

work. As at 31st December, 1944, out of a total staff of approximately 12,000, the Post and Telegraph Department was holding only 232 men on appeal, all of whom were technicians, mostly engaged substantially on work directly for the Armed Services.

221. Railways.—The Railways Department was embarrassed early in the war by the despatch of a railway operational unit to the Middle East and by the progressive mobilization of other members of its staff. Added to this difficulty was that created by the huge increase, particularly in 1942 and 1943, in goods and passenger traffic due to troop movements, centralized shipping, and petrol-restrictions.

222. By March, 1942, 5,862 railway workers, representing approximately 25 per cent. of the pre-war strength, were absent with the Forces. In addition, 2,143 workers had been lost from the outbreak of war by way of resignations and retirements. Up to 31st March, 1942, 4,676 special troop trains had been provided, conveying 2,574,400 troops. Overtime for a four-weekly period at that time totalled 300,000 hours for train-operating staff alone, and unfilled vacancies numbered 3,783. At that point it became necessary to postpone the military service of large numbers of workers being called by ballot. The Locomotive staff were working, on an average, sixty hours a week, excluding Sunday work. To ease the position the National Service Department arranged the release from home service of seventy-five members of the Locomotive staff.

223. By August, 1942, the Workshops staff had fallen from a pre-war total of 7,244 to 4,807. The workshops were then undertaking the manufacture of war materials, and this additional work, combined with the reduction in staff, was restricting the performance of essential repair and maintenance work.

224. The sixteenth and seventeenth ballots for military service in August and September, 1942, included the names of a further 2,404 railway workers, and appeals were lodged in respect of 2,151 of these men.

225. The railways adopted the policy of accepting women for portering work and as at August, 1942, 100 women were so engaged.

226. By March, 1943, 6,887 officers of the Department were on military service out of a total pre-war staff of 25,765. When it is realized that such a high percentage of staff was released to the Forces by a service so essential to the economic life and the war effort of the Dominion, some appreciation is gained of the magnitude of the contribution of Government Departments to the man-power requirements of the Armed Forces—a contribution which compared more than favourably with industry in general. (Government Departments under Public Service Commissioner control had only 626 Category "A" men held on appeal as at February, 1945, most of these being men with professional and scientific qualifications. Of the 626 held on appeal, 310 were employed in the Public Works, Scientific and Industrial Research, and Mental Hospitals Departments. As at October, 1945, some 7,000 men were still in the Forces.)

227. At this stage it is interesting to compare the contribution of New Zealand Railways to the Forces with the contribution of railways in other parts of the Empire. As at March, 1943, in Canada 8.1 per cent. of the pre-war railways strength were serving in the Forces; in Victoria, 9.9 per cent., in New South Wales, 11.5 per cent.; in Great Britain, 14.5 per cent.; and in New Zealand, 26 per cent.

228. In April, 1943, a special Advisory Committee was set-up for the purpose of examining appeals in respect of railway workers. This Committee was responsible for seeing that further railway workers were not released to the Forces if their services were more urgently needed by the Railways Department, and also for ensuring that railway employees were not withheld from military service where they could be released without serious embarrassment. The findings of the Committee in each individual case were referred to the appropriate Armed Forces Appeal Board, which continued to be the sole deciding authority in the matter of appeals.