

IS THERE A RAILWAY MUDDLE?

First of a Series of Articles on the Railway Situation in Canada, intended to give by plain talk and clear thinking, a concise statement of the Railway side of the case

By C. PRICE GREEN

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IS it not time for a little plain talking and clear thinking respecting the Canadian railways, their history, their development, their achievements and their future? Some may say there has already been a good deal of plain talking. There has been, it is true, no little declamation, but the "plain talking" we have in mind is the talking that makes a subject clearly understood, and it must always be preceded and accompanied by clear thinking.

The man on the street is apt to tell you that the whole railway situation is a "jumble" that we have more roads than we need, that they have cost too much, that they are laid down in the wrong places. But the "jumble" or mix-up in the public mind upon these and kindred subjects, is due, we think, to all the facts not being known, or if known not being really understood.

Few men, we venture to think, approach the problem with open minds, determined to master the facts, and reach a fair and accurate conclusion. There is a "group consciousness" which often passes for public opinion. Real public opinion is, of course, a deliberate judgment reached upon examination of all the evidence obtainable. But a good many ideas are impressed upon the consciousness of a community, nobody knows exactly how or why, and they are assumed to be true. Thus for years it was generally believed that wheat would not grow west of Lake Superior, and a good many people still have the notion that all Ontario north of Muskoka is moor, rock and glen. Somebody says this or that section of the country will never be any good except for mining. He may have no personal knowledge about the matter he is discussing, but he speaks as one with authority. A second repeats the statement, a third, and a fourth. By mere dint of repeating the same statement to one another over and over again individuals who have no personal knowledge of the subject may form what is called the "public opinion" of a community.

Then, unfortunately, railways and railway construction have from time to time been more or less entangled in the mesh of party politics. There was a time, not many years ago, when half the people of Canada thought that a certain railway enterprise

would pay and the other half thought it would not. Those who admired a certain statesman and belonged to a particular party held one view, and those who distrusted that statesman and belonged to another party held the opposite view. Few on either side ever troubled themselves to get any first hand information about the road itself or to pass judgment in a fair and comprehensive way.

Perhaps the railway companies themselves are somewhat to blame. They have seldom addressed themselves to the general public. On the other hand, there has been a good deal of uninformed argument, sometimes purposely misleading. Party controversy, even in quite recent years, has raged around the construction of this or that railway, and extravagant statements have been made in the heat of a political campaign.

At the same time, we believe Canadian people are quite able to digest well considered information and to arrive at a correct conclusion if the facts are laid before them. It is the intention in a series of articles, of which this is the foreword, to assemble the facts and to present what we believe to be a fair statement of the railway situation. In so doing we may shock some preconceived prejudices or impressions by the frankness with which we will deal with some of the points in controversy, and in this connection we promise to relate some unwritten history. Some facts will be presented of whose verification there can be no doubt, which will appear in print for the first time. We have

no pet theory to advocate, and we are not going to prescribe any panacea for the body politic. We are going to tell the truth. We are going to express ideas that we think are clear, and express them in language that cannot be misunderstood. The articles will deal concisely with the railway situation as a whole and various phases of it. We only ask the public to read the articles in the spirit in which they are written, coming to no hasty conclusion, but wait and see just what we have to present.

There is, as we have said, an impression that our whole railway situation is a jumble; that mileage has been constructed through regions where traffic could never originate and that in more likely districts there has been wasteful duplication. We are constantly told if some master designer had mapped out a railway system for Canada forty years ago and all construction had been devoted to developing that plan that we would have to-day less mileage, and better service at considerably less cost. This proposition may or may not be sound, because its correctness all turns on the wisdom and foreknowledge of the imaginary designer. Certainly if such a plan had been made, say fifty years ago, it probably would not have provided for construction west of Lake Superior. If it had been made only twenty years ago, there might have been no provision for Eastern Canada north of the main line of the Canadian Pacific.

Our three big railway systems became transcontinental with the approval, we might almost say, by the command of parliament. The men who built the Canadian Pacific could only earn their grants of money and land by crossing the "sea of mountains" and establishing a port on the Pacific. The Grand Trunk Pacific wanted to make North Bay their eastern terminus, but parliament said the road must go from sea to sea and actually constructed as a national public work the line between Moncton and Winnipeg. It was the Parliament of Canada which, in 1911, declared it to be necessary and expedient for Canada to have a third transcontinental railway extending from tidewater on the St. Lawrence to tidewater on the Pacific Coast. Still it may be that there has been some extravagance in railway construction. (Concluded on page 17.)

