

H. S. Jenkinson



PHOENIX

pauses

VICTORIAN RAILWAYS

Phoenix pauses

Operationally, we, your Railways, have had a good year, in some ways a very good year. We broke our previous ton-mileage record for the carriage of goods ; and, notwithstanding severe and inescapable train service cuts, we logged a heavy passenger trade, better by nearly 24 million passenger journeys than in the previous year, and only 17 million behind 1949-50's 182 million.

Financially, the year was less rewarding. The insidious spiral again overtook us and left us with nearly £6 million to make up. Moreover, *Phoenix*, if still aloft was beginning to hover a little uncertainly, at the close.

These are the outstanding facts that emerge from the Railway Commissioners' report to Parliament on what happened in the twelve financial months of 1951-52. We feel that you, the public, ought to know them and the reasons for them : else how can we expect your confidence and sympathetic understanding, if we first give not ours ? And so, encouraged into custom, we publish this little precis of the latest report, with its good points and its bad.

When 1951-52 began, on its appropriate July 1st, severe cuts in train services—a hangover from the coal shortage—were still largely in force. Nor could we fully restore them when, subsequently, fuel supplies improved : we were then faced with a progressively deteriorating staff situation and a limitation on overtime by the members of two railway unions.

Even so, big passenger business and a bigger than ever goods traffic (which contributes the lion's share of revenue) were handled ; and it was achieved with three per cent. fewer train miles. We could not, of course, have done it without the help of new engines and trucks that we had ordered outside, and that, in face of criticism from some not very well informed quarters, were beginning to flow in.

The heavier volume of goods traffic, clearly showed two things : first, the trade of the State continued to prosper in 1951-52 ; and second, public confidence in the railways as common carriers was unimpaired, and even increased. We take pride in both.

Improvement in business, plus the higher fares and freight rates that were charged from October 1, 1951, yielded substantially more revenue, but not enough to catch up with uncontrollably mounting wages and material costs. At the end of the year, we were £5,948,584 on the wrong side of the ledger.

To digress a little into detail on this point : compared with the figures for 1946-47, the cumulative effect since then of quarterly adjustments to the basic wage, the 40-hour week and other industrial awards added more than £10 million in 1951-52 to our outgoings. Dearer materials put on another £4½ million, with a further £1 million for payroll tax, pensions and long-service staff leave. That, all told, is £15½ million.

Against that, cumulatively increased charges for service gave us only £9½ million in 1951-52. Which, of course, accounts for the deficit.

Since this situation obviously and seriously threatened the financial stability of the State as a whole, the Government, after the year had ended, agreed with the Commissioners that fares and freight rates must be brought into closer alignment with the unavoidable, if uncontrollable costs of giving Victoria the railway service it cannot do without. But even these increases are not expected to make ends completely meet this year. They are estimated to be short of costs by about £2,365,000. Which means that you, the railway user, will still get a shillingsworth of railway service for every elevenpenny ticket or goods receipt you buy.

With a disappointing year, from the financial standpoint, a gradual aridity developed in the money market. Loans became difficult to negotiate, and Victoria's

