

ENTER THE "SOUTHERNER"

NEW TRAINS TO REPLACE THE "SOUTH ISLAND LIMITED"
EXPRESSES FROM 1 DECEMBER 1970

THE upgraded express passenger trains that replace the "South Island Limited" express between Christchurch and Invercargill from 1 December 1970 have been named the "Southerner". Each of the two new trains, one for each direction, will initially comprise seven vehicles: three smoking cars, a buffet car, two non-smoking cars, and a guard's van, and will be hauled by diesel-electric locomotives. This arrangement leaves two spare cars out of the twelve 56ft. first-class cars that are being completely overhauled and refurbished at the Otahuhu and Addington railway workshops. Each of the smoking cars, we understand, has a hostess compartment and seats for 29 passengers, and the non-smoking cars have seats for 33 passengers.

The completely refurbished passenger cars have new seats, wall-to-wall carpet, fluorescent lighting, oil-fired heaters, and an attractive colour scheme. Externally, they are finished in a pleasing shade of blue, with a waistband in a light shade of blue edged with gold lining. The car roofs are white.

The buffet car attached to each train has amenities of a similar standard to those being provided in the cars being built in Japan for the North Island sleeping-car expresses, and are equipped with new bogies of the latest type to provide the smoothest riding quality possible. The "Southerner" buffet cars, however, have a long bar-counter with about 20 seats instead of the short counter and tables and chairs in the larger cars for the North Island. A variety of light meals may be obtained.

To run daily except Sunday, the new "Southerner" expresses leave both Christchurch and Invercargill at 8.40 a.m., and are allowed 9 hr. 55 min. southbound (train 143) and 10 hr. 5 min. northbound (train 144) to cover the 367.2 miles. These times compare with the 11 hr. 40 min. allowed for the former "South Island Limited" trains. The train from Invercargill will run through to Lyttelton Wharf on the evenings when the steamer express sails for Wellington.

Because the number of intermediate passenger stops to be made by the "Southerner" is reduced to six (Ashburton, Timaru, Oamaru, Dunedin, Balclutha, and Gore) from the former 21, a road coach service

is provided for the convenience of travellers to and from other localities en route. The timetable for this coach service allows passengers to transfer to or from the "Southerner" at appropriate scheduled stops.

Fares on the "Southerner" are the same as those on the Department's road services, the latter being at a level between first and second-class rail passenger fares. Examples are \$4.90 from Christchurch to Dunedin, and \$7.90 from Christchurch to Invercargill. Ordinary rail fares at present are \$5.45 and \$8.60 respectively first-class, and \$3.80 and \$5.95 respectively second-class.

Hostesses are also on board the "Southerner" to serve passengers during the journey, particularly the elderly and those who are unable to go to the buffet car for their refreshments. Passengers in the smoking cars who wish to purchase liquor can obtain their requirements from a hostess, who will serve them at their seats. These arrangements are similar to those that apply on the "Blue Streak" railcar service in the North Island.

Bookings on the new service opened on 13 July. In accordance with normal New Zealand practice, reservations of seats may be arranged at any railway booking office or rail travel agency up to six months ahead of the travel date.

The latest information indicates that diesel-electric locomotives of the 750 h.p. "Dg" class are to be used on the "Southerner" expresses, probably in pairs. They



Photograph: R. J. Meyer

North Island version of the "Southerner" is the popular "Blue Streak" express diesel railcar service between Wellington and Auckland, seen here passing Turangarere (between Taihape and Waiouru) on 1 June 1970, when two cars were coupled to cope with the passenger demand.

will have to maintain start-to-stop average speeds up to 46 m.p.h., the fastest such booking being the 62 minutes allowed train 143 for the 47.2 miles from Ashburton to Timaru, an average of 45.7 m.p.h. This is closely approached by the allowance of 69 minutes for the up train over the 52.2 miles from Ashburton to Christchurch, 45.4 m.p.h. average. With maximum running speeds probably in the vicinity of 55 m.p.h., there should be no difficulty in maintaining these schedules.

Coincident with the introduction of the "Southerner" expresses from 1 December 1970, the timings of some other trains on this route are adjusted. Train 161, the daily 5.35 p.m. railcar to Dunedin, will be delayed to leave at 5.50 p.m.; Ashburton at 7.5 instead of 6.56 p.m.; and Timaru at 8.7 instead of 8.1 p.m. It continues to reach Dunedin at 11.45 p.m., so that the new time of 5 hr. 55 min. for the 228.8 miles is the first ever regularly scheduled in less than six hours by rail between these two cities.

The 5.15 p.m. Sunday express from Dunedin to Invercargill (train 427) leaves Dunedin earlier, at 4.45 p.m., and reaches Invercargill at 9.30 p.m., while the Friday and Sunday overnight express from Invercargill to Christchurch (train 190) runs some 20 minutes or more earlier throughout its journey. Its new departure times are 6.5 p.m. from Invercargill and 10.30 p.m. from Dunedin. It reaches Christchurch at 6.20 instead of 6.43 a.m.

The opportunity has also been taken to withdraw the one 16-berth sleeping car from each of the Friday and Sunday night expresses on this line. Never very well patronised, probably because of the relatively short distances involved, and the number of alternative services available, these sleeping cars have latterly often had only four or five occupants each.

As an encouragement to greater utilisation of the first-class coaches on these overnight trains, a new scale of first-class fares, about 8 to 10 percent below the standard level, is applicable to these trains from 1 December.