

Electric Railway Department

The Postmaster-General and the Transportation of Postmen.

On Feb. 21, 1913, the Postmaster General introduced, and secured the first reading in the House of Commons, of a bill of three clauses, to provide that postmen be conveyed on every electric railway in Canada on such terms and conditions and under such regulations as might be made by the P.M.G., and that if any electric railway company refused to carry postmen at the amount fixed by the P.M.G., the company should refund an amount equal to the difference between the amount so fixed and the amount actually expended for such carriage, and the act was to be made retroactive from March 1, 1913. A deputation from the Canadian Electric Railway Association waited on the P.M.G. as quickly as possible, protesting most strongly against the arbitrary nature of the bill, and the Premier was also waited on, and towards the end of the session the bill was withdrawn. At the interview referred to with the P.M.G., it was suggested, on behalf of the electric railway companies, that in case of dispute between the P.M.G. and any company, the matter be referred to the Board of Railway Commissioners, but Mr. Pelletier declined to accept this suggestion.

At the session of Parliament which closed recently, the P.M.G. introduced a bill, entitled, "An Act to Amend the Post Office Act," dealing with a number of matters, including postage on newspapers, etc., registration and insurance letters, and appointments and salaries of railway mail clerks, and towards the end of the bill the first two sections of the 1913 bill in regard to transportation of postmen were included, with the exception that the words "except municipally owned electric railways" were inserted, thus exempting municipally owned lines and dealing only with electric railways owned by companies. This bill was carried through the Commons without the interests affected having any notice of it, and it was not distributed to the press or public until after it had received its third reading on May 4.

Steps were then immediately taken by the Canadian Electric Railway Association's Secretary-Treasurer to secure a delay of the bill in the Senate until representations could be made against it. Its provisions were fully discussed at the Association's annual meeting in Ottawa, May 13 and 14. On the following day the Association's then retiring President, Patrick Dubee, Secretary-Treasurer, Montreal Tramways Co., and the Association's Secretary-Treasurer, Acton Burrows, remained in Ottawa in connection with the matter. Owing to the representations made, the bill was further delayed from time to time in the Senate. The Government leader there, Senator Loughheed, proposed to have it referred to a committee of the whole house after its second reading, but as this would have prevented the Association from being heard, Senator Young moved that it be referred to the Committee on Banking and Commerce, which was carried, and its consideration fixed for May 27. Mr. Burrows attended at Ottawa on that day, but the committee's whole session was taken up in considering the first section of the bill, relating to the rates of newspaper postage, and the committee adjourned till May 29, when Mr. Burrows returned to Ottawa and was given an opportunity of addressing the committee and stating the Association's case. A full report of his

remarks, which, at the suggestion of one of the members of the committee, was immediately printed and distributed to all the senators, is given on page 333 of this issue. He was followed by Andrew T. Thompson, Ottawa solicitor of the British Columbia Electric Ry. Co., and T. Rinfret, of the Montreal Tramways Co.'s solicitors' office. The P.M.G., who adopted the unusual practice of a minister with a seat in the Commons, appearing before a Senate committee to urge the passing of a bill, spoke in reply, and Mr. Burrows was allowed to speak again in rebuttal of some statements Mr. Pelletier made. When 1 p.m. had been reached, further considera-

principles of arbitration. As it was evident that a majority of the committee was against the proposed amendment, the P.M.G. evidently thought it best not to press it any further, and Senator Loughheed, on behalf of the Government, then introduced the following amendment:—electric railways, or any of them, and the Department, the terms and conditions shall be fixed by the Board of Railway Commissioners for Canada, and in so doing due regard shall be had by the Board to terms and conditions agreed upon theretofore between the said electric railways, or any of them, and the Department."

Senator Loughheed also moved to strike out sec. 9 of the bill requiring electric railway companies to refund any amounts charged for fares in excess of rates fixed by the P. M. G. As the first part of Mr. Loughheed's amendment was in accordance with the action taken on behalf of the Association on Feb. 28, 1913, when it was suggested to the P.M.G. that in case of dispute as to compensation to be paid, the matter be referred to the Board of Railway Commissioners, a suggestion which he then referred to the Board of Railway Commissioners, a suggestion which he then refused to entertain, Mr. Burrows did not oppose the amendment, but suggested that the following words be omitted, "and in so doing due regard shall be had by the Board to terms and conditions agreed upon theretofore between the said electric railways or any of them and the Department." This, however, Mr. Loughheed would not agree to. Senator Mitchell then moved that secs. 8 and 9 of the bill be struck out altogether. Mr. Loughheed's amendment was finally adopted by a vote of 10 to 9.

In view of the fact that the bill was a Government measure and that it had been passed by the House of Commons without a division, it could hardly be expected to secure its entire rejection, and the result was considered very satisfactory, the Government having practically accepted the Association's contention of last year, and the proposal to clothe the P. M. G. with arbitrary power without any right to appeal having been rejected.

The Senate's Committee on Banking and Commerce also made an amendment to the clause of the bill relating to newspaper postage which the Commons, at the P. M. G.'s instigation, refused to agree to. When the bill again came up in the Senate on June 10, Mr. Burrows, who was also interested in the newspaper postage question, had returned to Ottawa, and in conjunction with other publishers, made such representations that the Senate, by a vote of 28 to 13, refused to give the P. M. G. the power to decide the rates of postage to be paid on newspapers, a power which has been vested in Parliament ever since Federation and which he attempted to take away from that body and give to himself. The bill in its amended form went back to the Commons once more, and as the P. M. G. would not consent to the Senate's amendment to make newspaper rates subject to parliamentary approval, the bill was dropped.

The net result, therefore, is that matters are in exactly the same position as they were before the bill was introduced, and that the compensation to be paid for the transportation of postmen is still a question to be settled by negotiations between the Postmaster General and the different electric railway companies.

Canadian Electric Railway Association.

PRESIDENT—C. B. King, Manager, London Street Railway Co.

VICE PRESIDENT—James D. Fraser, Director and Secretary-Treasurer, Ottawa Electric Railway Co.

SECRETARY-TREASURER—Acton Burrows, Managing Director, Canadian Railway and Marine World.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE—The President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer and

E. P. Coleman, General Manager, Dominion Power and Transmission Co.

Patrick Dubee, Secretary-Treasurer, Montreal Tramways Co.

A. Eastman, General Manager, Windsor, Essex and Lake Shore Rapid Railway Co.

H. M. Hopper, General Manager and Purchasing Agent, St. John Railway Co.

Wilson Phillips, Superintendent, Winnipeg Electric Railway Co.

C. L. Wilson, Assistant Manager, Toronto and York Radial Railway Co.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY—Aubrey Acton Burrows, Business Manager, Canadian Railway and Marine World.

OFFICIAL ORGAN—Canadian Railway and Marine World, Toronto.

tion of the bill was adjourned to June 1, when the P.M.G. appeared before the committee with the following suggestion for an amendment to the bill:—

"If any electric railway objects to such terms and conditions within eight days after it has been duly notified of same, the Postmaster General will, by petition duly served, apply to the Board of Railway Commissioners, which is hereby empowered to order any electric railways to accept such terms and conditions if it is found that they are on the whole about the same as those now in force, and to vary them only if there are special circumstances which might justify a different decision in any special case. The same rule will apply in case any terms and conditions now prevailing are to be revised by the Postmaster General."

Mr. Burrows protested most vigorously against the proposed amendment, pointing out that its adoption would effectually tie the Board of Railway Commissioners' hands and that it was absolutely foreign to the