

Home and distant signals and Woods locks have been dismantled at Okahukura.

A switch-locked siding has been installed at the Silverstream Ballast-pit and the switch-locked siding at Andrews' Siding has been removed.

The total number of signalling installations is as follows :—

Miles of single-line automatic signalling	..	..	..	..	190 m. 41 ch.
Miles of double-line automatic signalling	..	..	..	..	63 m. 14 ch.
Automatic crossing-loops	..	..	..	..	33
Automatic switch-locked sidings	..	..	..	..	34
Power interlockings	..	..	..	..	27
Mechanical interlockings	..	..	..	..	98
Interlocked tramway-crossings	..	..	..	..	7
Mechanical fixed-signal and Woods locked stations	..	..	..	..	305
Tablet locked sidings	..	..	..	..	265

TELEGRAPH AND TELEPHONE FACILITIES.

Block-working.—During the year Onoke was closed as a tablet station and Rotowaro and Waikiwi converted to switch-out working. The Waterworks Siding at Heathcote, controlled by the lock-and-block system, has been lifted.

The present position in regard to block-working is as follows :—

Total mileage equipped with tablet instruments	..	..	..	..	1,577
Number of tablet instruments in use	..	..	..	..	847
Number of tablet stations	..	..	..	..	353
Number of tablet exchangers	..	..	..	..	313
Mileage of double-line worked by lock and block	..	..	..	..	15
Number of stations	..	..	..	..	12
Number of instruments	..	..	..	..	23

During this the fourth year of the communications rebuilding programme 174 miles of pole-line were rebuilt; 521 miles of copper conductors replaced the worn-out iron circuits on these sections; and 591 miles of copper wire were erected in new circuits.

The sections rebuilt include Helensville-Maungaturoto, Tahora-Stratford, Stratford-Aramoho.

The train-control system was brought into use on the Stratford-Okahukura-Taumarunui Section with a temporary control office at Stratford, and the Stratford-Wanganui Train Control Section was nearing completion at the end of the year.

Larger telephone exchanges were installed at Frankton Junction and Palmerston North, including a voice-frequency repeater at Frankton Junction, and the recovered exchange boards were used for providing additional facilities at Ohakune Junction, Taumarunui, and Wanganui.

The cable on the Wellington Paekakariki Section is now partially installed, and this work is proceeding rapidly now that the route has been made available by the Public Works Department.

A carrier-frequency telephone system from Ohakune to Paekakariki has been installed, and is ready for use when the Wellington-Paekakariki cable extends the circuit to Wellington.

The circuit on the Onerahi Branch line was dismantled when the Branch line was lifted.

The statistics of communication facilities are as follow :—

Morse instruments	..	..	..	..	..	192
Telephones	..	..	..	..	..	2,663
Miles of wire	..	..	..	..	..	16,956
Miles of poles	..	..	..	..	..	3,085
Railway exchanges—						
Automatic	..	..	..	..	..	5
Manual	..	..	..	..	..	10
Public exchange connections	..	..	..	..	..	570

The Board desires to make some comment as to the policy which it has pursued regarding the means of communication in connection with the railway services. When the Board assumed office it found that the standard of communications was much below what was required for efficient and satisfactory working. A programme of improvement had been worked out, and this programme the Board has diligently pursued according to the funds that could be made available for the purpose. The position has now been reached where substantial improvement has been brought about by the adoption of modern appliances, and the effect has already been very noticeable in the carrying-on of the Department's operations. Efficient means of communication have a vital bearing on the organization of the Department. They solve the problem of decentralization, for they admit of that degree of centralization which is inseparable from the operations of a State Department, and, by ensuring prompt communication of question and answer between headquarters and outlying areas, the real effects of decentralization can be obtained. This, the Board is convinced, has had a substantial bearing on the improved service, which has won favourable comment from the public in recent years. On the part of the staff nothing could be more unsatisfactory than poor communications. The effect of the improvement in means of communication on the general efficiency of the Department has been very marked, and this result has afforded the Board much satisfaction.

LEVEL-CROSSING ALARMS.

A number of these installations have been equipped with secondary batteries and rectifiers, reducing the more expensive primary-battery renewals.

The total number of level crossings now fitted with automatic warning-devices is 123. In addition, there are also a number with manually controlled bells.