

The rail and road services that belong to the Department, while, in association with my colleague the Hon. Minister of Transport, efforts are being made to properly co-ordinate all transport services, whether they be State owned or privately owned. There are many difficulties in the way, but I am sure that all the transport agencies involved will co-operate in the public interest in minimizing the over-all transport costs of the country, which are generally estimated from £75,000,000 to £80,000,000 per annum.

During the year, a number of trains that were run in the pre-war period have been reintroduced. The services of the "Limited" expresses running between Wellington and Auckland have been extended, and a "Limited" train running between Christchurch and Invercargill has recently been introduced. In some localities, mixed trains have been replaced by more efficient road services, and this has given general satisfaction to the public concerned. Sunday trains are now running again to and from the main centres throughout the system. A limited number of excursion trains have been made available, and race trains have been reintroduced, particularly in those areas where it has been necessary in the public interest to reduce the volume of road traffic. Services generally will be improved and extended as the staff and rolling-stock position improves.

After examining the economics of the system, and the public need for efficient passenger and goods transport, it was clear to the Government that the best means of modernizing the system, paying full regard to our national resources, was to follow a policy of electrification; consequently, a Railway Mission, headed by the General Manager, has been sent overseas to examine electrification problems on other systems. The work of investigation will occupy a number of months, and after a full examination of all the technical and economic considerations involved a report will be submitted to the Government.

CONCLUSION

Finally, I must express my appreciation of the able assistance I have received from the General Manager, Mr. F. W. Aickin, and his staff. Apart from the burden of the day-to-day operation of the railway system, they have not spared themselves in the onerous work involved in the administration of such a wide-flung organization. I should also like to refer to the excellent relations existing between the Government, the management, and the staff organizations generally. The spirit of co-operation shown by all concerned has been most gratifying and commendable, and new avenues are being explored to make this co-operation more effective.