as adequate arrangements for the provision and consumption of food in the best possible circumstances, sanitary protection of clothes, sanitary water-drinking facilities, washing and toilet facilities, &c. All these matters have, of course, involved expenditure, but it is confidently believed that the expenditure will be worth while in the efficiency reflected from the higher standard of health and happiness that will be brought to the staff.

When the staff of the Locomotive Branch are transferred to the new workshops, it has been arranged to consolidate into the same shops the present Maintenance and Signal and Electrical Departments workshops. At the present time these departments have independent workshops and organizations in various parts of the Dominion, and by absorbing them into the modernized new workshops not only will several valuable sites become available for profitable disposal, but the Department will obtain the benefit of the reduced costs possible only under the new workshops conditions. It must be pointed out that this consolidation was not possible under the old conditions, on account of lack of space and equipment.

Provision for the future in the design of the new shops has been made a feature in all the layouts, which provide that future extension can be made to each department without the principle of operation of the workshops being altered.

As stated, the new shops provide capacity for building the Department's new rolling-stock requirements (with the exception of a comparatively few specialty items) and any mechanical work required for the railways or any other State Department. This policy will permit of the importation of only raw materials in the future, instead of finished articles, and will assist the labour situation of the Dominion by providing work in New Zealand rather than elsewhere. Without the reorganization of the workshops as planned by the Department this would not have been possible.

With the completion of this scheme for concentrating all work into four main workshops, the smaller shops at East Town, Napier, Greymouth, and Invercargill will not undertake any heavy repairs. The staffs at these places are being transferred to where their work will in future be carried out, and at two of the main shops the locomotive men are being concentrated, while the car and wagon men will be placed at the two main car-shops. At East Town the points and crossing work for both Islands has been concentrated. Here, also, all tarpaulin-work for the North Island will be done, the South Island tarpaulin-work being concentrated in the new shop at Addington as previously.

In connection with the rearrangement of the staffs at the various centres a large number of transfers has been involved. Many difficulties have arisen requiring