

ELIMINATION OF LEVEL CROSSINGS.

A list of dangerous level crossings, in their order of urgency for elimination, has been prepared. It is intended to eliminate a number of the worst each year.

The elimination of three public level crossings by the provision of overbridges is now in hand.

The Department will work in conjunction with the Main Highways Board in carrying out the proposals for road improvements which affect public level crossings over the railway.

On new suburban lines where traffic is considerable it is the practice of the Department to eliminate level crossings by means of subways or overbridges.

BRIDGE-STRENGTHENING.

To enable heavier engines to run, a programme of bridge-strengthening has been drawn up. Work is in hand on the following sections of line: Dunedin-Oamaru, Frankton-Taumarunui, Catlins River Branch, Whangarei-Opua, Wanganui-New Plymouth.

SIGNALS AND ELECTRICAL WORKS.

The provision of automatic signalling between Penrose and Mercer is in hand. Further extension to Frankton will be put in hand later.

Electric-power interlocking is being installed at Paeroa, Whangarei, Papatoetoe, Papakura, Paerata, and Stillwater.

Mechanical interlocking is being installed at Brunner, and a number of stations are being fitted with fixed signals and Woods locks.

Metallicking earth telephone circuits is in hand in both Islands, a number of circuits already having been completed.

Automatic warning-signals have been provided at a number of public level crossings, and the work is being continued according to the order of urgency.

The electrification of Petone Workshops is in hand, including the erection of the 11,000-volt station, which is nearly completed. Pending the arrival of the main transformers, temporary arrangements have been made for supply of 350 horse-power, which enables a number of machines to be connected up with electrical power. Electric lighting has been installed in the two main shops.

At Addington and Newmarket a number of machines have been connected up with electric power, and tenders have been called for the supply of motors to enable the whole of the machinery to be converted to electric drive.

STAFF WORK.

Some changes have been made in connection with the staff work of the Railways Department during the last few months. The system followed with regard to the annual review of staff is somewhat different from that in operation in the Post and Telegraph Department and the Public Service, where the employee has been allowed to ascertain particulars of the marking of his qualifications and comment thereon.

In the Railway Department a special conference of controlling officers is held annually to review the staff, and only those officers not recommended for promotion have been advised of their reports and reasons furnished. This arrangement has now been altered, and employees will in future be furnished with a copy of the marking decided upon at the annual review of staff, and consequently will be in a position to know in what direction they are considered to be lacking and to take such steps to improve their qualifications as may be within their power.

Much objection has been raised to the system of punishment in operation, and, as a result of careful investigation into systems adopted in various parts of the world, proposals have been placed before the organizations representing the employees, which it is anticipated will not only minimize complaint but result in greater efficiency in working. Shortly, the scheme provides for the abolition of monetary fines for irregularities, misconduct, &c., and also confines suspension of the members at fault to cases where it is fairly certain the offence will result in dismissal.

A feature of the new system will be the awarding of merit marks for good conduct, which will be counted as a set-off against demerit marks, which will be adjudged for minor delinquencies. By this means a delinquent member will, by consistent good conduct, be able to rehabilitate himself and purge his record of all demerit marks.