

a defined area adjacent to stations, conveniently grouped, a motor service for collection and delivery could be arranged by agreement with motor-owners on the basis of payment by the Department of so-much per ton on goods hauled to the stations, and provided also that the charges levied upon traders by the motor-owners were subject to departmental approval, we think a service satisfactory to the public and the Railway would result. This would meet the evidence given at Murchison upon the subject of collection and delivery to and from the railhead of the Nelson section. At the same time we recommend that in one, or possibly two, localities the Department should set up its own service as a guide to the value of the arrangement made with motor-owners, and as forming a nucleus for extension if the joint transport agreement fails. It would be desirable to detail a suitable officer attached to each General Superintendent's Office to organize and supervise any such scheme as we suggest. In some instances it might be advantageous to reduce rates, but it is clear that in the majority of cases it is not rate but facility that is the governing factor.

As noted previously, nearly all the trains are mixed; these give a fair goods service, and there are but few complaints of the time taken in transit. The practice of staging from one subterminal to another is not conducive to economy. There should be more through goods trains, to the relief of subterminals. It may be convenient to keep engines within a certain district, but when goods traffic is held up and costs increased by regard solely to engine-working an attempt should be made to get more remunerative mileage out of the engines by longer runs, irrespective of locomotive districts. This should not be difficult, given co-operation between the Traffic and Locomotive Branches.

Train-loads.

The train-loads are light by reason of mixed trains and the limitation of tonnage per train. There is no reason why trains of 1,000 tons should not be hauled upon the level or where grades are easy. At the top of a grade where for many miles beyond it is all downhill, as in the instance of the line from Arthur's Pass to Christchurch, after reaching Cass, it is a waste to haul to Christchurch only the same load as between the tunnel and three miles east of Cass. The provision of one or two suitable sidings at the top of the grade for accumulation of traffic, and the blending of two or three trains into one for the down grade, would be economy of power.

Wagon-distribution and Wagon-loads.

There have been some complaints of shortage of wagons. This should not be, having regard to the number of wagons available. There are in New Zealand, according to the last Railway Report, 26,195 wagons and brake-vans for the conveyance of 6,925,517 tons of goods. In New South Wales there are, for 5,317 miles of line and 13,801,310 tons of goods, 23,897 wagons. In Queensland, 4,208,989 tons of goods are conveyed in 15,364 wagons. South Australia, with 9,833 wagons, conveyed 3,283,594 tons; and Western Australia, with 10,208 wagons, carried 3,006,063 tons of goods. The average capacity of the wagons is, as to New Zealand, 9.57 tons; New South Wales, 14.9 tons; Victoria, 13.6 tons; Queensland, 9.29 tons; South Australia, 9.6 tons; and Western Australia, 10.36 tons. The detached sections of line in New Zealand call, no doubt, for more wagons than would be sufficient if the North and South Islands were linked up by railway, and the isolated sections on both Islands were connected with the main lines. There is also the variation of commodities and quantities to be taken into consideration when comparing one State railway with another, but, after giving full credit for these differences, there does appear to be quite enough wagons for the tonnage in New Zealand, and complaint should not arise if wagon-distribution is well and speedily regulated. It is unfortunate that no statistics are collected of wagon demand and supply, as these would enable the position to be focused more clearly. It is said that wagons are held up by traders, but we do not think there is more reason to complain of this than in the States with which comparison is made. In any case, delay in discharge of wagons can be met by charging demurrage after a certain time.

Wagon-control is exercised by the Traffic Managers, who have an allocation of so-many wagons for their respective districts. When a shortage arises in one district, appeal is made to the neighbouring district. In theory, assuming the allocation to each district is correct in proportion to the tonnage and haul, the