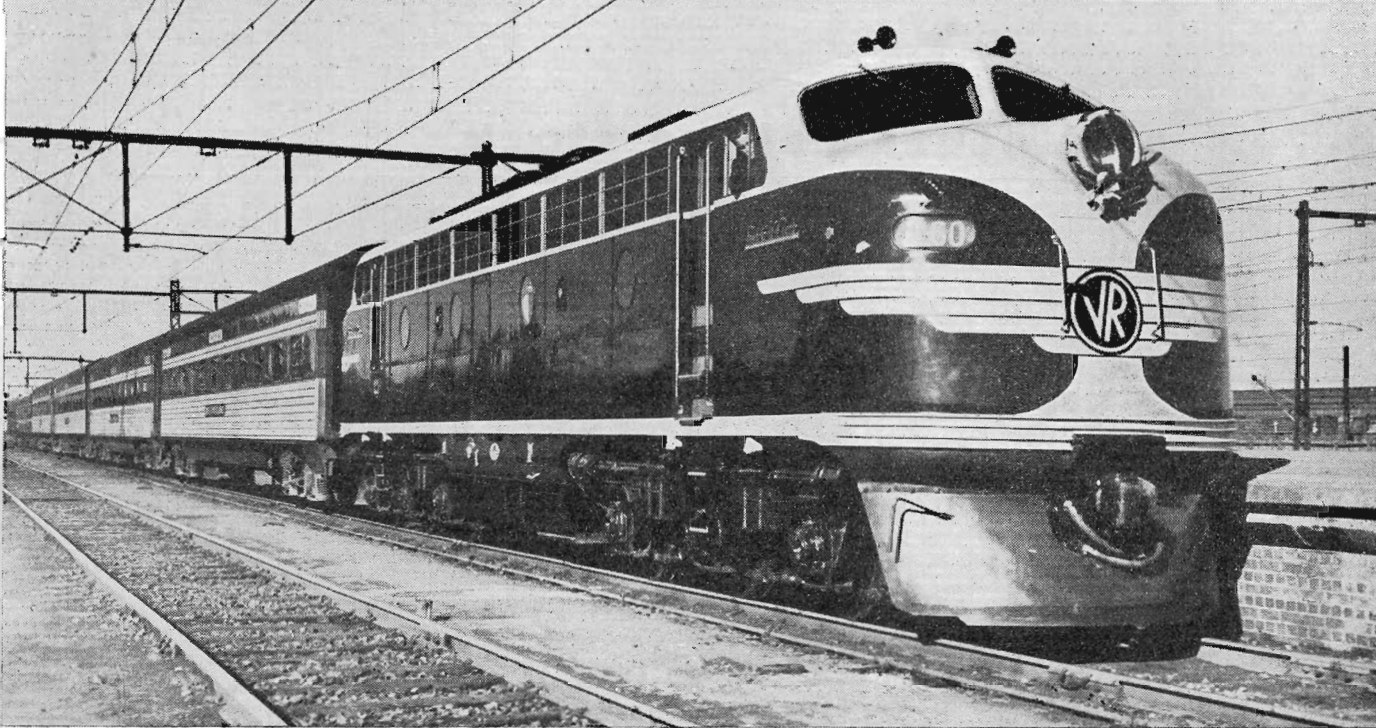
share of what proceeds were available, far short of needs, had a serious effect on the implementation of plans already gaining momentum to rehabilitate and expand railway service. *Operation Phoenix* had to pause and seek its bearings and direction. This year it has been decided that *Phoenix* must fly at half speed : in other words, its programme, originally planned to cost £12.5 million in 1952-53, must expend no more than £6.8 million.

However—and this is another of the more cheerful aspects—the labour situation is showing improvement. Substantially more operating staff are available. When they are fully trained as enginemen, guards, shunters, signalmen and so on, and when still more rolling stock takes the track, the Railways will be able even to surpass their pre-war standard of service. Already we—and we believe you—can point to substantial improvements.

And so we look forward, cautiously, realistically and with some hope, into 1952-53.

R CLASS LOCOMOTIVE HAULING A PASSENGER TRAIN





MAIN-LINE DIESEL-ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVE

new engines

Shortage of staff and a great deal of extra work involved in keeping old and obsolete rolling stock in service, reduced the building of new rolling stock in Departmental workshops to one N class goods locomotive, 27 locomotive boilers and a number of vans and trucks.

Very satisfactory deliveries, however, of new locomotives by private contractors have been made. At the end of the financial year the position was :—

Steam Locomotives—	Ordered.	Delivered.
N Class	50	50
R class	70	64
J Class	60	—
Diesel-electric shunting locomotives ...	10	10
Diesel-electric main-line locomotives ...	26	—
Electric main-line locomotives ...	25	—

Since the year ended, and before this pamphlet went to press, five of the diesel-electric main-line locomotives and five more of the R class engines have been welcomed in. As the remainder progressively arrive and go into running, they will greatly improve many passenger and goods services. Both the new steam locomotives and the diesel-electrics have handsomely proved themselves. They will permit many old and obsolete locomotives, that now cost more than they are worth to keep going, to be retired after their years of first-class service to the State.

