

# REFERENCE PAPERS

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## CANADIAN RAILWAYS IN WARTIME

### OUTBREAK OF WAR

The importance of transportation in the war of supply does not begin only with the loading of the goods of war into a merchant ship at the dockside of an ocean port.

It begins long before that. The task of delivering the all-important heavy ammunition to artillery units fighting their way toward Berlin may have begun when zinc was brought from a mine at Kimberley, British Columbia, to a smelter at Trail, B.C. After smelting, the metal was taken east, across the Rockies and the Prairies, to a brass mill at Toronto, Ontario.

Meanwhile, copper, the other metal used in making brass, has been mined and smelted at Coppercliff, Ontario, and the refined copper has been shipped to the same brass mill at Toronto. From here, the brass is shipped to various plants around Toronto where it is made into components of a finished round of ammunition.

The parts are then shipped to a shell filling plant at Cherrier, Quebec, and the finished round of ammunition is shipped from Cherrier to a port -- perhaps Montreal or Halifax.

In all of these movements, and many other similar movements, the railways of Canada are doing one of the most vital of war jobs -- a war job which is absolutely indispensable -- and they are doing it despite strongly felt shortages of men, equipment and material.

### BACKGROUND TO CANADIAN RAILWAYS

The outbreak of the present war found Canada ranking third in the world in total railway mileage with 42,346 miles of single track. (see appendix A for mileage table of Canadian railways in 1943) Of this, 51% was operated by the Canadian National Railways, 40% by the Canadian Pacific Railway, and 9% by other roads. The United States and Soviet Russia are the only countries in the world with a greater mileage. In miles per capita, Canada has one mile of line for each 281 persons, exclusive of Canadian railways that cross over United States territory. This figure is twice the average for the United States and is second only to Australia in miles per capita. Canada's extensive transportation system was in peacetime capable of handling a much greater volume of traffic than economic conditions required.

It has been estimated that before the war the debt incurred in respect of Canadian railways, including some construction grants made to the Canadian Pacific Railway, accounted for more than a quarter of the public debt of Canada. The Canadian National Railways cost the country in net income deficits an average of \$50,000,000 a year from 1930 to 1939. Every effort was made to maintain track motive power and rolling stock in good condition, but because of loss of traffic many economies had to be made, and when war broke out Canadian railways were by no means in an ideal condition to meet the demands made on them. Hence their wartime achievement is even more remarkable.