

STAFF

The staff position has been eased somewhat by the return to railway duty of the 16th and 17th Railway Operating Companies, which had given splendid service overseas. There are still, however, 5,440 railwaymen serving with the Armed Forces, and the staff is still short of its pre-war strength by 2,123, or 8·24 per cent. While this gap remains, heavy demands will continue to be made on the railway employees, but with the easing of the situation they have been able to overtake at least some of the overdue leave and enjoy a well-deserved rest.

PROSPECTS

One cannot overlook the fact that the phenomenal increase in railway traffic during the last four years has been largely brought about by the wartime conditions, resulting, as they have, in a shortage of tires and petrol, a shortage of coastal shipping, longer haulages due to the centralization of shipping, and the heavy movement of Armed Forces personnel and military stores and equipment. During the year under review the revenue from both military fares and freights showed substantial increases, and fares from this source provided 34 per cent. of the total passenger revenue, while military freights provided over 9 per cent. of the total goods revenue. Under present conditions, and apart altogether from the present restrictions, it cannot be expected that the existing high level of traffic will be maintained. The war has departed farther and farther from our shores, and a substantial decrease in military fares and freights must be anticipated.

No doubt some increase in production may be expected, but I do not think it can be nearly sufficient to counterbalance the loss.

In view of these conditions, it would not be prudent to expect anything but a substantial reduction in net revenue for the coming year.

EXECUTIVE PERSONNEL

Since my last Statement a considerable number of changes in executive personnel have taken place. Among those who have retired on superannuation are Mr. E. Casey, General Manager, Mr. A. L. Smith, Transportation Superintendent, and Mr. W. Bishop, Chief Accountant. To these and to all those who have retired during the year I express my appreciation of the excellent service they have rendered. I should like particularly to thank Mr. E. Casey for his unfailing courtesy and consideration during the years I have held the portfolio of Railways, and to pay a tribute to the splendid work he has done during an extremely difficult and trying period.

As from 1st February, 1944, Mr. J. Sawers (Assistant General Manager) was appointed General Manager, and Mr. C. R. Riesop was appointed Assistant General Manager.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I should like to say that the relationships between the Minister, the Management, and the employees have continued to be thoroughly harmonious throughout the year, and I should like to record my appreciation of the splendid way in which the whole staff has responded to the special calls made upon them in handling a record traffic.