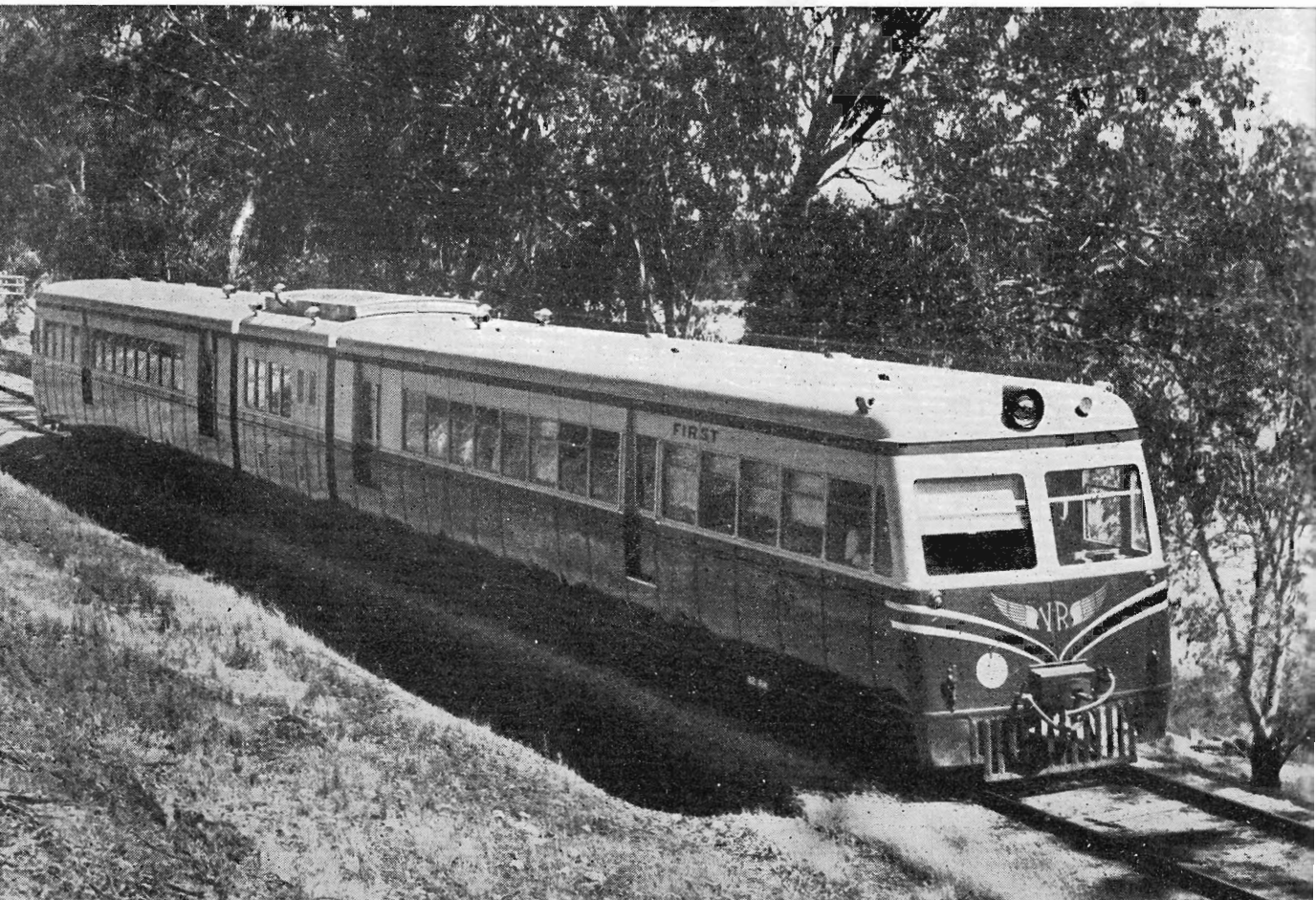
and other rolling stock

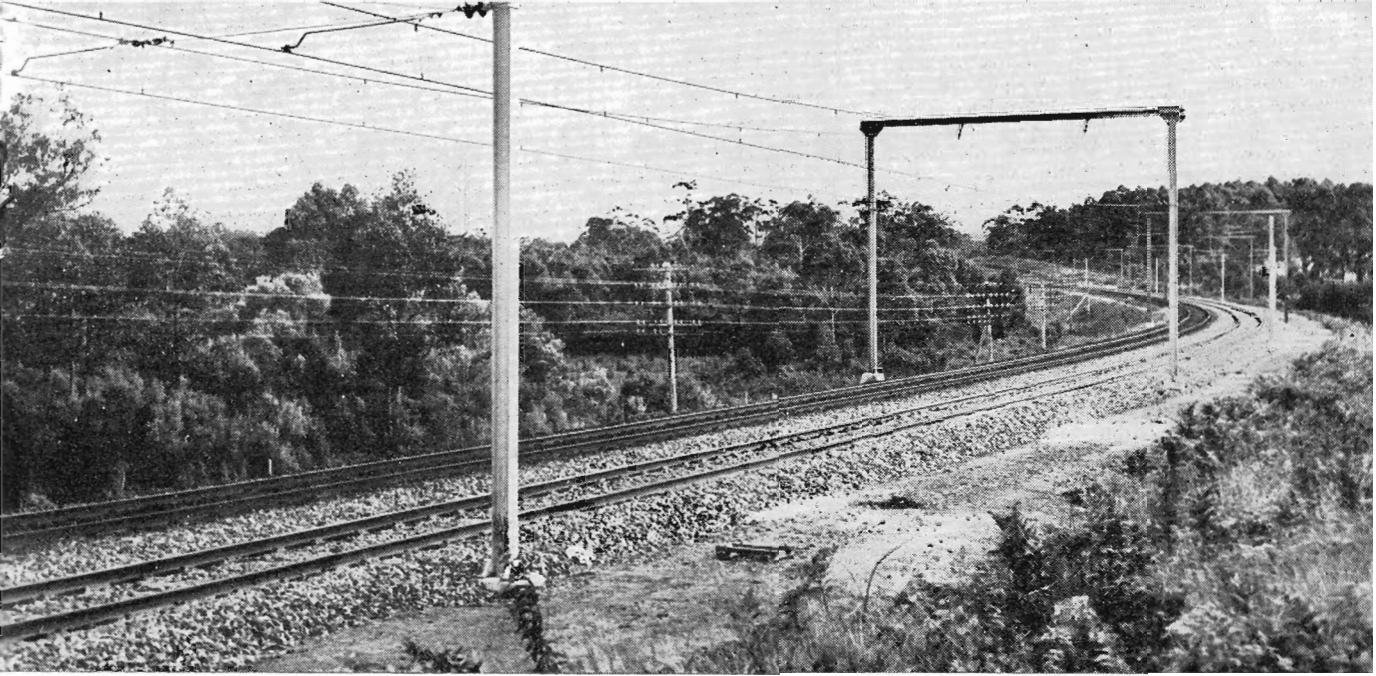
At June 30, 31 new diesel rail-cars, all in all, had been delivered. They are operating on country lines and are giving a service greatly ahead of what previously could be provided. In addition several of the original petrol-electric rail motors were converted during the year to diesel-electric propulsion, re-seated, repainted and generally modernized. They, too, excellent vehicles that they are, are doing splendidly.

Two first class sitting cars, incorporating the most modern standards of comfort, were put into service on *The Overland* express between Melbourne and Adelaide. These cars, as well as the highly popular *roomette* and *twinette* sleepers (for some time, now, components of that train) were built by the South Australian Railways to joint plans and for joint stock. Since the end of the year, four new second class sitting cars of the same type have been incorporated in this train which is building up into one of the world's crack expresses.

In addition to 137 trucks and vans built in departmental workshops, 1,825 open goods trucks for bulk wheat and general produce were delivered by private contractors.

