

made of the existing stock : the opening of new lines in both Islands has increased the length of the average haul ; the curtailment of train services contributes in no small degree to delayed turn-round ; and, finally, there has been the effect upon turn-round of the five-day week.

Accurate figures for wagon turn-round are not available, but, apart from this, it can be said that the available wagon stock is now receiving better use than ever before. Compared with 1939, the average load per loaded wagon for goods other than live-stock has increased by over 1 ton and the net ton-miles per wagon per annum have increased by 11,000.

During the last few years a valuable contribution to the wagon situation has been made by the use of the ancillary lorries for the conveyance of small lots of goods for wayside stations. The use of the lorries has improved both the average wagon loading and the general availability, and for the year ended 31st March, 1948, the savings in wagon loadings and wagon days is estimated at 71,566 and 178,822 respectively. In addition, the use of lorries has meant operating savings by eliminating shuntings at small stations, with resulting improvements in time-keeping not only of the goods-train concerned, but also of other trains on the particular section. It must be noted that even with an adequate supply of wagons the use by the Railways Department of lorries is an economic proposition for the conveyance of small lots of goods for wayside stations, and this method is used extensively by railways in Great Britain and the United States of America.

It was necessary again this year to supplement the supply of wagons with the use of private motor-lorries for the transport of manure under the scheme outlined in the previous annual report. During the year the total quantity of raw materials carried by road from the wharves to the Auckland works and of artificial manure carried by road from the works under this scheme was 335,426 tons.

A similar scheme was operated for two short periods during the year for the conveyance of timber, and, in all, 4,740 tons of timber were so conveyed.

The wagon situation, particularly in respect of the open-type LA, should continue to ease gradually from now on. At the date of writing only 300 of the 3,000 LA wagons ordered from Great Britain have not yet arrived in this country, and 2,158 have been put into service. During this year it is also anticipated that approximately 300 LA wagons will be manufactured in our own workshops, and consideration is now being given to the question of the importation of a further quantity of LA wagons from Great Britain.

ZONAL LOADING

Conditions in some of the main goods-yards and the established custom of receipt and despatch have also accentuated the wagon shortage. Generally speaking, the loading of outward goods takes place for all points right throughout the day, although there is a very pronounced peak between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. An endeavour must therefore be made to have as full a supply of empty wagons as possible placed for loading in the early morning, although many may be only partly loaded or not loaded at all until the peak rush. Wagons unloaded in the morning cannot be used for afternoon loading without a great deal of shunting and upsetting the loading of other wagons. The position was particularly bad at Auckland, and an experiment is now in progress for the loading of wagons for one direction to be done only in the morning and for the other direction only in the afternoon. With the co-operation of the carriers and consignors, this experiment has so far had very good results. Less empty wagons are required for the morning "set-up," wagons unloaded during the morning can be used in the afternoon "set-up," and the congestion of and delays to lorries which occurred in the peak rush has very definitely been reduced. In addition, the work of the office staff in waybilling, rating, &c., has been more evenly spread and the usual rush in getting away the evening goods-trains has been materially reduced. Most important of all, empty wagons previously required for the goods-yard can now be used for bulk loadings of fertilizer and the like.