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## THE INTERCOLONIAL.

(See Second Page.) enter into contracts upon this basis. If you will give to us certain freight rates throughout the year, we will patronize your road, not only in winter but in summer as well. Under these conditions we are seriously handicapped in freight rates, not merely with one company, but with many companies. And naturally precedent governs, particularly in the matter of the government railway. Precedent is very strong; and if you fix a certain rate in connection with the Sydney, for instance, you are called upon to have proportionate rates fixed over the whole of the Intercolonial. There can be no discrimination, there must of necessity be uniformity. The ordinary company can do as it will—that is to say—they can withhold here or they can extend there.

There can be no favorites, there must be uniformity. The very moment you establish a precedent with respect to one thing, that precedent must prevail all over the line. Under these conditions I must say that the Intercolonial is to be congratulated, even under the results that are shown. Of course we do not take into consideration the cost of the canal system of Canada. The canals were constructed as part of the highway for the country. For long years tolls were charged, but in the interests of trade and commerce these tolls were abolished. There is an annual current expenditure of upwards of \$1,000,000 on the canals. In whose interest is that expenditure made? It is true that last year we had \$1,000,000 deficit on the Intercolonial Railway, but there was also \$1,000,000 deficit on the canals of Canada. The canals were a part of the compact of confederation. They were made free in the interest of the trade and commerce of the country. Now the Intercolonial was established as a bond between the old provinces of Ontario and Quebec and the provinces known as the Maritime Provinces. It was established to promote trade. It did promote trade. It is true that the freight rates are not high, but it repudiates the idea that they are not high simply in the interest of the Maritime Provinces, because, if they had been higher, there would not have been that trade created between these upper provinces and the lower provinces which has resulted.

Take the tariff of the Canadian Pacific Railway or the tariff of the Grand Trunk Railway and compare it with the freight tariff of the Intercolonial Railway, and I say that you will find that the Intercolonial Railway tariff is all the way from 25 to 80 per cent. less than the freight tariff of these different railways. Perhaps that is a condition of things that should not have prevailed.

Necessarily the through tariffs must be governed by that of the other railways. Necessarily, if we accept freight at Montreal for St. John, we are governed by the Canadian Pacific Railway tariff, because they have the direct route, they have the shorter mileage, and we are compelled to carry that freight away around a much longer route at the same rate as the local tariffs are much less than that of those other railways, and therein is a very great loss.

We expend a greater amount of money in order to carry that freightage to its point of destination. It is also true—I admit it frankly—that our local rates are lower. I think they should be increased. I think they necessarily must be increased in the interest, not merely of the road, but in all interests. I think I may safely say that we have now passed the stage when it is impossible to make ends meet. On the hand the freight tariff is practically fixed. The rates are exceedingly low as compared with those charged by the different railway corporations in Canada.

On the other hand we have an ascending scale of operating charges. Chief among these is the wages. The very moment you increase, by even a farthing, the wages of any of the employees you have what is practically not a controllable element; that is to say, it becomes a fixed charge. You can never reduce, it is easy to increase, but you can never reduce.

But a government railway never could. I make the statement unequivocally and unhesitatingly that the government cannot, in justice pay a lower scale of wages to its employees than that paid by ordinary commercial railways.

The men in the car shops and the men in all departments of the Intercolonial Railway are not paid in excess of what other railway companies are paying; in fact instead of the government establishing the standard of wages, the government has simply followed in the line of the other railways and all appeals that have ever been made to other ministers of Railways in times past, as I know from personal experience, were made on the basis of the established rate of wages paid by other railway companies. Under these circumstances, we have simply followed on tardily, I admit, but we have followed on and we are yet under the standard as established by the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Grand

Trunk Railway. In keeping to the rule of paying our men in accordance with the rate of wages which is paid by the commercial lines, we have been compelled during the past two or three years to grant very large increases to our employees in all branches of the service, and to this item of wages may be charged the principal cause of the financial results which we are now compelled to face. Fuel, ties, lumber, steel and all classes of materials are much dearer than they were three years ago. All these charges swell the operating expenses. We have not been able thus far to adopt the remedy of increasing the rates, which a railway corporation might apply. That is a very difficult thing to do. I think I can say frankly that there is no subject upon which the people are more sensitive than that of increasing freight rates on a government railway. From one end of the railway to the other, from the Sydney to St. John, and from Halifax to Montreal, the very moment the suggestion of an increase is made, that moment you meet with opposition. That is necessarily the outcome of a government operation of railways.