280 H.P. DIESEL RAIL-CAR





OVERHEAD WIRES ON GIPPSLAND LINE

the Gippsland line

During the year a further section of duplicated track between Longwarry and Drouin was brought into use. Track-laying was begun on the section between Officer and Tynong, and earthworks on this and other sections between Dandenong and Longwarry were well advanced. The new marshalling yard at Yallourn, which was designed to facilitate the working of a growing traffic from this important centre, was brought into use. At Springvale and Dandenong, additional sidings for the crossing of trains were well advanced.

Of the 16 sub-station buildings needed for the electrification of the line from Dandenong to Traralgon, five were completed and eight were in course of erection. Electrical equipment is being installed in the finished buildings and in the four tie stations erected. Seven of the remaining eight tie stations were being built at the close of the year.

Much of the major sub-station equipment manufactured in England was either delivered or ready for shipment. The construction of the supervisory control building at Warragul was commenced.

About five miles of single track and four miles of double track of the 1,500 volt overhead wiring were completed. Structures for 12 miles of track are now in position and concrete foundations have been made for a further six miles.

Numerous difficulties have had to be overcome in all this work, but, until recently, it was hoped that electric trains would be running, at least as far as Warragul, before the end of 1953. Unfortunately, the drastic limitation of loan funds has brought work practically to a standstill. It is now unlikely to be finished before the end of 1954.

fewer feathers to fly with

For 1951-52, the Department sought £13,241,000 in loan money. Of that a substantial part was needed to pay for new locomotives, diesel rail-cars and trucks that had been ordered. Other major works that had to be financed in that way included the electrification, duplication and regrading of the Gippsland line, the construction of new rolling stock at departmental Workshops, track duplication between Camberwell and Ashburton and between Flinders-st. and South Yarra (which will necessitate a new station at Richmond) the erection for staff of 1,500 pre-cut houses bought in England, the purchase of 500 more houses, the conversion

EXCAVATING FOR NEW TRACK, ASHBURTON LINE





MAIN-LINE ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVE

of locomotives to burn pulverized brown coal, and the building of special trucks to convey it to fuelling points.

But the amount actually allotted to the Railways was £2,741,000 less than had been asked for. This entailed cancelling an order on the way to Britain for 500 pre-cut houses limiting the Department's contribution to the construction of new V. & S.A.R. joint rolling stock for *The Overland* to the cost of six sitting cars and suspending construction at Newport Workshops of locomotives, carriages and livestock trucks.

While the Commissioners' Annual Report was being drafted it was made clear that only £6.8 million (representing the amount involved for contract commitments) would be available from loan funds towards the £12.5 million programme planned. Contractors have been asked to agree to slow down work on building rolling stock already ordered and to defer claims for progress payments until 1953-54, so as to reduce to, some extent, the effect that shortage of money would otherwise have on works still being carried out by the Department. The capital works programme itself is being curtailed at the same time. The complete stoppage of some important works already begun will be involved, and, apart from other inescapable repercussions, including loss of employment for a good many men, material that cost some hundreds of thousands of pounds will have to be carried in stock.

freight rates and fares

The Government agreed to an increase in fares and freight rates, as from October 1, 1951. Country fares and suburban fares outside the competitive area were increased by $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Within the tramway competitive area they were increased, broadly, by 1d. single and 2d. return, with appropriate increases in periodical fares. Parcels and goods rates were raised by 10 per cent.

The overall increase was 9 per cent. which, it was estimated, would produce about £1,490,000 additional revenue for the months of 1951-52 in which the increases were effective, and £2 million in a full year.

By agreement between the various systems, intercapital rates were increased by 20 per cent. from December 1, 1951.

The disparity between mounting costs outside our control, since July 1, 1947, and additional revenue from the increases in fares and freights during the same period worked out, so far as 1951-52 was concerned, at £6 million. It was feared that, unless railway charges were increased substantially and immediately, this would rise to about £9½ million by the end of 1952-53.