THE PATRIOTIC PILGRIMAGE TO QUEBEC

THE recent fraternal visit of the Ontario business men to idyllic Quebec was one of those all-too-rare strokes of statesmanship which amount to a display of genius. It was so simple that the marvel is that it was not thought of long ago. Its beneficial results could have been predicted with certainty and in detail. Any journalist who knows his Quebec and his Ontario citizen, could almost have written the report of this pilgrimage before it occurred. The gracious and winning hospitality of Quebec has always been there, awaiting just such opportunities to reveal itself. The openness of the frank-eyed and receptive Ontario thinking man to the genial sunshine of true and sincere friendliness is one of the finest characteristics of our English-speaking people. Prejudice of a dangerous virulence can only grow in Canada by "absent treatment."

OF course, the pilgrims loved Quebec. Who could escape that fascination, once they exposed themselves to its seductive influence? It is the common history of the human race that the Latin peoples have ever won the love of their more northerly neighbours. Even the Goth and the Vandal who descended upon Italy in no gentle spirit, tarried to companion with the courteous representatives of a finer civilization whom they found there, blended themselves with that attractive people, and in the end fell into—though not before—the arms of their "conquerors." The Visigoths who plunged so ruthlessly into Spain, suffered the same fate. During the last century or so, France has been the chief representative of this charm; and it has been well said that "every man has two native countries, that in which he was born, and France." To-day, the appeal for the Allies in neutral countries is very largely an appeal to the universal popularity of the French people. It is bleeding France that attracts their sympathetic championship.

By THE MONOCLE MAN

THOSE who do not know Quebec are in the habit of saying that there is a wide difference between the French of our own country and the captivating French of Old France. In order to say this with a free conscience, it is also necessary not to know Old France. I hear it mostly from folk who think that the French people of Europe were properly represented by the Boulevard types before the war. The fierce fires of the war have, however, dispelled this superficial libel upon the French of France. All the world knows them to-day for what the few who really knew them in the past always knew them to be. There was no surprise at the heroism, the steady devotion, the firm nerves, the deathless patriotism of the French people among those who had studied their France north of the Place de Clichy and south of the Rue de Rivoli.

THOSE who have sunned themselves in Normandy orchards know that the French of Quebec are very like their forebears. Those who have enjoyed the privilege of penetrating into the homes of our Quebec French know that they have all the vivacity, all the quick and elusive wit, all the grace of gesture and mobility of countenance, all the charm of manner, we associate with the French character. Of course, not all French are vivacious; any more than all English people are incurably imperturbable. These national generalizations are apt to be disappointing if you insist upon every representative of a race being a "type." There are all sorts of Frenchmen just exactly as there are all sorts of Englishmen. But I think I am within the mark when I say that the French of Quebec are probably more nearly

like the French of Northern France than the English of Ontario are like the English of any other part of England. Yet two centuries and more, as well as the Atlantic, divide the French from their Motherland.

HOWEVER, we are talking about the French of Quebec as they are—and as the Ontario pilgrims found them. They found them gracious and kindly. They found them most desirous of living on good terms with their fellow Canadians of English origin. They found them unaggressive. The legendary picture of Quebec trying to impend over Canada and impose its institutions on the English Provinces, is so far from the reality as to be supremely ridiculous. Of course, when a French Canadian moves his family to another Province, he likes to worship God in the manner to which he has been accustomed, and he does not like to find that his language is regarded as a pest by the educational authorities. But he has not the remotest notion of interfering with anybody else in their worship or educational systems. He does not try to interfere with them in his own Province where he has an overwhelming majority.

AS for his fascination as a fellow human being, I have never known any English-speaking person, who came really in contact with him, to resist it. Only by isolation, either of body or spirit, is this to be safely accomplished. I recall some of my own earlier experiences. I was walking through the Laurentian country one day with a friend who had occasion to go into a farm house on business. I waited outside on the road. In a few moments, I heard a gentle voice addressing me from the gateway. There was an old lady with feeble hands and deeply wrinkled face—a grandmother of the old sort—not the kind they have now-a-days—carrying an old-fashioned black hair-cloth chair of an equally (Concluded on page 28.)