

THE CIVILIAN

DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF THE CIVIL SERVICE OF CANADA

VOL. XIII.

HULL, QUE., MARCH, 1920.

No. 4.

The Government Railway Problem.

The railway legislation passed by the Dominion Parliament at the special session has had the effect of making Canada the owner and operator of the largest railway system in the world. This momentous responsibility assumed by a country of barely 8,000,000 people excites the imagination, and whatever the policy of the past has been which has made necessary the railway policy of the present Government, it behooves all good citizens of the Dominion who are part owners of this great system to help in making a success of this new departure in railway management.

"The Civilian" has undertaken to publish a resume of Government ownership of railways in Canada, historically, ethically and practically, with special reference to the dangers to be avoided and the hopes to be entertained. Articles will be contributed by prominent officials of the various railway systems which have now been incorporated into a single national organization, and official declarations will be presented as to the administration of the system upon a strictly business basis. Mr. D. B. Hanna, president of the Canadian National Railways, introduces the subject in this number in a historical sketch of the Canadian Northern Railway.

The Canadian Northern's Early History

(By D. B. Hanna)

The construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway across Canada was a tremendous undertaking for a country with a population of four and a half million, and it brought Canada very much into the limelight. Largely due to this and the demand for labour during 1882, 1883 and 1884, when this construction work was at its height, 112,000, 133,000 and 103,000 immigrants, respectively, came to Canada in these years, but thereafter the number rapidly diminished until in 1896 the number was only 16,835. As Winnipeg was the gateway to the Canadian West, this falling off in immigration and the general halt in the progressive development of Manitoba and the Northwest provinces in early nineties was naturally a matter of no small concern to the Manitoba Government. The census of 1891 had been disappointing—giving Manitoba a population of 152,506 and Winnipeg 25,639. Railway construction gradually fell off—not a mile was added to the mileage of the country from the head of the Great Lakes to the Pacific Coast in the years 1894 and 1895, due no doubt to a reflection of business conditions in United States, where the effect of the panic of 1893 had not fully passed away.

Among those who knew Manitoba there was no doubt as to the general

fertility of the soil, but even free grants of 160 acres of land would not take settlers into sections unserved by railways. Promises of railways made with all sincerity were not sufficient to induce farmers to go into new tracts. The experience of a number of settlers who had gone into the district west of Lake Dauphin along the then projected route of the C. P. R. and who were left "in the air" when the more southerly route was adopted, had shaken the faith of the settlers in promises of that kind.

The Greenway Government of Manitoba in 1895, re-endorsed by an election in which the Manitoba School question was the leading issue, decided to take action to relive the oppressing stagnation and approached the contractors who had built the Calgary and Edmonton, and the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan railways, to build a colonization railway in the province of Manitoba. The contractors so approached were MacKenzie and Mann—(now Sir William MacKenzie and Sir Donald Mann). Work was commenced at Gladstone early in 1896 under a charter which had been granted in 1896, when, as stated in the Statute, the Company was "*revised and amended*"—this was the Lake Manitoba Railway and Canal Company. The line was projected to the Dauphin country (to the relief of the marooned settlers) and 100 miles of line were completed by the end of the year.

I had gone to Manitoba in 1886 and had seen a number of railways make a start and fall into the hands of the big transcontinental line which had in ten years after its opening become a veritable octopus. I had been in railway service since 1882 when I came to this country to enter the service of the Grand Trunk, as a young Scotch lad. After two years with that Company, during which I had a good chance to observe the effect of the "absent treatment" that a directorate 3,500 miles away can give a property, I went to the West Shore in New York and from there to the Manitoba and North Western Railway where I did everything that someone else didn't, and there I was in 1896 when Mr. D. D. Mann, as he was then, came to me and asked me to take charge of operating the 100 miles of railway they had built that year. I took the job, and became the first employee of the Company, which, when subsequently, in 1899, amalgamated with the Winnipeg Great Northern Railway, took the name of the Canadian Northern Railway Company.

The start was a very modest one and when I issued the first time table—just a little typewritten sheet—we only had one engine and a single crew. I interjected a little humour into the situation as well as a safety first principle by stating that No. 2 would not leave until No. 1 arrived. The staff was very small for that first winter,—thirteen, until I discovered this and