

Robert Williams

Federation, while not as yet committed to State ownership, has been pressed at the conferences recently held on "After-War Policy" to demand equal representation on all authorities controlling docks, harbours, canals, and other transport affairs on which its members are employed.

If the railways are nationalized the State will be faced with the competition of road transport, which competition will be assisted by the activities of the Road Board and the Development Commission, on which private transport interests are represented. Moreover, the State may assist this competition by throwing on to a flooded market a large number of cars and lorries at scrap-iron prices. Then, inasmuch as a third of the canal mileage of the country is owned by railways, nationalization will have to include canals. No doubt the railways will be treated generously, and on top of the expenditure so to be faced, the State will have to find huge sums for the reconstruction and improvement of the railways and canals. For, bad as the condition of the railway system is, the state of the canals is chaotic. They will need to be standardized to admit of barges up to at least 300 tons (barges of 1,000 tons are common on the huge canals of Germany), and better methods of propulsion must be introduced. Electricity, of course, will play its part as a propellant, and I am emphatically in favour of the sixteen great generating stations proposed in the report to the Ministry of Reconstruction being in the hands of the nation, because they will be, perhaps, a main factor, certainly a considerable factor, in the supply of power to tramways, railways, canals, and (given the long-looked-for economical accumulator) road and aerial transport.

For the reason that the immediate advantage after the war will rest with the privately owned road and aerial transport, I am in favour of the Joint Committee of the National Union of Railwaymen and the National Transport Workers' Federation pressing—possibly in conjunction with the postal employees—for the estab-