

TRAIN SERVICES AND GENERAL OPERATION.

The Commission recommended a complete revision of time-tables, and that mixed trains be reduced to a minimum. As will be seen from my last Statement, these matters were then being considered. Very considerable improvement has already been effected in express and important passenger-train services, and the General Superintendent of Transportation and the Operation and Equipment Assistant are at present engaged on the general revision of time-tables throughout the Dominion.

The "Limited" express was inaugurated as a night service between Wellington and Auckland in December last. Originally it was proposed to give the night service a trial for some months and then try a daylight "Limited" service, but so much opposition was raised to the suggested withdrawal of the night service that it has been decided to defer the running of the daylight service until next summer, when a more satisfactory comparison can be made. It may be found possible to so arrange the running of the ordinary Main Trunk expresses as to enable the scenic part of the journey to be covered in daylight hours.

The Wellington - New Plymouth and Wellington - Napier express time-tables have been vastly improved and journey times reduced. Many other improvements have also been effected, including a connection at Palmerston North with the down Napier and up New Plymouth expresses. The acceleration of these trains has also placed the railways in a position to cope with the rapid growth of passenger motor competition between Napier - Palmerston North - Wanganui and Taranaki, and Wellington and Hawke's Bay. A motor service that usually met the Napier expresses at Ashhurst, where the trains previously crossed, and picked up passengers for the district north of Palmerston North, has been eliminated. The crossing-place under the present time-table has been changed.

The Christchurch - Invercargill expresses, Christchurch - Dunedin, and Dunedin - Invercargill mail-trains have been accelerated, the time of the journey being reduced in the case of the longer-distance trains by nearly an hour and a half.

Other important services are now having attention, and improved schedules will be brought into operation. It is estimated that during the current year the train-miles will be increased about 800,000.

An improved sleeping-car for use on the Main Trunk express has been designed, and is at present being constructed in the workshops for inclusion in the Department's section in the forthcoming Exhibition. The car will be composed of two-berth compartments only, with added comforts and conveniences, and a slight increase in price will be made as in the case of deck cabins on ferry-steamers. The emergency sleepers of the Pullman type provided for the "Limited," by converting ordinary cars, are very popular. Consideration is being given to the utilization, as an experiment, of these converted cars, which accommodate twenty-four passengers, for second-class passengers.

Attention has also been given to the question of obtaining additional sleeping-cars for use on the Main Trunk expresses, and information is being gathered with regard to all-steel cars in use in many parts of the world.

There can be little doubt that later on it will be desirable to make the "Limited" express a full sleeping-car train, in which case the Department's stock of these cars will require to be very considerably increased.

A study has been made of many modern designs of day coaches for use on the more important services.

A number of the services that were in operation prior to the war and cancelled or restricted during the war period have been replaced, and many new concessions have been granted. One of the most valuable concessions enjoyed by the public before the war was the liberal excursion fares based on the fare one way only, which was entirely cancelled during the war. The doing-away with this was responsible to a very large extent for the greatly reduced number of passengers carried during the Christmas and New Year and Easter periods, but there are other important factors, such as the commercial motor service and the privately-owned motor-car, that also had a detrimental effect. Passenger fares in New Zealand were not increased by nearly the same percentage as in other countries to meet increased expenditure arising out of war conditions. For the Christmas and New Year