

system should function satisfactorily. It has been found, however, that where a similar arrangement has obtained, there has developed a tendency to hold up empty wagons in a district for fear of being short later on. Under modern practice, and as the result of experience, the control of wagons is in the hands of a central office with sub-control. We recommend that, with the appointment of General Superintendents for each Island, this system be adopted. With the connecting-up of the detached sections of line the position should further be improved, and there should be no demand for additional wagons, apart from specialities, for some years to come.

There are no statistics of average loads, but wagon-loads appear to be light. We mention the possibility, in our remarks under "Rates and Fares," of increasing the weights by minimum wagon-load rates. There is in some districts unbalanced wagon-mileage. This is so, more or less, in every country, and it needs very careful watching with a view to minimizing it as far as possible.

-Checking of Freight Traffic.

Complaint was made at Auckland that checking of goods into truck upon the wharves was not performed by the Railway Department in ordinary course. Where the Railway takes charge of a consignment into truck direct from a ship or wharf there should be a check upon the quantities received, to the same extent and in the same manner as goods are dealt with when loaded at a station.

Train-control.

The control of train-running should be centred at the District Traffic Offices, with telegraphic or telephonic communication to all stations within each district. At certain important junction stations, sub-control offices in touch with the District Traffic Manager's Office should be established, the object in both cases being the watching and control of the trains from start to finish.

There are long lengths of line without either tablet or automatic safety devices. In the event of a train getting out of course and running late, the practice is to give instructions by telegraph or telephone to the Stationmasters concerned to stop the train running late at a station other than that provided for as a crossing-place and to send the other train on. This method of working, even if all possible precautions are taken, is a fortuitous one. New Zealand has, fortunately, been free from trouble in this direction, but many serious accidents have occurred elsewhere as the result of carelessness or misunderstanding. In Great Britain the practice is prohibited, all single lines being equipped with train tablet or train staff. We recommend that similar safety appliances be provided in New Zealand. Pending the fixing up of these instruments, we suggest that instructions be issued in very definite form. We give the following as an example of the wording and order in which messages should be sent in the event of a crossing being changed :—

EXAMPLE.

- (1.) From Control
To Stationmaster, Pukerau.

ALTERED-CROSSING ORDER.

Hold train No. 27 at Pukerau until arrival of train No. 30 from McNab.

- (2.) From Stationmaster, Pukerau
To Control.

ALTERED-CROSSING ORDER.

Have obtained signatures of guard and driver, and will hold No. 27 train at Pukerau until arrival of No. 30 from McNab.

- (3.) From Control
To Stationmaster, McNab.

ALTERED-CROSSING ORDER.

Send train No. 27 on to Pukerau to cross No. 30.

- (4.) From Stationmaster, McNab
To Control.

ALTERED-CROSSING ORDER.

Have signatures of guard and driver, and will send No. 27 on to Pukerau to cross No. 30.