The people say this in our line, this is our railway, we own it, and we are going to run it in our interests. I know that it is difficult for people in other parts of Canada to properly take into consideration the feeling that exists with respect to that very feature of the Intercolonial Railway. I have known it, I have felt it, I have been made to feel it. The very fact that you run your canals free, the very fact that these canals are operated without charge to those who take advantage of them, is used as an argument by those who would seek low freight rates on a government railway. It is stated very freely all over the Maritime Provinces that if it were in the interests of confederation to construct canals and make these canals free, it is also in the interests of the confederation that the Intercolonial Railway should be operated at the least possible cost to the people who are interested in using it. I know that it is not a pleasing thing for men in Minister of Railways to stand up here to-day and acknowledge these things; certainly it is not a gratifying fact. We are all judged by results—circumstances are not taken into consideration, peculiar conditions are not thought of—it is the results that are looked to, and upon these results I stand measurably condemned before the people of Canada as the administrator of this railway during the present fiscal year. But I want the people of Canada to bear in mind the conditions, I want them to realize the circumstances; I want them to travel over that railway from the first of July last down to the present moment and make their own judgment of the history of the road. If there has been any mismanagement I certainly have to learn of it. We have the same general manager, we have the same officials, there has been no change created, there has been no extravagance; we have been buying as we bought heretofore by tender, there has been no favoritism to characterize this road during the past year as compared with previous years; the conditions have been normal as to purchase, as to operation, as to the employment of men; and yet we have a deficit which may reach nearly \$2,000,000.

The question of rates on the Intercolonial must sooner or later receive serious consideration. I am free to admit that even though the canals are free, even though the people of the west have the advantage of free freightage over the canals without tolls, and even though there is an expenditure of \$1,000,000 or more annually on the canals for the benefit of the trade of the country, yet I feel that so far as the Intercolonial Railway is concerned there must be some attention given to the freight charges. I certainly cannot go on from year to year that we should have a very large and increasing deficit, and under these circumstances I would feel that this is a matter which should receive very serious consideration. I desire as briefly as possible and purely in a general way to go over some of the accounts connected with the operating expenses. In the maintenance of way department there has been an increase for the nine months ending 31st March last as compared with the corresponding period last year of \$324,808. The principal items of this increase were Snow and ice, \$126,641; ballasting \$56,608; ties, \$42,426; buildings and platforms, \$15,480; and snow fences, \$5,482. Against this increase there was a decrease aggregating 70,762, so that the net increase was \$182,625 for the nine months.

The maintenance of way has to do with the keeping up of the high character of the Intercolonial, that is its roadbed and condition, and the additional charges for ballasting and ties show that this work has not been neglected during the past year. In fact the standard of the Intercolonial is being maintained. In the department of maintenance of way, the increase of the wages list for the nine months to the 31st of March last, amounts to \$7,000. We paid out that additional amount to the same number of section-men along the line of railway for the same work that they have been doing for years. For 7,000,000. This additional amount is not due to any ad-

ded number of men; there have been none added; but it is due simply to the increase in wages. I am not taking into consideration the amount that was paid out in connection with the snow blockade. That of course was exceptional. We require to have special men in addition to the regular trackmen. In the mechanical department the expenses of the nine months reached 3,098,482, showing an increase over the same period of last year of \$521,563. The chief items making up this increase were: Wages of drivers firemen and cleaners, \$81,660; fuel 174,938; repairs to engine 114,908; repairs to cars 232,452; oil, tallow, and waste 3,308; snow ploughs and flangers, 6,948; and superintendence 9,412. During the past year we have repaired a great many more cars and engines. The rolling stock of the Intercolonial today is in a condition with certain exceptions bears splendid comparison with that of previous years. In fact, I think I can safely say that at no time in the history of the Intercolonial has the rolling stock been in a better condition than it is in to-day. All the old cars—that is, the first class, the second class baggage cars and all that description which have been in the shop and they are certainly in a much better condition to-day than they were at this period last year; and I congratulate the superintendent of motive power on the splendid way in which he is attending to his duties in that direction. They are turning out more engines and cars daily and monthly; they have a better system; they have the work systematized in such a way that the best results are being accomplished. The men who are receiving higher wages are making greater and better returns for those wages than they have heretofore done. A greater number of men are employed, it is true; but the principal reason for the increase in the higher scale of wages paid to every class of men in the shops.

