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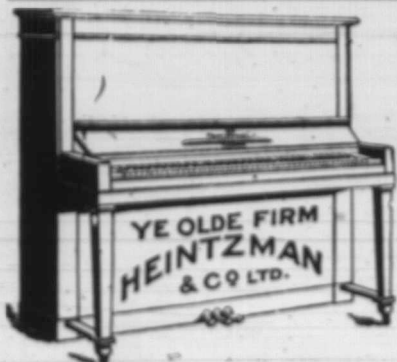
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The Railway Problem

Article XI.—The cost of living is the cost of transportation—Cheap railway rates the only condition of permanent prosperity—War and the railway problem. The only hope of cheap rates is in government ownership.

By E. B. Biggar

It is only when we imagine railway service cut off that we realize how the railway has transformed our daily life. At the beginning of last century it cost twenty shillings sterling to convey a bushel of corn from Fort William to the Grand Portage, thirty miles west, and according to Sir Alex. MacKenzie corn was the cheapest article of provisions. In another part of Canada Col. Talbot paid eighteen bushels of wheat in exchange for a barrel of salt, and a bushel of wheat would only buy a yard of cotton, and yet in sections of the Talbot settlement wheat sold for cash at \$2.00 a bushel in the same season in which it was obtained for 75 cents in other sections where the roads were good. In 1795 the freight on goods by boat from Kingston to Queenstown on the Niagara—about 180 miles—was \$9 and \$10 first class and \$5 second class per ton. The Molson's in 1823 charged passengers \$14.50 for a single trip on their boats from Quebec to Montreal. Cut off railway services and these conditions would return with privation and ensuing starvation to multitudes in every province.

But if the railway is the factor that wrought the change from those conditions up till now, it is also the index of what settlement can be made if the element of private profit were removed and the rates were cheapened still more. To show the loss annually suffered by the people of West and East owing to the restrictions of high rates,

to sell, and on the other side of the account on the tax added by the many acts of transportation involved in all he has to buy.

Why Settlers Are Leaving

Thru the alienation of vast areas of land into the hands of railway and other private corporations, the advantages we have been able to offer the settler in cheap western lands is fast disappearing. We have no great advantage over the unsettled regions of the United States west in climate or in length of summer season; while on the other hand our freight and passenger rates are so much higher than those on the American side at the same distance from markets, that the remaining advantage in the price of Canadian land is cancelled. We may as well face the fact that it is these considerations that account for the homeward migration in the past two years of thousands of settlers who came into Canada from the United States; and as long as the primary purpose of operating our railways is dividends to shareholders, how can we expect permanent improvement?

No private railway can live off its own flesh; it thrives and extends its reach by profit and on no other basis. But a system of taxation which leaves thousands of square miles without any rail transport, but wrests a profit to three companies where one would be sufficient to carry the traffic, is not



American troops on the Mexican border. Exceedingly patrol duty between the Rio Grande and the Colorado River is very different work to that being done in the trenches along the Somme.

take an item of home produce—apples. It costs the dweller in the prairie provinces \$4 to \$7 before he can have a barrel of this wholesome fruit, and every autumn in some districts of Ontario and Quebec thousands of barrels are left to rot under the trees, simply because the cost of freight, added to cost of barrels and wages in picking, would bring a loss to the grower if they were shipped. By a railway policy directed to promote the interests of these two classes, the rate on apples would be reduced so as to secure to the grower a small profit on every barrel of eastern apples, and an immense distribution at reasonable prices to the people of the West. But, as stated by the president of the Fruit Growers' Association of Ontario last year, "when the transportation companies receive 15 cents more for carrying a barrel of apples 146 miles than the grower receives for the fruit, it is evident there is something wrong with the transportation and marketing systems."

Illustrations of the damaging effect of high railway rates on the internal commerce of Canada can be multiplied in every branch of trade and industry. They may all be summarized in this, that broadly speaking, high railway rates mean restricted commerce and high cost of living, low rates mean well distributed prosperity; because what a man can save depends on how much is subtracted in freight from what he has

best calculated to re-people the prairies or maintain the commercial and industrial life of the East.

State Ownership Not Demoralizing

We have shown that the surrender of a nation's highways into private hands for private profit has endangered the foundations of responsible government in this country and the United States. There are many who see this plainly enough, but are not so sure that government ownership may not replace this menace with others equally grave. We must face this question.

If we make ourselves believe that government ownership will remove every fault and cleanse public service of every form of corruption, we shall be disappointed; and for this reason, that where government is truly representative of the people, and where imperfections exist, either in morals or efficiency, it follows that these imperfections will be reflected in government. A nation representatively governed will get that standard which its own moral aims may dictate. What government assumes all the functions and responsibilities belonging to it, and its aims and ideals improve, its organized life will improve as a logical consequence, just as a man is in good health only when the organs of his body are working in harmony and all under the direct control of the mind. What

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