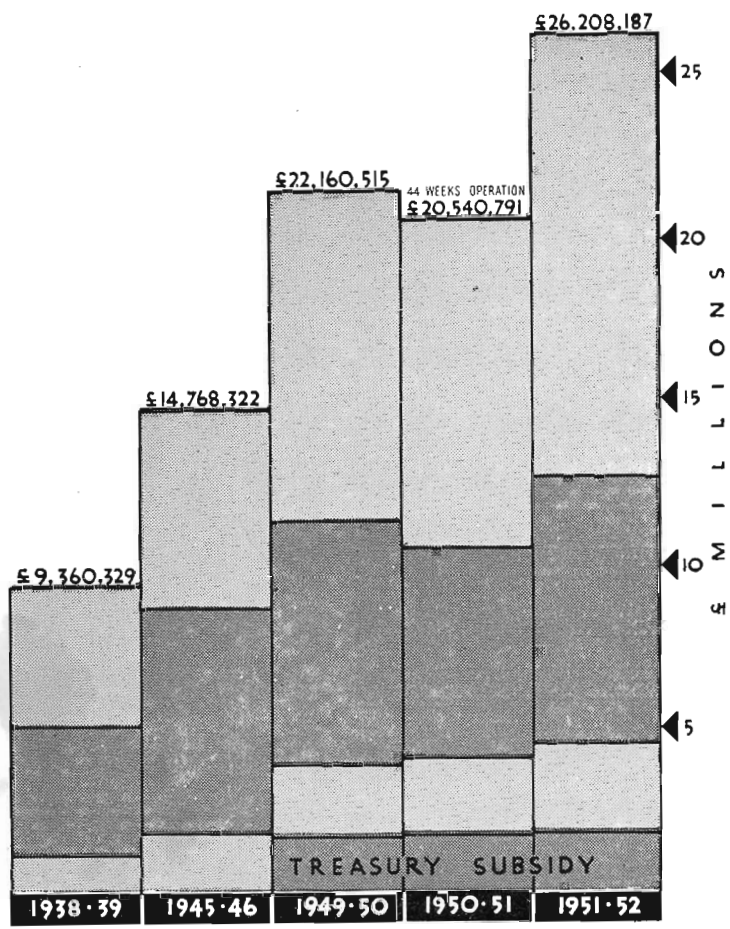
Early in the current year approval was given by the Government for fares and freight rates to be increased by an overall average of about 35 per cent., which will bring the railway charges into closer, although still not identical, relationship with actual costs.

SECOND-CLASS SITTING CAR ON "THE OVERLAND"



revenue.

GOODS & LIVE STOCK
 PASSENGERS
 ALL OTHER REVENUE



revenue up

Revenue for the year was £26,208,187, an increase of more than £5½ million compared with the previous year which, because of the railway strike, was a working year of only 44 weeks.

