

GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP V. PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF RAILWAYS IN CANADA

The state ownership of railways was first definitely adopted in America by the maritime provinces of Canada, and a state-owned railway afterward became the economic basis of the confederation by which Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were united to the inland provinces of Upper and Lower Canada (now Ontario and Quebec), thus forming the nucleus of the Dominion which now extends from the Atlantic to the Pacific. To tell how the current of this policy was turned awry and left the present Dominion with a state railway unequally yoked to three privately owned trans-continental railways is to unfold an instructive tale of history, bringing into light the fundamental contrast of state ownership and private ownership of railways. We have here illustrated in the same country the effects of legislation on railways and the influences of railways upon legislation.

Before giving a brief outline of the railway history of Canada let us try to clear away some of the fog which has gathered around the railway question. This is needful because the present generation was born and bred under private-company ownership and consequently that condition is so familiar as to seem like one of the laws of nature. The great majority have no knowledge of the revolution in the viewpoint toward railways that has come about in the last half-century in lands outside of America. If any ten Americans of average intelligence were told that sixty-five countries in the world have railways on a considerable scale and then were asked how many of these carry on their railways by government ownership or operation the majority would answer, from five to ten. They are surprised when told that fifty-one of these sixty-five nations now nationally control their railway systems by ownership, or operation, or both. It is indeed hard to realize that of all the nations in the world which count for anything in civilization the United States and Canada stand practically alone in having their modern highways, or the great majority of them,