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INLAND WATERWAYS OF CANADA

A FRANK DISCUSSION OF OUR TRANSPORTATION PROBLEM

Transportation is the most important material and economic question before the people of Canada to-day.

RELATIVE CHEAPNESS OF RAIL AND WATER TRANSPORTATION.

The Canadian Government's report on the proposed Georgian Bay Canal (1908) states briefly, and well, the relative cost of water and rail transportation, on pages 398-399, as follows:—

"It is well known now, that transportation by water on a first-class shipway is not only cheaper than by rail, but often much quicker.

It is recognized in the United States that the average movement of freight by rail is only twenty-five miles per day, or about one mile per hour, including of course, all delays at stations and at terminals, where cars are frequently side-tracked for several days. Anyone conversant with the movement of freight on the Great Lakes can see that the average there is considerably above this figure.

Mr. Joseph E. Ransdell, President of the National Rivers and Harbours Congress, in the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, states:—

"As to the relative cost by the two methods, there can be no difference of opinion. The Interstate Commerce Commission reported that the average cost of moving freight by rail in 1906 was 7.48 mills per ton per mile. The statistical report on the lake commerce for 1906 by Colonel Davis, U. S. E. C., shows it cost to move over 51,000,000 tons through the Sault Ste. Marie canal last year .84 of 1 mill per ton per mile or one-ninth of the average rail rate.

From the best information I can get after a careful study of the subject, I am convinced that waterway transportation in this country, under favourable conditions, costs only about one-sixth as much as the average cost by rail. The above remarks apply to the lakes and rivers and furnish unanswerable arguments for their improvement."

He further states that practically all expenditures on waterways have been profitable investments. They have turned in reduced freight rates to the United States people from 100 to 200 per cent. yearly.

There is no doubt that money expended at present, on well advised improvements of harbours and rivers is a wise expenditure which benefits the entire country."