

SUBURBAN TRAIN FARES.

Following on a comprehensive review of the fares and conditions of travel in suburban areas a number of far-reaching alterations have been decided upon.

By virtue of the number of people affected the most important feature of the adjustments is that both the workers' weekly tickets and the weekly twelve-trip tickets in use in areas where workers' weekly tickets are issuable will in the main be superseded by a new suburban twelve-trip weekly ticket.

The effect of this change is that both 8 o'clock and 9 o'clock workers in such areas, as well as other regular travellers, will be able to use the new suburban twelve-trip tickets, which will be available for six outward and six homeward journeys at any time of the day from Monday to Saturday in each week. The new type of ticket will be a more suitable and generally more useful class of commutation ticket than any previously available to regular suburban travellers, inasmuch as it provides cheap rates for a small outlay at the time of purchase and unrestricted rights with respect to the hours of travel.

The distinction in transport conditions as between the 8 o'clock worker and the 9 o'clock worker, a discrimination which has been maintained for so many years despite frequent agitation for its removal, ceased to exist with the introduction of the new ticket.

The main effect of the change is that for distances over three miles the new suburban twelve-trip ticket will cost 3d. more per week than the old workers' weekly ticket, but for a ½d. per trip the necessity for completing the outward journey before 8 a.m. is removed; also, in contradistinction to the present workers' weekly ticket, which is restricted to one outward and one homeward trip per day, the new twelve-trip ticket will, as already mentioned, be available for six outward and six homeward trips by the holder at any time during the week from Monday to Saturday.

The rates for the new suburban twelve-trip weekly tickets are, in general, substantially lower than those for twelve-trip tickets, as the standardization aimed at, in effect, strikes a balance in the revenue obtainable from the two rates, the cost of the unrestricted weekly twelve-trip ticket being much higher than the restricted workers' weekly tickets. As an example, the case of three members of a family travelling ten miles to work on both types of existing weekly tickets may be taken. Assuming that one member went to work at 8 o'clock and the other two at 9 o'clock, they would in the aggregate pay 16s. under the old scales, but only 12s. 9d. under the new method.

These two classes of tickets (workers' weekly and twelve-trip) which are now largely replaced by the new suburban weekly twelve-trip ticket, accounted for 50 per cent. of all the types of travel at other than ordinary fares in suburban areas.

As a further encouragement to residents in suburban areas to use the trains to and from the cities a new type of bearer ticket suitable for the use of the suburban residents who are not daily travellers has been introduced. This will be available for six second-class single trips in either direction at any time up to the end of the month following the month of issue, and it will be transferable—that is, more than one person may travel on the ticket. The rates, particularly for the longer distances, are substantially below those for ordinary single or return suburban tickets, and the inducement to use the trains held out by the lower travel cost should be attractive to the public.

A slight increase has been made in the charge for ordinary season tickets for distances from one to three miles in order to bring the charges into conformity with those for the new standard weekly tickets.

Another far-reaching innovation decided upon is that the issue of season tickets at half rates, which had been restricted to young people in employment up to the age of twenty-one, will be extended to include all young people up to twenty-one years of age, whether in employment or not.

FARMERS' EXCURSIONS.

The promotion of special farmers' tours successfully instituted some time ago but abandoned in more recent years on account of adverse economic conditions was revived during the year when arrangements were made to conduct two large parties of farmers—one from Westland on a tour of the North Island, and one from Southland to the West Coast. To the extent that these tours provide those participating with opportunity for obtaining first-hand knowledge of farming and industrial conditions in other parts of the Dominion they must be regarded as having considerable educational value. The organization of further tours of a similar nature will be encouraged during the current year.

PASSENGERS' LUGGAGE.

The facilities provided for the checking of passengers' luggage have been extended by the introduction of a system whereby passengers from the principal centres may, when purchasing their tickets in advance of the travel date, arrange for their luggage to be subsequently checked through to destination by a carrier or other agent acting on the passengers' behalf. The counterpart of the checked luggage ticket is held at the station until claimed by the passenger prior to the commencement of his journey. The arrangement is designed to meet the convenience of travellers who do not desire to attend personally to the checking of their luggage.

Provision has also been made whereby passengers travelling by the air services between Palmerston North, Wellington, Blenheim, Christchurch, and Dunedin may, on payment of an appropriate charge, have their luggage checked and conveyed by rail, or, in the case of inter-Island journeys, by rail and steamer, for the full journey. The service is available irrespective of whether the journey is made exclusively by air or by a combination of rail and air services.