

framed on lines that will furnish the people of the Dominion with the most convenient and rapid means of transport between Auckland, the Bluff, and the important business centres of both Islands lying between those points.

The commercial interests of the country demand that mails should receive quick despatch, and those engaged in business pursuits in the various important centres be given reasonable facilities for replying promptly to oversea communications.

The distance intervening between Auckland and Invercargill renders night-travelling by land and sea unavoidable. It also makes the curtailment of the stopping-places of the through trains, which must in the future be regarded as essentially fast passenger and mail trains, an imperative necessity.

It follows, therefore, that a satisfactory service between the north and south portions of the Dominion can be given only by limiting the number of stopping-places for the through trains, and this will be done accordingly. The through trains in the North Island will consist of 50 ft. cars, convertible into sleeping-cars at night, and the time-table will be approximately: *South bound.*—Leave Auckland 8.30 p.m. Monday; arrive Wellington 3.30 p.m. Tuesday; leave by steamer for Lyttelton 8 p.m. same evening; connect with first express at Christchurch Wednesday; arrive Invercargill 9.30 p.m. same night. *North bound.*—Leave Invercargill 7.10 a.m. Monday, Lyttelton by steamer 10 p.m. same night; arrive Wellington 9 a.m. Tuesday, leave 12 noon; arrive Auckland 7.15 a.m. Wednesday. Similarly on other days daily connections will also be provided between Napier and New Plymouth and Auckland.

The success of the operations of the North Island Main Trunk Railway will be materially assisted by the acquisition of the Wellington and Manawatu Company's line, which now forms the direct connecting-link between Wellington and the North, and over which a very large portion of the traffic originating on the State railways now passes. It is desirable that the company's line be taken over at the earliest possible date.

The linking-up of the chief cities of the Dominion and the settlement of the inland district traversed by the Main Trunk line will undoubtedly result in a large increase of traffic at Wellington and Auckland respectively. Increased accommodation is therefore essential, and with a view to providing this, it is proposed to erect new station-buildings and to remodel the yard accommodation at both centres. Plans for these important works are in course of preparation.

In view of the large economies that can be effected in the cost of operating the railways of the Dominion if the gradients were flattened and alignment improved, thus enabling increased loads to be hauled, arrangements are to be made to obtain the data necessary to formulate a scheme for dealing with the matter in a practical and comprehensive manner.

As some misunderstanding appears to exist in the minds of those concerned respecting the course they should adopt in respect to appliances invented, or improvements discovered in methods of working, I have directed that notices setting out what is necessary are to be posted in each Railway workshop in the Dominion.

I propose shortly to extend the issue of fifty-trip family and fifty-trip single commutation tickets to distances up to twenty-five miles, to issue workers' weekly tickets under the usual conditions to stations between Lower Hutt and Upper Hutt, and to extend the Wellington suburban area to Upper Hutt. I also purpose during the next summer season to make an experimental issue of week-end tickets to and from the various week-end resorts served by the railways, and, in the event of the result being satisfactory, to further extend the issue as circumstances warrant.

With a view to dispelling the misunderstanding that exists as to the extent of the rolling-stock equipment of the railways of the Dominion I append a table which shows the position clearly and concisely.

The tonnage shown represents the actual traffic in goods of every description dealt with during the financial year ending 31st March, 1908; the wagons shown are those actually available and suitable for dealing with that business. The wagon capacity has been calculated on the basis of the trucks being made use of for conveyance of traffic on two days per week only, yet even on this very low basis the capacity of the wagons is sufficient to deal with two and a-quarter times the existing goods traffic. If every goods-wagon was loaded to its full carrying-