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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

American Railway Master Mechanics' Association, -	
Fuel Economy	305
Laboratory and Road Tests	304
Locomotive Headlights	306
Locomotive Stokers	296
Smoke Prevention	311
Standardization of Tinware	312
Superheater Locomotives	313
Appointments, Transportation	325
Birthdays of Transportation Men	316
Board of Railway Commissioners, -	
Orders by, Summaries of	331
Canadian Pacific Ry., Construction, etc.	319
Trains, Windsor St. Station, Montreal	317
Electric Motors in Railway Shops	307, 314
Electric Railway Department	332 to 339
British Columbia Electric Ry. and In- creased Fares	338
Postmaster-General and the Transporta- tion of Postmen	321, 332, 333
Toronto Ry., Recommendations re Traffic Mainly About Transportation People	327
Marine Department	340 to 345
Empress of Ireland Wreck	342
Standard of Construction of Great Lakes Vessels	340
Stern Wheel Steamboats for the Sas- katchewan River	341
Master Car Builders Association, -	
Brake Shoe and Brake Bean Equipment,	310
Car Construction	294, 313
Car Wheels	293
Car Trucks	302
Couplers and Draft Rigging	303
Freight Car Equipment, Damage to	302
Interline Loading of Commodities	293
Overhead Inspection of Box Cars	299
Retirement of 40,000 and 50,000 lb. Capacity Cars	293
Revision of Rules of Interchange	309
Revision of Standards and Recommended Practice	308
Specifications and Tests of Materials	299
Postmaster-General and the Transporta- tion of Postmen	321, 332, 333
Railway Development	323
Railway Rolling Stock Notes	330
Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Ry. Passenger Equipment	320

The Postmaster General's Attempt to Establish an Autocracy.

Canadian Railway and Marine World is not a political paper and has no partisan bias. Its founder, who still controls it, is a Conservative. In forty years of voting life he has never voted for anyone but a Conservative candidate, at either Dominion or Provincial elections. In years gone by, he took a somewhat active part in political affairs, but on establishing this paper decided to withdraw from participation in them, without, however, in any way changing his personal views, believing that Canadian Railway and Marine World would thereby occupy a stronger position among its readers, embracing men of both political parties throughout the entire Dominion. For this reason political questions have found no place in its columns, but circumstances have arisen which make it necessary to depart from that policy, in one instance at least, and to protest against recent action by the Postmaster General.

On other pages of this issue considerable space is devoted to a bill introduced at the Dominion Parliament's recent session, by the P.M.G., in which a most barefaced attempt was made to give the occupant of that position even more autocratic powers than he already possessed, and to take from a large section of the people rights which should be inalienable. The portion of the bill particularly dealt with elsewhere in this issue is that relating to compensation to be paid electric railways for carrying postmen, the P.M.G. having made an ineffectual attempt to secure the power to fix this arbitrarily, without the companies affected being given the right to secure arbitration or to appeal in any way. This provision was included in an "omnibus bill," entitled "An Act to Amend the Post Office Act," in which a number of other matters were dealt with, including newspaper postage rates, registration and insurance of letters, appointments and salaries of railway mail clerks, etc., etc.

We say deliberately, and without fear of successful contradiction, that a determined attempt was made to smuggle this bill through Parliament, without at least two of the interests affected, viz., newspaper publishers and electric railway companies, being aware of its contents. It was not distributed to the press in the usual way, nor even to those who subscribe for copies of all bills in order to keep posted. In fact, as far as Canadian Railway and Marine World is concerned, a copy of it was not received until after it had been read a third time in the Commons, and then it came simultaneously with the Official Report of the Debates which contained the discussion on the third reading. That the attempt to keep the contents of the bill from those interested was deliberate, is proved by the fact that a person who wrote a permanent official of the P.O. Department on May 6, asking for a copy of the bill (two days after it had been read a third time), received an answer from that official, dated May 8, stating that the bill would not be printed until it had been signed by the Governor General. This was an absolute untruth, as Canadian Railway and Marine World had a day or two previous to the date of that letter secured a copy of the bill, and we cannot believe that the untruth was unintentional. We cannot imagine that a permanent official, occupying such a prominent position as the one referred to does, was unaware that it was necessary that the bill should be printed before it could be passed in the Commons. When he gave the answer above stated, the bill had not only been printed for submission to the

Commons, but it had been reprinted as passed by the Commons, and for submission to the Senate. When the discussion on it opened in the Commons the P.M.G. gave an evasive answer as to the effect of some of the amendments proposed, and anyone reading the official report of his remarks cannot fail to come to the conclusion that there was a deliberate attempt to deceive.

The including of the various subjects above referred to in one bill, is in keeping with the cunning which appears to be one of the P.M.G.'s chief characteristics. By putting in the clause respecting newspaper postage rates, and compensation for carrying postmen on electric railways, with other clauses relating to appointments and salaries of railway mail clerks, he attempted to bring it under the head of a money bill, and therefore unamendable by the Senate, but he was unsuccessful.

We do not believe that Mr. Borden had any knowledge of the contents of the bill, before they were brought to his attention after it had passed the Commons. In the multiplicity of his duties he is not blamable for this. We believe he is too high principled to have countenanced such legislation, and we cannot help thinking that when he was informed of what had been done he deeply regretted it.

As pointed out elsewhere in this issue, the electric railway companies had no notice of the portion of the bill affecting them, and no opportunity for making any representation to the Commons. The intention evidently was to "railroad" the bill through the Senate in the same way, but its reference to the Committee on Banking and Commerce, in opposition to the expressed wish of the Government leader in the Senate, prevented this, and an amendment was secured giving electric railway companies the protection which they offered last year to accept, but which the P.M.G. refused, viz., reference to the Board of Railway Commissioners.

The rate of postage to be paid by newspaper publishers for the transportation of their papers has, ever since Confederation, been vested in Parliament. The objection to the P.M.G.'s attempt to take that power from Parliament, and confer it upon himself, is not a question of rates. The publishers object to it because they want stability, and because they do not want to be in the power of any one man, who could change rates as often as he might see fit, and who would have absolute powers of discrimination. Many of them particularly object to such powers being vested in the present P.M.G., who has shown himself impervious to argument or reason, and they object to his successors, whoever they may be, having such power, but they do not object to paying a reasonable rate, to be settled by Parliament. The question of newspaper postage rates has been before the P.M.G. for months. He had ample time to prepare a tariff and present it to Parliament, but he broke faith with the Canadian Press Association, and attempted to steal a power which no one man should possess.

This is not a political question. As soon as the contents of the bill leaked out, protests from newspaper publishers all over Canada, irrespective of their politics, poured into Ottawa, but Mr. Pelletier treated them with absolute contempt. When the bill first came up in the Senate, Sir Mackenzie Bowell, an ex-Conservative premier and the ex-government leader in the Senate, said: "Although I appear as a seconder, I do not approve of the bill and I am not to be com-