

Discussing the new management of the Intercolonial and its prospects, the Canadian Courier gives the general impression as "not overly favorable." With which we are in full agreement. The Intercolonial is a great enterprise, but the ground upon which the Courier bases its own conclusion is hardly worth foundation. According to the Courier's idea, the rock upon which the Board will come to rest is the fact that the Intercolonial's working staff is inefficient and that the management has not sufficient power to discharge its duties and hire capable men. The Courier, if they have enough power to enable them to use the pruning knife thoroughly, looting off a few small twigs on either side, the tree is not likely to make much change. The only really effective method would be to give the Intercolonial absolute power to hire and dismiss. This they will never have, so long as the politicians have their present ideas and policies. Ever since the Intercolonial was built, the people have been taught that the patronage of the road was the prize of the ruling political party. The employees' ways have been striving to win the favor of the politicians rather than the approval of their superiors. The Intercolonial has been an intercolonial sleeping car, and through the curtains of his berth watched two passengers, the sleeping car conductor and the conductor pig cards as the train rumbled through the night from Montreal to Lewis. Could any management make good employees of men who have been so trained? No, certainly not. The Intercolonial needs a brand new staff from top to bottom, but it will not get it under the present conditions. In almost every instance this is wrong. The management has the power The Courier says it lacks, the influence of politics upon the general personnel is greatly overstated, and for general average of efficiency the working staff of the Intercolonial ranks high.

It is a matter of record, for instance, that Intercolonial drivers get better results from their engines than any other line in the country. I. C. R. conductors in capacity and courtesy are exceptional. The train and track hands are admirably efficient. Men of men. Politics may help a man to get a start in these lines to work, but once there, the railway unions and the railway officials will not let him down. The Minister himself would not dare to promote or to retard one of these men without good reason. The Intercolonial has a large number of unskilled work, around election times, and in the general offices at Montreal, politics may not be so much a factor as it is in the general offices at Montreal. Moreover, the Board has "absolute power to hire and dismiss" and is exercising it. It is not exercising it in the way of the I. C. R. activity, for instance, a "senior" man of many years, who has been dismissed, and every man of them was a Liberal, or claimed to be. Naturally there was some serious feeling about it, but the Intercolonial has no right to be back, and it is not.

The political board which controls the Intercolonial works out, not through the staff, but through the system. The Board has the power to put in a "brand new staff from top to bottom," but it has the power to eliminate all forms of graft—and is doing this with more vigor and courage than any other body. But if the Board were composed of the best railroad men on earth, were freed wholly from the patronage evil and had a staff above criticism, it would still fail to make the Intercolonial the profitable agent it should be for its owners and its territory. It would be operated under a system which makes an indifferent and ignorant parliament its directors to which the management has to go for every dollar of expenditure. That's what's the matter with the Intercolonial—not politics in the petty sense of the word, but so much of the general system of government operation.

For instance, there are two members of the present Board who are committed to the policy of branch line absorption. After full investigation they have made a report recommending this procedure at once. Undoubtedly the other members hold similar views. But what can they do? The thing is essential to Intercolonial prosperity and to Maritime development. If a progressive company owned the road all those branches that are profitable feeders would have been amalgamated with the main line long ago. But under the present system the management is powerless to do this or anything else that involves the expenditure of money, no matter how sure the return on the investment.

It is this condition and the apparent impossibility of remedy under parliamentary control that has made The Sun pessimistic of the road's future under government operation and favorably inclined toward the idea of the effect of private enterprise. It is forced to agree with The Courier, though for different reasons, that the new commission task is an impossible one. But there should be a better alternative than The Courier's suggestion for "the leasing of the road to some one of the three private railway corporations for a term of years, with a certain control of rates and a certain rate of return on the present investment."

The C. P. R. is a wonderful corporation, but its future is elsewhere. It has done tremendous things for the development of the West, where its chief treasure is, but its consideration of the Maritime Provinces is secondary. It regards its road from Montreal to St. John merely as a branch line, spending millions of dollars for the development of traffic producing territories and the building of facilities of all kinds, it will spend nothing here. To the C. P. R. the I. C. R. is a liability to Halifax would be but an extension of a branch line, and the I. C. R. from Montreal to Montreal a useless parallel.

Alcock and Mann are great railroaders, but their operation of their roads in the West or in Nova Scotia gives small ground for belief that they would make the Intercolonial a profitable kind of service we need. Their main interests, too, lie elsewhere. And the Intercolonial has apparently yet to learn that there is such a place as the Maritime Provinces. Though the line which the government is building for the company is valuable without means of reaching St. John and Halifax and terminal facilities there, its officials so far have made no effort in this direction nor displayed any interest.

Several months ago The Sun, in face of much criticism, suggested that if in these provinces an association of able men interested in Maritime development could be formed and could secure the right to operate the Intercolonial under conditions which would guarantee against increased traffic charges, this would provide the solution of the problem. And we have seen no better plan put forward since. As a winter branch of a transcontinental line, the Intercolonial would doubtless be valuable to one of the great companies. But that these, with all their vast and varied interests elsewhere, would devote the developing energy of the Intercolonial to the road and its territory needs, is doubtful. But an independent company of men acquainted with the system and the time conditions, and forced to operate the road as an independent institution, intensively, could make it an energizing and developing agent that would revolutionize our industrial and commercial situation. Aside from the personal interests of such a company in Maritime development, it would make the matter of rates that could only make the road profitable by improving the quantity and grade of its traffic. And such improvement could only come through general development of industrial conditions throughout its territory, so that the company would be compelled to beam the country as it broke.

Falling the present experiment on the Intercolonial, and looking any other plan of reform under government ownership, this plan is, at any rate, better worth trying for a year or two than the present one. It is a matter of record, for instance, that Intercolonial drivers get better results from their engines than any other line in the country. I. C. R. conductors in capacity and courtesy are exceptional. The train and track hands are admirably efficient. Men of men. Politics may help a man to get a start in these lines to work, but once there, the railway unions and the railway officials will not let him down. The Minister himself would not dare to promote or to retard one of these men without good reason. The Intercolonial has a large number of unskilled work, around election times, and in the general offices at Montreal, politics may not be so much a factor as it is in the general offices at Montreal. Moreover, the Board has "absolute power to hire and dismiss" and is exercising it. It is not exercising it in the way of the I. C. R. activity, for instance, a "senior" man of many years, who has been dismissed, and every man of them was a Liberal, or claimed to be. Naturally there was some serious feeling about it, but the Intercolonial has no right to be back, and it is not.

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