

From information available it would appear that the industry has continued to expand at a healthy rate during the year ended 31st March, 1949.

(2) *Financial Position of the Industry.*—The financial position of the industry has improved. Profit, both in total and expressed as a pence-per-mile figure, has shown an upward trend. While the average cost per mile has increased from 12·12 pence in 1940 to 19·68 in 1948, revenue during the same period has increased from 13·16 to 21·33 pence per mile. Both costs and revenue have been affected by the use of larger vehicles, but the bulk of the increase in revenue is due to improved management and to the enterprise and efficiency of the industry itself. In many cases standing charges and overhead costs per mile have been reduced by the use of vehicles at week-ends and slack periods on “contract” and “group travel” work. During the period under review fares have increased in some areas, but for a large proportion of the industry there have been no fare changes. If the average fare per passenger-mile in the Dominion in 1940 is taken as 100, this index number has now risen to 102. While these figures do not represent with complete accuracy the extent to which fares have risen in the Dominion (because of changes in the relative importance of different services) they do show that the over-all fare increase has not been substantial. The industry has absorbed the bulk of the rising costs through increased efficiency.

(3) *Future Prospects.*—The statistical tables show that during the past eight years the licensed road transport operator has become a serious competitor of the earlier land passenger transportation agencies. By virtue of its mobility and flexibility motor-transport offers serious competition to the rail services in point of comparative service; indeed, it offers transport amenities that, by reason of their nature, cannot be provided by these services. To this extent competition by road is to the national good, as the community reaps the benefit of services which would not otherwise be available. With improvement in roads, motor-vehicles, and organization it is inevitable that the sphere of competitive activity will expand.

A recent development in motor passenger transportation is the “contract” or “group travel” trip, whereby a vehicle is exclusively hired to a group of people for pleasure purposes. In this way cheap and convenient transport is made available to sports bodies and holiday groups, &c.

In future the most serious competitor of the existing forms of land passenger transportation may well be the private car. In March, 1940, 220,000 cars were registered. In March, 1949, this figure has increased to 225,000. The number of private cars in use has been affected by restricted importation during the war years, but as the car combines speed, comfort, and flexibility it is probable that there will be an increased tendency for the private car to be used in preference to other transport agencies.

## B. TAXI-CAB SERVICES

(a) *LICENSING.*—During the year 2,251 applications relating to taxi-cab services were dealt with by the District and Metropolitan Licensing Authorities—112 new licences were granted, 101 licences were amended, 1,189 licences renewed, and 204 licences transferred. Tables 29 and 30 set out the manner in which the various authorities dealt with applications relating to taxi-cab services.

(b) *FINANCIAL AND OPERATING STATISTICS, 1947–48.*—From financial and statistical returns lodged with the Department it is estimated that during the year taxis ran 43,000,000 miles carrying 13,500,000 passengers, who paid approximately £2,000,000 in fares. Table 48 sets out financial and statistical data for an average taxicab based on figures obtained from a sample of operators throughout the Dominion. These figures show that, on the average, the financial position of the industry during the year was satisfactory.