

tag traffic in the last year of the Plan period would amount to 255 million tons compared to the Planning Commission's estimate of 245 million tons. On the basis of this higher estimate of traffic, the Railways have been pressing for an increase in the resources allocated to them by Rs 180 crores from Rs 1,300 to Rs 1,480 crores.

The estimate of freight traffic made in the Third Plan was a tentative one. It was admitted that traffic requirements could not be estimated precisely five years ahead. For one thing, the location of some of the important units in industries like coal and fertiliser had still to be determined when the Plan was framed. What impact the planned increase of industrial production would have on the pattern of movement of goods could at best be guessed very broadly. And even the respective spheres of road and rail transport were no clearer than they are today.

The growing inability of the Railways to meet the demands made on them for goods transport, however, has forced the Planning Commission to concede the demand for a larger Railway plan. But, if the Railway plan needs to be expanded, so does the programme for power. And where are the resources to come from? As it is, for a physical Plan estimated to cost Rs 8,000 crores, financial resources amount to only Rs 7,500. Moreover, as actual expenditure has a habit of exceeding Plan estimates, the physical programmes included in the Plan would almost certainly cost more than Rs 8,000 crores.

The Planning Commission's hesitation to commit itself to a larger outlay on Railways at this stage is therefore, understandable. All that it is prepared to concede at the moment is that the Railways may spend more in the first three years than had been provided in the Plan. This the Railways have refused to accept. They insist that the Planning Commission must commit itself to actually increasing the total allocation at least by Rs 50 crores immediately. In support of this stand, they have pointed out that if the Railway development schemes are to be effective within the next three years, they must plan right now and make arrangements for construction of wagons, securing the neces-

sary materials etc. These arrangements cannot be made unless the Railways are certain of the necessary finances,

Nor is the problem only one of internal resources, it is ironic that, while the World Bank team of experts has recognised the need for a bigger plan for the Railways, the World Bank itself has hinted that it may not be able to provide further assistance to the Railways. The World Bank has hitherto been the Railways' main source of foreign assistance. It has given the Railways six loans totalling \$ 379 million. This is by far the largest amount lent by the Bank to any individual undertaking in any country and about half of all World Bank loans to India. The Bank supplied about 10 per cent of the foreign exchange requirements of the Railways in the Second Plan.

Against the foreign exchange requirement of the present Railway plan, amounting to Rs 186 crores, the Railways have secured a loan of \$ 50 million from the World Bank and another from the U S Development Loan Fund of \$ 43 million. Together, these two loans, it is expected, will be enough to meet the foreign exchange requirements of the Railways this year.

Postal Service De-Kidwaised

KIDWAI pave India the all up air mail. What an inestimable boon this was people are coming to realise only now, not with the disappearance of air mail inside the country with no extra cost—letters are still carried by air—but with the disappearance of the advantage associated with the despatch of mail by air—quicker postal service. Kidwai's successors have not revived the air mail surcharge on letters; nor

has 'express delivery' service been withdrawn. But the advantage of both have been completely negated by the manner of handling of mail by the postal department which has become dead set — slow delivery and complete unconcern of the postal authorities in the matter. The all up air mail was introduced in this country at a time when in many of the countries which were far more advanced, it was still unknown. With such vast distances to cover, to have a letter posted in Calcutta or Delhi delivered in Bombay on the following morning was a remarkable performance. The night air service which made it possible was itself a brilliant idea, pioneered by people whose names are now forgotten.

The "express delivery" service, however, is a different affair. When successive written complaints failed to produce any visible results a personal visit to the officer-in-charge at the C T O elicited the homely advice that one should go on complaining in writing but one should not expect results, "for now-a-days nobody has got control over the Class IV employees". Taking up the matter with authorities higher up elicited an extremely courteous reply that the matter would be investigated but as no register was maintained of unregistered letters, no results were to be expected from the investigation! All 'express delivery' letters have an individual number stamped on them, and the receipt for them has to be signed by the addressee. Who puts these numbers and what happens to the acknowledgment taken from the addressee are questions beyond the ken of those not familiar with the intricacies of the postal administration. If the Postal Department finds that it is not in a position to ensure quick delivery of such letters why not be frank and honest and abolish this special 'express delivery' altogether? Or if it finds that in order to ensure this service much greater supervision is necessary which involves more cost, why not raise the charges so that those who still want it may have the services that they pay for? For the past several weeks at least, in this office 'express delivery' letters have been received later and not earlier than those which come by the ordinary mail.

ANNUAL NUMBER 1962

The Thirteenth Annual Number of *The Economic Weekly* will be out in the first week of February. It will contain a minimum of 180 pages and will be priced Rs 3. Registration and postage charges will be Re 1.

The Annual will be supplied free to subscribers. Other readers and agents are requested to place their orders in advance.

A FERNANDES
Business Manager