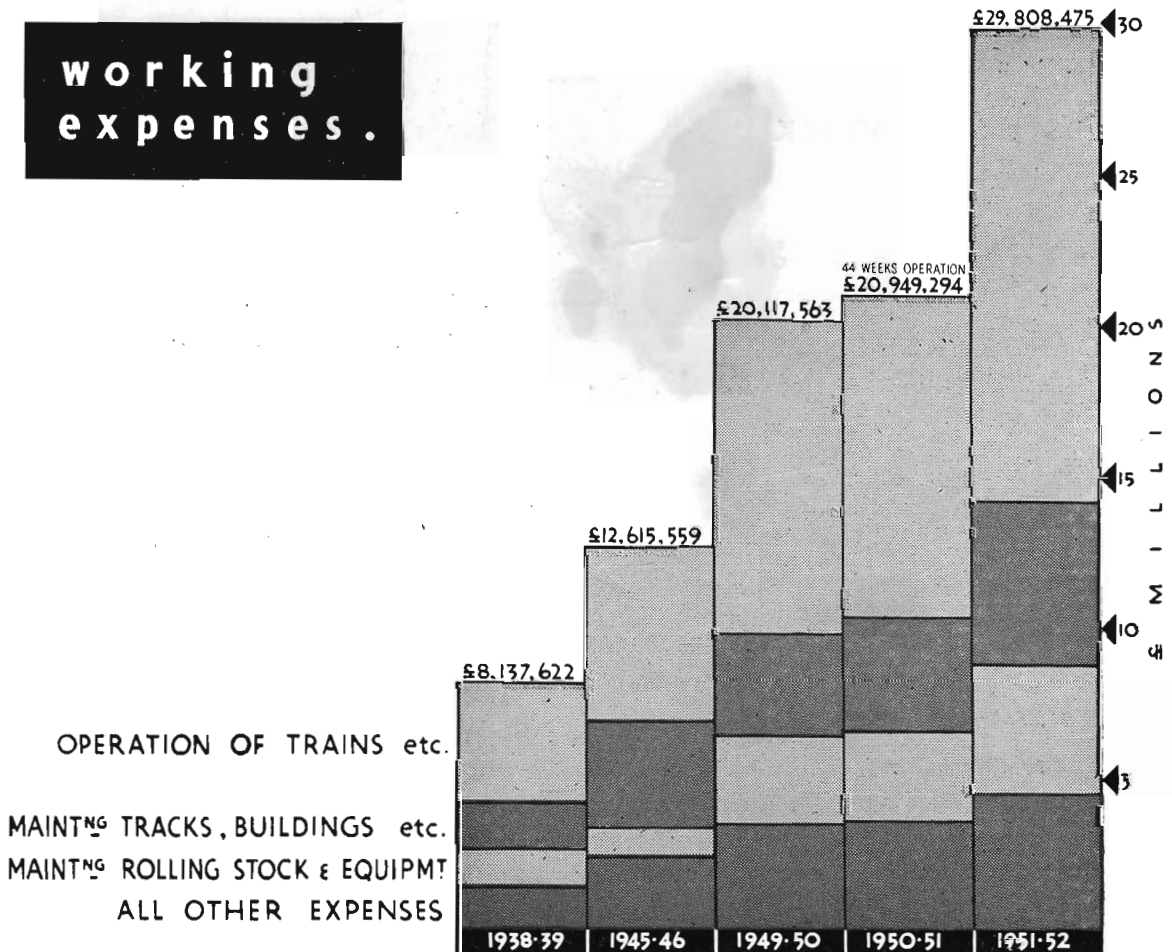
Additional revenue, estimated at £2,650,000, was yielded by increases in fares and freight rates (introduced on December 18, 1950, and October 1, 1951), but, as has already been recorded, it fell far short of the additional costs of operation. The balance of the £3 million increase stems largely from the fact that 1951-52 was a full working year.

