

Draughting Office. The pending retirement of the Chief Draughtsman on superannuation makes this immediately necessary. The control of the clerical side of the Locomotive Head Office is efficiently carried out by the Chief Clerk.

It is essential in the interests of economy that the Chief Mechanical Engineer should have available for immediate reference more complete records of the performances of locomotives, showing mileage and tonnage hauled, running and standing time, consumption of stores, and cost of maintenance and repairs carried out in the different workshops, &c. I am arranging to improve the locomotive statistics in this respect.

Stores Branch Organization.

The organization of the Stores Branch is satisfactory and the staffing ample to meet requirements. Quite recently arrangements were made providing for the closest possible supervision and scrutiny being maintained in respect to the purchase and issue of stores. The practice followed in regard to tenders for the purchase of stores is satisfactory and ensures economy.

Accounts Branch Organization.

The staffing and organization of the Chief Accountant's Branch are satisfactory. Some alterations will, however, be made in the direction of simplifying station accounts.

A chart showing the proposed organization of the Department is attached to this report (see page 22).

Education of Staff.

The absence of facilities and inducement to the members of the Railway staff to qualify themselves in the higher branches of education as relating to the railway profession struck me very forcibly. Provision exists for crediting juniors who pass the Public Service Examinations and tests in shorthand and typewriting with periods of service varying from six to twelve months, but beyond this nothing is done to encourage men to study the higher branches of railway business.

The position in this country is in strong contrast to that in other countries where the railways are conducted by private enterprise, and the companies subsidize schools of economics to conduct classes dealing solely with railway subjects.

Where railway competition exists the rivalry to obtain traffic brings out the inventive faculties of the staff, resulting in the introduction of the best practical methods of handling and inducing business. A study of these is the best possible education for the student in railway operations.

In New Zealand the State has practically a monopoly of the whole railway business, and I regard it as obligatory on the Railway Department, in the interests of both the State and the employees, to provide in a practical way facilities for the education of its staff in the fundamental principles of efficient and economic railway operations.

With this end in view I recommend that each year two candidates from the Locomotive and Civil Engineering Branches respectively at the age of twenty-three years be given a two-years engineering course at Canterbury College, the Railway Department paying their full salaries and defraying college fees and costs of necessary books.

Those desiring to compete for entrance to the College course would be required, after passing successfully the qualifying examination laid down in the regulations, to sit at a competitive examination, on the results of which the four candidates would be selected annually.

The practice of appointing mechanical-engineering cadets will be discontinued, and in future duly qualified apprentices who have served their time in the railway workshops will have the opportunity of competing for the College course, after which the successful candidates will be trained to become mechanical engineers.

The course of training will include a period in the Running department of the Locomotive Branch, during which they will be expected to qualify and pass examination as firemen and engine-drivers.

A college course is not nearly so advantageous to men employed in the Traffic Branch as practical railway experience gained on proper lines. The Traffic Branch is the business department; the duties are specially connected with the movement of trains, the transport of traffic, and the working and organization of stations. The best training-ground for making capable Traffic officers is unquestionably on the relieving staff. The appointment to relieving staff will in future be by most careful selection, and the members in this grade will be reviewed annually, so that only the most competent remain to graduate through the various relieving positions until a final selection can be made of those most suitable to receive a special two-years training. The selected Traffic officers would be attached to the General Manager's Office, and be passed successively through the Locomotive Running Branch, Draughting Office of the District Engineer (Maintenance Branch), and the District Traffic Manager's Office, studying various problems in each of the branches. Traffic officers who undergo training on the lines indicated and profit by their opportunities should emerge qualified railway men.

The problems dealt with in each branch of the Railway service are complex in character, and the men on whom the ultimate administration of any branch of the service will fall should unquestionably be trained in a manner that will fit them for their responsibilities later in life.

STAFF CONTROL

After having looked carefully into the method of dealing with the staff I have come to the conclusion that the general staff control must remain in the Head Office in order to ensure uniformity of treatment of the members of the various branches and to bring them under the comprehensive supervision of the General Manager.