

has within recent months offered so many facilities for week-end travel and special excursions that it is freely remarked that the public when contemplating holiday trips will look to the Railway Department as a means of providing them with the travel facilities for enjoying themselves in fresh fields on each occasion.

The Department has recently arranged for the Mail Agents on the trans-Pacific steamers to act as agents for the Railway Department on the steamers, and much useful work is being done by them in the direction of inducing traffic to New Zealand, the attractions of which are such that each traveller will, I feel sure, induce others to visit New Zealand as circumstances permit.

Notwithstanding all that has been done in the direction of securing new business and holding other traffic at reduced rates, I am of opinion that if the railways are to occupy their present place in the progress of the Dominion and its general development, and at the same time show a satisfactory financial result, the application of legislation to control the introduction and operation of privately-owned motor transport services must take place in order that such undertakings will not be permitted to operate indiscriminately. In my opinion, licenses should not be granted to road operators unless it can be shown that their services are in the interest of the community. I foresee that unless very definite action is taken in this direction the railways will require increasing assistance from the Consolidated Fund merely to benefit a comparatively small number of private transport-service owners.

TRAINING SCHOOL.

In 1925 the Board decided that cadets appointed to the Service should receive tuition in railway accounting in addition to being instructed in telegraphy. The Christchurch Telegraph-school was closed in November, 1925, and Wellington selected as being the most suitable place for one central school.

Cadets in the Wellington school now receive lectures daily in accounting, tariff regulations, and elementary railway principles; and practical knowledge is gained through a system of stations at which sets of stations' books, forms, and tickets are used.

The new method of instructing cadets has proved to be most valuable to the Department, as cadets appointed to stations now have sufficient knowledge of general railway-work to be of immediate use.

CORRESPONDENCE COURSES.

In order to encourage a higher standard of efficiency, the Board decided that members in the lower clerical grades would require to pass qualifying examinations, and to enable members to obtain the necessary tuition in the various subjects in which they required to qualify a Correspondence School was established in Wellington under the direction of Mr. M. L. Bracefield, Officer in Charge of the Training School.

Courses in accounting, safe train-working, transport work, correspondence, and clerical work were compiled for members of the Traffic, Locomotive, Stores, and Maintenance Branches, and at the present time we have the following number of students: Traffic Branch, 1,303; Locomotive Branch, 157; Stores Branch, 108; Maintenance Branch, 100: total, 1,668.

The classes are open to all employees of the First and Second Divisions, and the instruction given is of such a comprehensive character that any ambitious employee desiring to increase his knowledge or equip himself for advancement in the Service has an excellent opportunity if he avails himself of the tuition given by the Correspondence School.

Already 802 members have sat for the various examinations.

CADETS' HOSTEL.

Owing to the fact that all cadets appointed to the Service now commence their careers in Wellington, it was found that the boys experienced difficulty in finding suitable accommodation. The Board considered that a hostel was a necessity not only for accommodation purposes, but also as a means of training boys in right habits and eliminating the risks that they are exposed to in city life.

A building was purchased in Fitzherbert Terrace and suitably equipped for accommodating forty boys. The hostel is under the control of the Officer in Charge of the Training School, who has had a number of years experience in the handling of young lads. The boys are charged £1 5s. per week, and through careful management this revenue has been practically sufficient to meet all charges against the hostel. The cadets at the hostel are encouraged to take up courses of study, and sports and pastimes receive special attention. There is no doubt that this establishment is doing good work in training youths under constant supervision to better fit them for their careers as Railway Officers.

APPRENTICE-TRAINING.

In July, 1926, an apprentice-instructor was appointed at each of the four main workshops. First-, second-, and third-year apprentices are given three hours' class training per week, and fourth- and fifth-year apprentices receive one lecture per fortnight by a supervisory member of the staff on some phase of shop-work or railway practice. The average number of apprentices receiving class instruction, including maintenance apprentices, is—Newmarket, 51; Petone, 64; Addington, 60; Hillside, 40.