

When the road services were first purchased it was not possible to make immediate radical changes in methods of operation, and later the process of co-ordination of rail and road route services was interrupted by the outbreak of war. It is felt, however, that the time is now opportune for co-ordination to be implemented, and a study has been made with a view to determining the best method of operation.

An analysis of the traffic handled by rail revealed that considerable railway operating economies and an improved service to the public were possible if road services operating auxiliary to rail were instituted for the purpose of conveying the following classes of traffic :—

- (1) Small consignments providing less than a reasonable railway wagon load, direct from one railway-station to another.
- (2) Small consignments bulk loaded by rail to selected distribution points for distribution by road to destination railway-station instead of being railed “tranship at” various intermediate stations.
- (3) Short-haul traffic from railway-station to railway-station where the wagon-user time is excessive in relation to the distance the goods are transported.
- (4) Special consignments such as urgent perishable or fragile goods, direct by road.

An experimental service on these lines was first tried out between Wellington and Palmerston North, and the service proved very successful. The advantages were—

- (i) A substantial number of railway wagons were released from small consignment and tranship work and made available for bulk loading.
- (ii) A faster service was provided for small consignments at present loaded “tranship.”
- (iii) Reduction of tranship work relieved congestion at Palmerston North goods-shed.
- (iv) A noticeable improvement in timekeeping of trains due to elimination of the necessity to shunt wayside stations to lift or put off small consignments.
- (v) The fast transport provided by the Auckland-Wellington express goods-trains was extended to small centres.
- (vi) The existing co-ordination between rail and local carriers is not being disturbed.

In view of the success of this first application of the co-ordination principle it is proposed, as and when suitable road service vehicles become available, to inaugurate similar co-ordinated road services over the other routes covered by the Department's present licenses.

STAFF

A summary of the staff position, compared with the previous year's figures, is given in the following table (the figures do not include railway employees serving in the Armed Forces) :—

—						1946.	1945.	Variation, 1946 with 1945.
Total staff as at 31st March—								
Permanent	..	..	..	..	..	15,786	13,649	+2,137
Temporary	..	..	..	..	..	9,809	9,983	— 174
Totals	..	..	..	..	..	25,595	23,632	+1,963
Average staff throughout the year						24,329	24,002	+ 327