

## ELECTRIFICATION OF SUBURBAN LINES.

The Government recognizes the advantages to the public and to the railway system which the utilization of electric power on these busy lines would undoubtedly give. Its aim is to keep development in this direction one of the first items in its railway policy. Already the Government has sought and obtained valuable material locally and from other countries to aid it in the schemes which are in preparation. During the year these reports will be reviewed and considered by departmental experts with the Department's proposals. It should be possible then to decide whether it would be desirable from an economical standpoint to electrify several of the services mentioned. Later, when all investigations have been made and a proper basis arrived at, I propose making a statement indicating the action the Government, guided by experts in electricity, considers it advisable to take.

The quickly growing population of our cities and the tendency to overcrowding, coupled with the need for still further opening up unoccupied residential areas in the suburbs, are matters with which the Government is deeply concerned. There is a constant clamour for faster and more frequent services on the existing suburban lines. In dealing with these demands I must consider what an extension of the time-tables would mean. If that extension would cause the population of the areas to which the existing services now run, and of those which they would tap in the near future, to increase, the Department must view with favour the question of extensions to existing lines and the establishing of suburban services to localities which have so far not been settled residentially. I think that such a policy should not be based on the immediate financial return, but with the ultimate object in view of the settlement so encouraged warranting the economical electrification of the train services.

Where there is prospect of proceeding ahead with these objects in view, there will be no hesitancy on the part of the Government in putting progressive proposals into operation.

## MOTOR-TRAINS.

I am of the opinion that if a suitable rail motor-vehicle can be devised it should go far to solve the traffic problem on some of our suburban lines and non-paying branch lines. Newspapers have reported a certain amount of success in some of the Australian States with motor-trains. I have arranged for the Department to purchase two or three first-class motors for conversion into suitable railway motor-trains for trial on some of our branch lines. The experiments will be very closely watched, and the service will be extended if satisfactory.

## LEVEL CROSSINGS.

The matter of level crossings has been fully dealt with in the report of the General Manager. The only way in which absolute public safety can be assured is by the provision of bridges or subways, but the expense entailed places such a proposal beyond the realm of practical possibility. In the meantime the safety of motorists using the level crossings must depend principally on the care exercised by themselves. Instructions have been given that in cases of flagrant breaches of the by-laws legal proceedings are to be taken. The Department is installing warning-devices at some of the more dangerous crossings, but it has to be remembered that the expenditure for this purpose must be limited when there are so many other works of urgency demanding attention.

## ADVERTISING.

I am fully convinced of the possibilities of judicious advertising, both in the Dominion and abroad, the scenic and health resorts to which access can be gained by railway. I think the establishment of an Advertising Branch in the Department has been a step in the right direction, and that its activities will have very beneficial results not only to the railways themselves, but also to the Dominion generally.