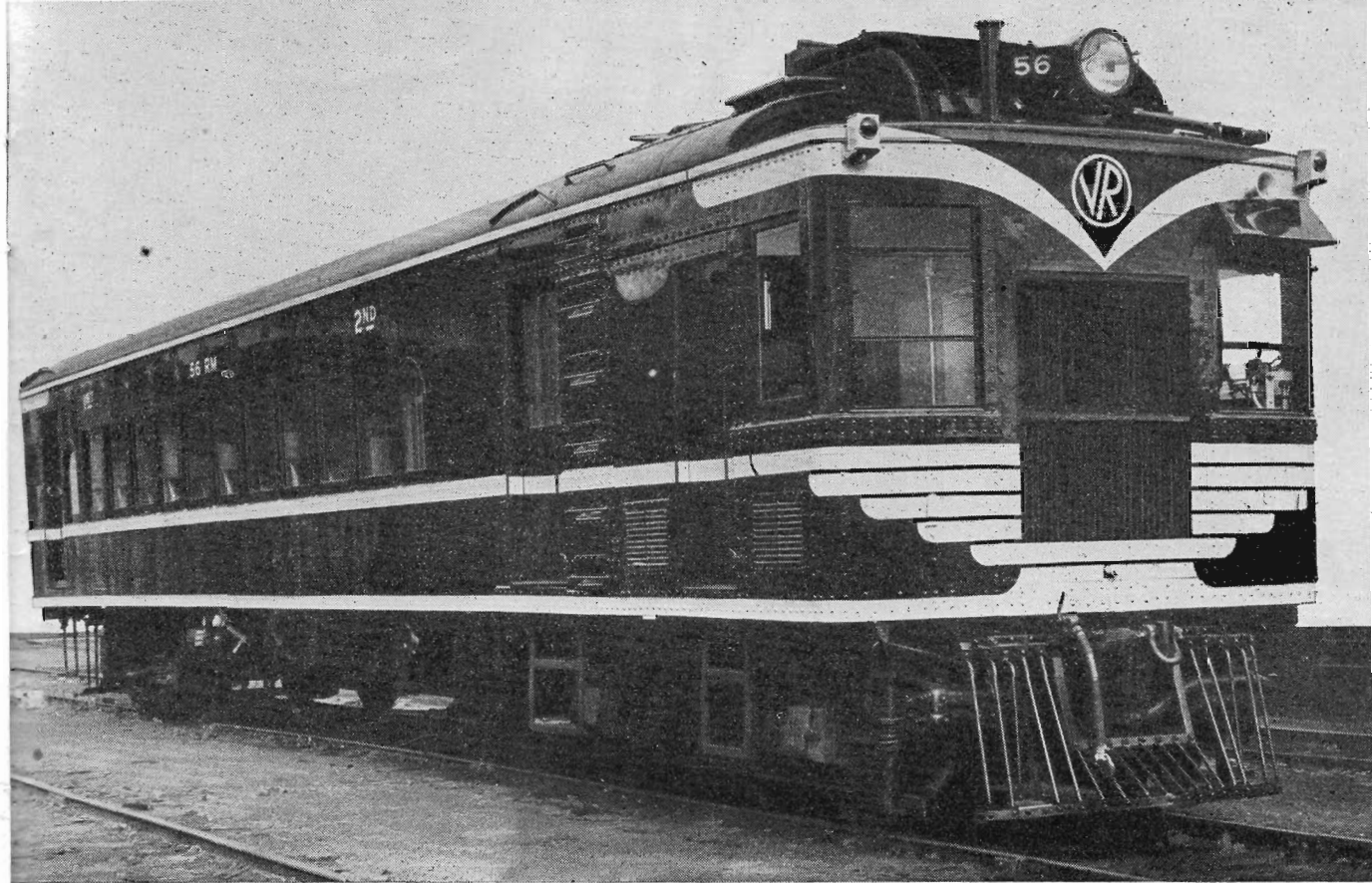
but expenses soar

Working expenses (excluding interest and other debt charges) totalled £29,808,475, which was £8,859,181 heavier than in the previous year ; but these again included a full year's outgoings.

Wages increases accounted for more than £3½ million, higher prices for fuel and materials entailed nearly £2 million more, and an additional £368,000 was involved for payroll tax, pensions and long service leave.

working expenses .





MODERNIZED DIESEL-ELECTRIC RAIL MOTOR

a tribute

It is usual for a company or a public utility to pay a yearly tribute to its staff on their work. So do we. Sometimes, praise is perfunctory : ours is not.

It has been said that a railway without staff would be virtually a sprawling junk heap of iron and steel and timber, and waste land ; and that its inertness would bring short commons, unemployment, poverty, chaos even to the community it serves. In one sense, therefore, a railway is its staff.

Many letters come to the Commissioners spontaneously thanking this or that man or woman for some little service over and above the prescribed and routine job : it is our part gladly to record that the big, overall routine job itself was done in the spirit of service. And it was well done.

moving the harvest

In the 1951-52 season, the area sown with wheat was 2,463,574 acres and the yield was 45,984,752 bushels.

The quantity moved by rail was 39,726,960 bushels, of which about 91 per cent. was in bulk. This was 645,894 bushels more than in the previous season, and 743,244 bushels more than in 1949-50.

In the 10-week harvest period, nearly 500,000 tons of wheat were trucked. Expressions of appreciation of the way in which this major railway task of the year was accomplished were many, spontaneous and sometimes unexpected. In all modesty, we think we did a very good job of work.

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