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## THE GOVERNMENT RAILWAY PROBLEM

The development of Canada's Pioneer Railway.

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The development of Canada's railways from the fifteen miles of wooden track to the wonderful network of lines now stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific has been a truly remarkable achievement compressed into a period of little more than eighty years.

In the story of this astounding growth in transportation facilities the inception and development of the Grand Trunk System play an important part. After the completion of the first steam railway on the American Continent, the Baltimore and Ohio, in 1828, the little colony of Lower Canada projected a line from Laprairie to St. Johns, Quebec, linking the Richelieu and St. Lawrence Rivers and providing a through rail and water route between Montreal and New York. This was opened in 1836. The rails were of wood with flat pieces of iron spiked on them. The first locomotive used on the line was known as the "kitten", but the engine proved refractory and horses were substituted for it. It is later related, however, that, a practical engineer being obtained, he pronounced the engine in good order, requiring only "plenty of wood and water". This opinion proved correct and the iron horse later attained a speed of twenty miles an hour. This little road was afterwards taken over by the Grand Trunk Railway and may be said to be the beginning of that great system.

So little progress was made, however, in railway construction between 1836 and 1850 that in the latter year there were only fifty-five miles of railway in all the provinces. At the desire of both the Upper and Lower

Provinces — Confederation was still fifteen years distant — the Grand Trunk Railway was incorporated in 1852 to give the country real railway facilities.

The first meeting of the Grand Trunk Railway Company of Canada was held in the city of Quebec on Monday, July 11th, 1853, at which the Board of Directors were elected as follows: — Directors in London: Thomas Baring, M.P.; Geo. Carr Glyn, M.P.; H. Wollaston Blake, Robert McCalmont, Kirkman D. Hodgson, Wm. Thompson. Directors in Canada: Hon. Jno. Ross, (President); Benjamin Holmes, M.P. (Vice-President); Hon. Francis Hincks, Hon. E. P. Tache, Hon. James Morris, Hon. Malcolm Cameron, Hon. Peter McGill, Hon. R. E. Caron, Geo. Crawford, M.P.; W. H. Ponton, E. J. Whittemore, Wm. Rhodes.

It was one of the Fathers of Confederation, Sir George Etienne Cartier, who presented to the Canadian Legislature the act to incorporate the company. Cartier regarded with pride the fact that he had taken a prominent part in establishing the railway. "I had charge of the Act which created the Grand Trunk", he declared in Parliament, "and I am prouder of that than any other action of my life", adding that the line was "the greatest benefit that had ever been conferred upon the country".

The building of the Grand Trunk, linking the widely separated centres of population and activity, was in fact, the one great forward step of the pre-Confederation period. It has been justly said that the Union of British North America would have

been a farce if it had been brought about before the successful operation of the railroads had been demonstrated. It was clearly realized that unless Canada could combine with her inland water navigation plans a railroad system her great territories must forever remain unproductive.

Investors in England supplied the large amount of capital necessary for the construction of this pioneer railroad, and it may not be amiss to quote the following from the Drayton-Acworth report: "The Grand Trunk came into existence almost entirely as the result of the investment of private capital. It is comparable in this respect with the private railway companies of England and United States".

Unexpected difficulties were encountered from the inception of the Grand Trunk plan; traffic did not develop to the extent anticipated, the most acute commercial crisis through which Canada had ever passed came along when the railroad was just throwing open its lines to traffic, while the Civil War in the United States caused the road heavy losses. In spite of these and other difficulties the Grand Trunk steadily persevered in the task it had undertaken, year by year extending its lines, developing its facilities and improving its service. The benefits to the national welfare of Canada which have followed as the result of the creation of the Grand Trunk Railway stand out very clearly when the history of the first half century of the Dominion's progress is examined. No single force, it has been declared, more powerfully contributed to the growth of Canada along rational lines. The immigration move-