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The Canadian Engineer

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THE LATE ROBERT REID.

Mr. Reid was not an engineer, but a successful merchant and manufacturer of London, Ont. Five years ago he was selected by the Dominion Government as one of the commissioners of the National Transcontinental Railway.

The good judgment he has shown as a commissioner, the care and energy and tact displayed by him has made clear the wisdom of the choice, and he will be greatly missed.

The work of the Commission is but half done. The remaining years will be trying years, and a competent successor to Mr. Reid will be very necessary.

In selecting the first Commission the Government deliberately avoided appointing men to the Board who had some knowledge of engineering and construction contracting methods, and the folly of such a course has led to blunders, and worse. In the middle of the stream they are found swapping horses. The engineering staff and the contractors are chafing under orders, directions and intimations that would not come from a board of strong engineers and contractors.

It is just as senseless to ask a tailor—no matter how good a tailor he might be—to build a railway, as it would be to appoint a grocer to a judgeship or a farmer to be health inspector at a port of entry.

The National Transcontinental Railway is not a scheme for a clever promoter. The financing is looked after by a Government Minister. The possibilities of the road being a money-maker were discussed and decided by the Dominion Cabinet.

The National Transcontinental to-day is an engineering-contracting problem, and to be successfully handled must not be nursed by lawyers, manufacturers, merchants, but given over to specialists in that class of work—the engineering-contractors.

It is no argument to say that the railroads of Canada are controlled by business men—not engineers. Quite true; but they hand over construction to trained men and do not interfere. Construction is the work of the Commission.

If manufacturers and merchants compose the N.T.R. Commission, why not engineers for the Tariff Commission?

AVIATION.

The meet at Rheims this week tends to draw attention to aeroplanes, extended flights and aviation.

A few years ago the wireless accomplished the well-nigh impossible, and startled the world with a message transmission that appeared uncanny. This year the aeroplane has demonstrated the possibilities of a new method of transportation, and the air is full of machines, imaginary and real, and the daily press has a new subject that will stand for "copy" at any time when real news is scarce.

Progress in mechanical flight is dependent upon the reliability of the motor, and the high-class racing car has led to the development of such a light, durable, reliable machine that aeroplanes have been kept afloat for two hours and more, the giving out of the fuel accounting in most cases for the limit of flight.