The average increases to all classes of employees in the shop was twenty cents per hour, and you can very readily realize what a burden that means. Take the men not merely at Moncton but at Halifax, Sydney St. John, Riviere du Loup, Montreal, everywhere along the line of the railway. In the traffic department the increased cost of operation was very large. The chief items were: Station expenses 38,842, which is almost wholly an increase in wages. During the last six months of operation, as probably many hon members know, there was a delegation here representing the telegraphers union. Their schedule was gone over and their wages were increased with the result that during the past year they have been paid \$8,700 more than the same number were getting in the previous year. The wages of trainmen during that period were increased by \$16,608. I am prepared to give full details with respect to the comparative rates of pay of all classes of employees affected by the increase to which I have referred. Summing up the items of increased wages paid to the employees of the railway during the past year, I have added the account would stand as follows: Maintenance of way \$182,625; mechanical department, \$221,263; traffic department, \$145,147; making a total of \$549,035. Adding this sum to the deficit of last year of \$900,751, the short age indicated for the current year would be \$1,349,786. Until the year is completed, however, it perhaps would be imprudent to speculate as to what the actual amount of the deficit will be. That it will be large there can be no doubt. It is also certain that this result will be made the subject of general criticism. I think I may fairly ask, however, that judgment be suspended until full and accurate data are available for consideration in the light of the special conditions which have developed during the past two years in particular. These conditions we have added to our wage account. It is only within the last two years that this has been felt, and it is unfortunate perhaps if we see so early that it should have been effect during that period, but these are the facts. I am not disposed to apologize for these increases. I think we are justified. I think they were warranted from every standpoint. I think that the men employed on the Intercolonial Railway are as good as a class of men as are to be found anywhere in Canada. For intelligence, skill and attention to duty they are certainly not exceeded by any other class of men throughout the Dominion. There is no railway which can present a better aggregation of men than does the Intercolonial Railway. They were entitled to recognition, they certainly were entitled to as good wages as are paid by the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Grand Trunk Railway, and I feel that I only did them simple justice when I acceded to their demands. I may fairly be asked for my opinion as to the outlook.

Up to the 30th June. All my conjectures are based upon the year's operations and on certain results we have up to the 31st of March, and even up to this moment. Taking it all in all, on the 30th of June our deficit will not be less than \$1,800,000 and it may reach \$2,000,000. Of course a good deal will depend on the operations of this month will be. This is usually a good month; and if we have favorable conditions—that very dark picture may be brightened up to some extent. Of course this regards the conditions at the close of the year. I could very much better give an explanation as to the year's business, and I prefer to leave it until then. It is not worth while my speaking of the conditions of the Intercolonial Railway or its prospects but I simply recite the facts as they appear to-day. I think that I can fairly ask the sympathy of the house in facing the task of administering the Intercolonial

Railway under the new circumstances which now prevail. Two ways of reducing the deficit are open to us. One to increase the freight rate generally and the other to carry, by means of better equipment, traffic at a lower cost. I do not know that the former method could be immediately applied, but latter merits a trial. If we can equip that road so as to minimize the cost of carrying the traffic over the Intercolonial Railway compares favorably, according to the March returns, with any other railway in Canada. We are not paying more for our material. In fact we are paying less.

We are getting our materials for the Intercolonial Railway at less cost than do the other railways. We are not paying more wages, but there is this element which must not be lost sight of. We have to go mile after mile in order to earn the same results as are earned by the other railways. We have to travel additional miles and get no more returns than they do. That certainly figures very largely in our balance sheet at the end of the year, and we ought to recognize it.

(See last page)

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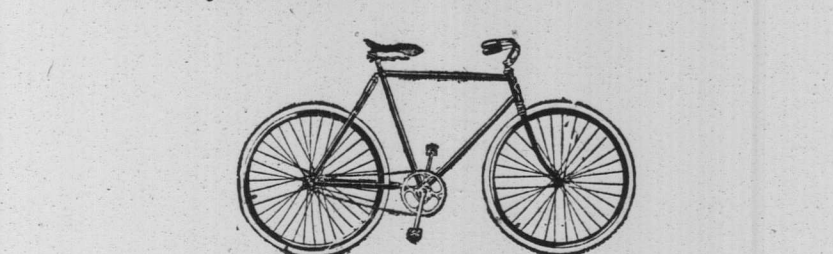
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