

Similar steps have been taken with regard to the position of Chief Engineer, whose duties and scope of authority have also been defined.

It is anticipated that by giving a freer hand and at the same time throwing the full responsibility appertaining to the position on to executive officers much better results will be obtained.

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY.

The presence in New South Wales of Sir Samuel Fay and Sir Vincent Raven, two English railway experts who with three others were engaged by the New South Welsh Government to investigate the railway system in that State, led the New Zealand Government to invite these gentlemen to carry out a similar investigation in the Dominion.

Arrangements have been completed, and it is anticipated the Commission will arrive in the Dominion during the month of October, and that the inquiry will occupy from two to three months. It will include the whole of the Department's operations, and should prove of considerable value in coping with present-day conditions.

APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT CHIEF MECHANICAL ENGINEER.

With the taking-over of the electrified section of railway between Arthur's Pass and Otira, and having in view the opinion held in many quarters that electrification should be carried out on other sections, it was considered advisable when the position of Assistant Chief Mechanical Engineer became vacant to advertise abroad for an engineer with a good mechanical training, but more especially with wide experience in electric traction, drawing up estimates for conversion from steam to electricity, and the construction of electrified railways.

Mr. R. P. Sims, who happened to be in the Dominion, made application, and has been selected for the position from a large number of applicants. He was trained as a mechanical engineer in the Crewe Workshops of the London and North-western Railways, and has had very wide experience in England and Canada in hydro and steam-generated electrical plants, and electrified railways.

COAL.

Very little alteration has taken place with regard to the use of New Zealand coal on our railways. As much of the various classes of coal as can be economically used is utilized.

As a result of negotiations with the colliery-owners of the Dominion a full inquiry is at present being held into this important matter, including a full investigation by experts representing the mine-owners and the Government to ascertain whether locomotive firebox designs or other parts can be so altered as to enable New Zealand coal of various classes to be used with satisfactory results. The findings of the Committee should prove of considerable importance, as the Government is particularly anxious to solve the problem in order to reduce as far as possible the large amount of money being paid out of the Dominion's revenue annually for imported coal.

PULVERIZED FUEL.

With regard to the use of pulverized coal, Mr. S. H. Jenkinson reported as follows subsequent to his recent visit to Australia :—

“The only place where I was able to obtain any information about the use of pulverized fuel on locomotives was in Victoria. Here two locomotives of the larger types (the A2 and the D₂ class) have been fitted with the Fuller-Lehigh equipment and tested in service. Various classes of coal from the Newcastle, Lithgow, Bulli, and Illawarra fields were tried, but in every case the results were disappointing, and the equipment has been removed from the locomotive.

“This negative result might have been expected, since the major proportion of the cost of such coals in Victoria is the freight charges, and these had to be paid on the moisture and ash content of the coal as well as on the useful carbon