

## Letters to the Editor

### RELATION OF THE RAILWAYS TO THE FEDERAL HOUSING SCHEME

Sir,—The Federal housing plan has in its intention a desire to benefit primarily two classes of the community: first, employees of manufacturing corporations who have located in parts of the country previously unsettled, and the employers of whom are willing to supervise the layout of model villages; and second, those of small means living under poor conditions in cities; and particularly the returned soldiers in these classes.

With the first class, the railways have no connection in the development of housing schemes, but with the second their influence may be paramount. The price of land within the cities is so high that in all probability the areas will be laid out in the suburbs, or beyond what we now consider as suburbs. Thus the greatest consideration is transportation, before even such important items as water supply and sewage disposal are considered.

It would be somewhat of a new idea for Canadians deliberately to set up habitations miles away from the centre of the city, although the reverse is often done. It is no unusual thing for the workers to travel for hours daily from the cities to their occupations, but consideration is seldom given to the other idea. An instance of this is the influx into Montreal every evening of the workers from the Longue Pointe district. In a small way, special transportation arrangements are made by the railways for the benefit of firms in outlying districts, but generally with the idea of bringing work people into the city after the day's work.

Those who have sufficient means live outside the cities in the summer, and in some cases the transportation facilities are good, but there is no evidence that the railways are convinced of the necessity of perfectly organized systems of rapid transit. Such systems are in evidence around London, Eng., where excellent service at very reasonable commuting rates exists as far as 50 miles out, and a great deal of this service is steam.

Previous to the war it was possible to commute on about 25 per cent. of the regular fare. The exact figures in one case were 50 cents return regular, and \$11.25 for three months on a "season ticket," i.e., commuting, but not being restricted in any way as to how many trips a day.

The extension of street car lines cannot be recommended on account of the irksomeness of the many stops at very short intervals. The question of the electrification of steam lines around large cities is very urgent, but much can be done by the existing railroads if the companies will throw themselves with sufficient energy into the problem.

In Ontario it is certain that the "Hydro" can keep pace as regards supply with any demand made upon it by electrification of steam lines. The idea of rapidity cannot too strongly be impressed; with proper organization there is no reason why a speed of around 35 miles per hour could not be obtained even for such a short run as that to a village say ten miles out.

It is not an unusual arrangement for the railways to be interested in ventures not quite in their direct lines, as for example, the irrigation, drainage and general development of farm lands. Therefore, it is suggested that there is now an opportunity for part of the federal grant to be utilized by the companies in building houses, not only for their own employees but for city dwellers. The existing staff could in all probability supply all the organizing end of the business, and additional labor could be secured for the actual construction. The revenue from the number of commuters should seem attractive to the railroads.

A particular example which is brought to mind is the Gatineau River district near Ottawa and Hull, fed by the C.P.R. Quite a large scheme (or two separate schemes) are possible here for the industrial workers of Ottawa and Hull and for the civil servants, in an exceedingly beautiful dis-

trict abounding in power for future electrification. At present, the rate at which this line is operated is roughly 18 miles per hour, but this might be increased if special non-stop trains were run from the suggested model villages.

Regarding the housing scheme in general, municipalities will be nervous of the question of the guarantee of repayment as demanded, for instance, in the Ontario scheme, and may not be inclined to be the first to move in the matter; and the question is very urgent. That is where a substantial lead may be given by the railroads around such cities as Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa, not to mention other cities and towns where the housing situation is just as acute.

EDMUND G. TIMBRELL,

Topographical Surveys Branch.

Ottawa, Ont., February 19th, 1919.

### JAMES WHITE STATES CONSERVATION COMMISSION'S CASE IN REGARD TO THE TWO CENTRAL STATION DIRECTORIES

Sir,—I note in your issue of the 20th an editorial entitled "Two Central Station Directories."

The first summary statement re electric energy generated in Canada was contained in the January issue of "Conservation," issued January 2nd.

At the eighth annual meeting of the Commission of Conservation, January 16th-17th, 1917, it was announced that the Commission was compiling data respecting electric generation in Canada. The circulars requesting such data had been sent out in November, 1916, and many replies had been received prior to January 16th, 1917.

The preliminary draft of the Census circular was prepared March 26th, 1917, nearly five months after our circular was sent. The Census circular in its final form was not sent out till November, 1917, a year after ours. This settles the question of priority.

The Conservation Commission publication is *descriptive*, with some tabular matter as appendices, whereas the Census pamphlet is *statistical*.

The only duplication, thus far noticed, is in a portion of one table occupying one page out of the 296 pages contained in the Commission report, this table being only incidental to the other material.

The Conservation Act provides that it "shall be the duty of the Commission to take into consideration all questions which may be brought to its notice relating to the conservation and better utilization of the natural resources of Canada, to make such inventories, collect and disseminate such information."

The Census statement is up to December 15th, 1917, whereas the Commission's data are up to October, 1918, nearly one year later. Last autumn, our data were resubmitted to the various authorities for correction and revision.

JAMES WHITE,

Assistant to Chairman, Commission of Conservation.

Ottawa, Ont., February 25th, 1919.

Changes in details of the Hunter St. Bridge, Peterborough, Ont., that will mean a reduction of more than \$50,000 in its estimated cost, have been suggested to the Board of Works by the consulting engineer, Frank Barber, Toronto.

Resolutions were passed by the Ontario Municipal Electrical Association, at its annual meeting this month, calling upon the provincial government to investigate the feasibility of a publicly owned telephone system, to secure the repeal of the federal act giving the Toronto-Niagara Power Co. certain rights, to secure additional payment for "the Hydro" for supply of power to munition plants, to secure provincial representation on the International Joint Commission, to petition the federal government against alienating the surplus water power of the province, and to advocate a senatorship for J. W. Lyon, president of the Hydro-Electric Railway Association.