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RAILWAYS IN MANITOBA.

THE railroad controversy which threatens to embroil Manitoba with the Federal Government has an economical as well as a political side, though in the heat of political strife the former and more important phase is liable to be quite occluded by the latter.

Secession, which a few in Manitoba and British Columbia talk of, will never be seriously contemplated by the people, when they realise that they could be admitted to the Union only in the dependent position of territories; for if Dakota, with its population of over 150,000, begs in vain for the privilege of Statehood, on what plea could Manitoba, with only, say, 75,000 inhabitants, expect successfully to claim the boon denied to her wealthier and more populous neighbour?

While a very few of the disappointed and dissatisfied may preach Annexation, the many doubtless prefer less drastic measures. But the people at large seem to be favourable to unlimited railroad construction; and yet it is very doubtful whether the public good would be really advanced thereby. The results of legitimate and, as with us, reckless railroad building, can best be studied in the history of the Rocky Mountain railroads south of the line.

Within the Rocky Mountains since 1863, when the first sod of the Union Pacific was turned, there have been built over 20,000 miles of railroad. Of this mileage about 10,000 miles may be allotted to the trunk lines and 10,000 to their branches. The trunk lines may be said to converge on the Pacific to San Francisco, but where they run parallel, across the great Central Plateau, and over the ranges of the Rocky Mountains and Sierra Nevada Cordilleras, they are hundreds of miles apart.

The Southern Pacific is built almost within sight of the Mexican frontier. Two hundred miles to the north the Atlantic and Pacific Division of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fé Railroad traverses Central New Mexico and Arizona. The Union Pacific and its extension, the Central Pacific, cross the Rocky Mountains through Southern Wyoming, Northern Utah and Nevada, about four hundred and fifty miles to the north of the Atlantic and Pacific. The Northern Pacific, again, intersects the Mountains about four hundred and fifty miles to the north of the Union and Central Pacific. Only about two hundred and fifty miles still further to the north is the parallel line of the Canadian Pacific. Intermediate between the Atlantic and Pacific and the Union Pacific the Utah Division of the Denver and Rio Grande spans the Rocky Mountains from the Plains to the Great Valley; and the Oregon Short Line runs diagonally through Wyoming, Idaho, and Oregon, between the Union and the Northern Pacific. But these two have heretofore been local rather than through lines. Counting them as one, the through traffic of the continent west of the Great Lakes, and of the Lower Missouri and the Upper Mississippi within the United States, may be said to be divided between five parallel roads, each of which should drain a section of the western half of the continent about one thousand and five hundred miles long and two hundred and fifty miles wide. Their

influence in developing the West has without question been paramount, but the return they have paid to capital has been very small. And yet it would seem that the traffic drawn from a tract of country as large as the whole of the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario—for such is the size of each of the sections in question—covered with pasturage, though scanty, and teeming with mineral wealth, should support profitably one trunk line and its tributaries; and so it would had the trunk lines parcelled out the local traffic as prudently as they have divided the through traffic among themselves. But instigated by rivalry and spite, rather than impelled by business motives, adjacent lines have generally competed for intermediate traffic and run branches from opposite directions into the same district, dividing into several channels the comparatively small stream of freight which flows from even the largest centres of Western industry. To take two notable instances: Leadville, in Colorado, lies in the heart of the Rocky Mountains, between the high Eastern Range and the Continental Divide. When lead carbonate ore was first mined there the nearest accessible point on the Denver and Rio Grande was Pueblo, one hundred and fifty-eight miles off; the nearest on the Union Pacific was Denver, one hundred and fifty-one miles off. Both companies built branches into it. The roads, carved out of mountain sides and spanning deep cañons, were costly to build. Running over steep grades and round sharp curves, and paying high rates of wages, their operating charges are heavy, and the total freight and passenger traffic of both the roads has proved to be insignificant as compared with that of a single Eastern road. The result is that freight and passenger rates are necessarily twice as high as they should be. A single road, enjoying all the traffic, could not carry it at Eastern rates; two roads, dividing it, must charge more than double rates. I say dividing it, not competing for it; for in nearly all these cases the opposition roads, in order to make running expenses, must come to an understanding, and must agree to charge living rates, which are about twice what profitable rates ought to be. Leadville, with two roads, pays \$9 per ton for coal, where \$5 would be a high price.

Now the Leadvillites are jubilant over the advent of another railroad from the Plains, the Colorado Midland Railroad, which is going to right every wrong. It is being built at frightful cost over hill and gorge, straight from Colorado Springs, over the high Eastern Range, into the valley of the Arkansas, where it occupies a shelf on one side of the cañon facing the Denver and Rio Grande on a shelf on the other. And beyond Leadville both roads are struggling to see who can first reach Aspen, a new camp of great promise but necessarily uncertain future. The probability is that Leadville will positively suffer from the advent of this third road, as she will have to support three instead of two corporations. Both Leadville and Aspen could exist only by the grace of a railroad, but one road could support both and prosper while charging fair rates of freight. Three roads will starve, and as a consequence starve their customers.

Butte, in Montana, offers another case in point. It is the second most important freight centre in the mountains. For some years it was tributary to the Union Pacific, through the Utah and Northern Narrow Gauge Railroad, the most profitable feeder of the Union Pacific system. The Union Pacific possessing the monopoly of its traffic, oppressed it shamefully. The Northern Pacific at length passed within striking distance to the north. It divided the freight and reduced the Union Pacific profits, but conferred very little benefit on the Butte industries. Now a third road proposes to share its freight. One road could certainly thrive on the traffic of Butte, and supply it with cheap salt and cheap fuel, and carry away cheaply its copper and silver bullion. Three will be obliged to charge extravagant rates, and none of the three will prosper. One road could, but one road if left to itself certainly would not adopt a reasonable tariff. The United States public is beginning to mutter *must*. But to fix rate tariffs and yet permit unlimited competition is a palpable wrong.

It is certain that unlimited railroad building and unchecked competition work positive harm. The periodical crises which mow down crop after crop of bankrupt railroads prove how much capital is wasted in unnecessary railroad building, and the very high local rates charged on all Rocky Mountain roads, even at competitive local points, shows also that competition does not necessarily mean cheap transport. In fact as soon as the facilities for transport are in excess of the available freight, increased facilities, which cost money, necessitate increased freight charges, out of