

The Auckland-Wellington daylight express trains were run again during December and January, and proved popular during the holiday season. Arrangements are being made to so adjust the schedules of these trains that they can be run at short notice when circumstances may demand without disturbing the ordinary train service.

Suburban services received special attention. Additional stops were introduced where warranted to further the development of growing settlements, and additional train facilities were provided where the prospective business gave indications of a reasonable return.

The West Coast trains (South Island) were speeded up in order to improve the communication with Greymouth, and to offer inducement for the development of business from Westport via Westland and Otira for the East Coast.

The Picton Section time-tables were recast, and a much improved service was introduced.

Night goods-trains have been arranged between Wanganui and New Plymouth, and have proved a useful factor in improving the transport of stock and general goods in Taranaki District.

The portion of the East Coast Railway (North Island) from Waihi to Tauranga has now been taken over from the Public Works Department. The Tauranga-Taneatua portion (60 miles) is still being worked under the control of the Public Works Department, but will be taken over by the Working Railways Department at an early date. Pending the Railway Department taking over this section, the time-tables have been co-ordinated with that in operation on the opened line, thus giving the maximum flexibility in the movement of passengers and goods. Under the time-tables now in operation there are daily express services running each way between Auckland and Taneatua, also daily goods-trains between the same points.

The double line between Auckland and Otahuhu was extended to Papatoetoe, a distance of two and a half miles. The extension is of great assistance in handling the heavy traffic in the congested area around Auckland City.

*Train-control.*—The system of train-control is now in operation between Auckland and Mercer (43 miles), Marton and Wellington (116 miles), and between Christchurch and Oamaru (152 miles)—a total of 159 miles in North Island and 152 miles in South Island—and is already showing gratifying results. The feature of train-control is a special telephone apparatus which enables the officer in control of the section to be in constant touch with all stations and engine-depots in the "control" area. Stations keep the controller apprised of all train movements, and he is able to foresee pending difficulties and, when practicable, apply remedial measures. The co-ordination of the work as a result of the controller's supervision will be an important factor in the better time-keeping of trains, and will ensure the best despatch for loads in transit.

*Rail-motors.*—The experience gained with rail-motors has demonstrated the possibilities of economical operation with these machines in suitable areas, and it has been decided to obtain a number of modern vehicles for service in selected districts. Specifications are being drawn up and orders will be placed shortly.

*Improvements to Car-seating.*—Improved seating has been provided in the cars running on a number of the branch lines. It is the intention to deal similarly with other lines as funds are available.

*Steam Heating of Important District Trains.*—Arrangements are being made to provide steam heating for the important local district trains. The important Otago Central, Christchurch-Waiiau, and Fairlie Branch trains have already been fitted, and the provision of steam heating on Rotorua expresses, the Wellington-Woodville trains, and the Ashburton-Christchurch trains is in hand with a view to being ready for next winter. Other trains will also be fitted as finance permits.

*Cruising-cars.*—A cruising-car for North Island use and one for South Island were provided recently to meet the demands of touring parties. The charges for these special cars are reasonable, and it is anticipated that by catering for this class of traffic new business will be developed.

*Dining-cars.*—Dining-cars are under construction for use on the Limited expresses of the North Island.

*Tractors for Yard Shunting.*—The trials made with tractors at several stations have demonstrated the usefulness of these machines for shunting purposes at country stations where an engine would not ordinarily be available until arrival of a train. By using the tractor to sort wagons for despatch or delivery, detention to passing trains can be avoided and the Department's clients can depend on wagons for loading or unloading being placed in position expeditiously. As a result of the success of the initial experiment several additional stations will be provided with tractors.

*Mail-exchanges.*—A suitable apparatus for exchange of mails by express trains at non-stop stations has been devised, and with the completion of some minor details will be ready for service at an early date. When postal cars have been equipped a number of stations now dependent on ordinary trains for delivery of mails will be served by express trains, which will be enabled to deliver mails without stopping.

*Wagon Stock.*—The increases in live-stock, goods, and coal traffic created some difficulty from a transportation point of view at peak periods, but by intensive use of the rolling-stock and close co-operation between the various districts the position was met with a minimum of inconvenience to our clients. Additional rolling-stock, notably sheep and general-goods wagons, now under construction should give considerable easement in meeting next year's peak demands.

*Engine-runs.*—A close watch has been kept over locomotive operation with a view to increasing the mileage of the various classes of engines, and so obviating the necessity of acquiring more engines. New turntables which have been provided in various localities permit increased flexibility in engine movement.

*Congestion of Train-operation in Mercer-Frankton Area.*—Increasing difficulty has been experienced in working traffic through economically on the single line between Mercer and Frankton. To meet the position additional crossing sidings are being provided at various points in that area, and a