



BUFFET MEALS on the "Southerner"

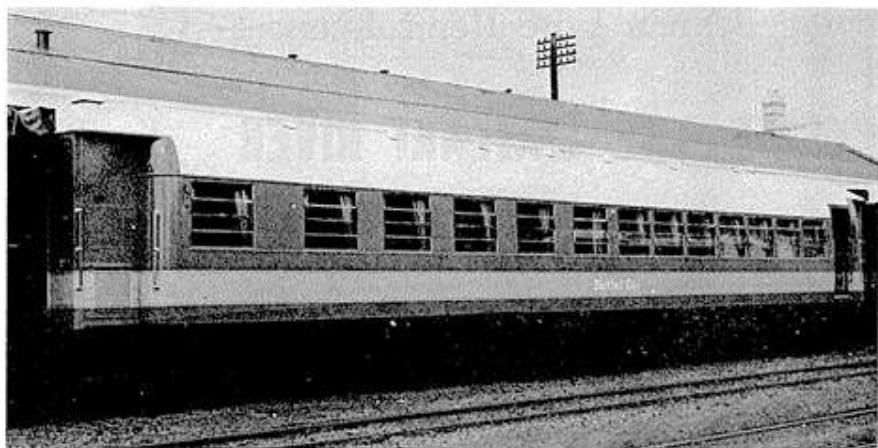
FOR the first time since 1917, New Zealand Railways are serving meals to passengers on a regular train service. This came with inauguration of the "Southerner" expresses between Christchurch and Invercargill from 1 December 1970. In 1917, old-style dining-car service on New Zealand express trains was discontinued in favour of refreshment rooms and dining rooms at appropriate stations, and stops for refreshments became a familiar and traditional feature of New Zealand train services.

On-train catering was resumed in a small way when the "Blue Streak" railcar service was introduced on the North Island main trunk line in 1968. Here arrangements were made for light refreshments to be served to passengers at their seats, but now two former main trunk cars, "A" 1898 and "Aa" 2011, have been fitted out as buffet cars in which up to 20 passengers at a time can sit down to meals chosen from an *à la carte* menu. Because of the cross-sectional dimensions of these cars, with a maximum width of 8 ft. 11 in. externally, the arrangement adopted is a long counter at which passengers may sit.

The train hostesses advise passengers when accommodation is available in the buffet car for morning or afternoon tea, and lunch. The latter is served in a series

of sittings between 11.30 a.m. and 2.15 p.m. Mothers travelling with young children, and elderly and infirm passengers who could not reasonably be expected to go to the buffet car, are served by the hostesses with meals or light refreshments as desired at their seats.

In the buffet car, passengers can choose from a varied menu for the main course and dessert. Fruit juice and a selection of New Zealand cheeses are also served. Table wines are included in the selection of liquors that passengers may order to have with their meals. This is the first time liquor has ever been served with meals on a regular passenger train service in New Zealand. As on the "Blue Streak" railcars, passengers may also order drinks to be served at their seats by the hostesses.



ABOVE: Formerly a composite car with first and second-class compartments, "A" 1898 in its new guise as a buffet car on the "Southerner" at Ashburton.

OPPOSITE PAGE: An attendant takes orders for lunch in the buffet car on the "Southerner".

BELOW: This view shows the general arrangement of the buffet cars used on the "Southerner". It appears that the cars are normally run with the passenger side to the west.

Most food preparation is undertaken in a small kitchen area at one end of the buffet car. Domestic-type gas ranges modified to use bottled liquid-petroleum gas are used. Other equipment includes a deep freeze, two refrigerators, and a bottle cooler.

To ensure the smoothest ride possible, the buffet cars have been mounted on new bogies of the latest design.

Photographs: N.Z. Railways Publicity

