

Winnipeg and Port Arthur Are Natural Junction Points

If Minority Report of Railway Enquiry Commission Be Adopted,
North Bay Is Not the Natural Junction for G.T.R. and C.N.R.—
Review of the Railway Situation and of the Various "Solutions"

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AS one who has taken a deep interest in railway matters for some years, and has given some thought to the various suggestions and reports upon the present railway problems in Canada, the writer is under the impression that there is still some room for further discussion at this time.

The facts brought out as to the financial affairs of the various railway companies agree fairly well, or as well as might be expected, but the suggested remedies are so varied that instead of being much help they appear to make the problem more confusing to the general public; and possibly to the powers that be. There is no doubt but that the facts brought out by the Royal Commission in great detail in their valuable report, and the facts as given by Mr. W. F. Tye, M.Can.Soc.C.E., in his valuable paper to the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers, agree fairly well, and are most excellent information. It is in the remedies suggested that the radical differences creep in. Up to the present we have the following suggested remedies:—

1st. The proposal of Sir Thomas Tait that all the Canadian railways be combined into one government owned and operated system, including the Intercolonial and the Canadian Pacific systems. This makes a system of 31,967 miles.

2nd. Mr. W. F. Tye recommends a combination of the Grand Trunk, Grand Trunk Pacific, National Transcontinental and Canadian Northern into a single system, to be privately owned and run upon a commercial basis in competition with the C.P.R. This makes a system of 19,021 miles.

3rd. The Royal Commission's majority report recommends the incorporation of the Dominion Railway Co., to include the Intercolonial, the National Transcontinental, the Grand Trunk, the G.T. Pacific and the Canadian Northern. This makes a system of 20,512 miles, to be operated for the government by a commission of five members.

4th. The Royal Commission's minority report recommends nursing the different railway corporations along in the future as has been done in the past, with government aid, until they get sufficient strength to stand upon their own feet.

It would serve no useful purpose to discuss the reasons or causes that have led up to the present financial difficulties of the various railway companies. No doubt there are many circumstances contributing to the result. The main question confronting the country is that they are in the hole, and how can they get out? That is the point. The proposal of Sir Thomas Tait would be a colossal undertaking; such as has never been undertaken anywhere. The taking over of, say, 32,000 miles of railway as a single government owned and operated system at a single gulp, would be "taking the bull by the horns" in earnest, indeed. Sir Thomas has given Australia the best government-operated system of railways known, and no doubt looks at the system from the inside; and from the inside of a well-managed system. There are some

others of us who have seen it from the outside, who look upon it as a calamity to be averted, especially on such a huge scale as that proposed.

The proposal of Mr. W. F. Tye would be a good, sound business proposition if it could be materialized. It would free the properties from political troubles, and the new system would have a free hand to forge ahead with somewhat better grades and distances than the C.P.R. It should be well able to compete successfully in a very short time. As to the difficulties in launching the project, it may be noted that the Royal Commission reports it to be impossible to form a commercial company in their opinion, and cite New York and Mexican cases as precedents; but we have done many things in the past without any precedents.

Without offering any opinion regarding the feasibility of forming this commercial railway company, the one objection the writer has to Mr. Tye's proposal is that it seems to be too radical. It takes cognisance of the financial and physical conditions of the properties and proceeds to apply a drastic remedy on cold business principles, without looking for the lines of least resistance and regardless of any rights or feelings the present owners may have.

The Dominion Railway Company recommended by the majority report of the Royal Commission would include the same railway systems as Mr. Tye's proposition, with the Intercolonial additional; that is, a new system of over twenty-one thousand miles, to be managed by a board of five trustees, in trust for the owners. This Board of Trustees is to be self-perpetuating, electing their successors subject to the approval of the Governor-in-Council, and after appointment responsible to nobody,—autocrats of the old school.

The writer may say here that he has no wish to criticize unduly the constitution of the proposed Board of Trustees, but thinks the Royal Commission has made the best of an impossible proposition. To see this fact it is only necessary to look at the proposition from the standpoint of the G.T. R'y or C.N. R'y, and ask how is it possible for any government, irrespective of party, to ask them to surrender the control of their properties to an irresponsible Board of Trustees without developing a sufficient opposition to endanger the life of that parliament? The constituencies along the line of the Intercolonial would also be likely to fear interference with their long-enjoyed low rates, and make themselves heard. On the whole, this is a more radical adjustment than that proposed by Mr. Tye, and the writer thinks unfair to the owners of the properties proposed to be taken over.

The minority report of the Royal Commission appeals to the writer as the opinion of a man who has the faculty of taking a view of the situation from all angles and interests. He sees it in connection with the difficulties to be encountered and compares it with other solutions that will accomplish the end sought without raising new troubles infinitely worse than those sought