

Department of Railways and Telephones

Railway Development Under Guarantee Policy

Some idea of the railway development of the province in the past seven years is gleaned from the fact that 3,015 miles of railway have been built, an average of 430 miles a year and more than a mile a day. Seven years ago there was practically a monopoly, today four companies are in active competition and operate 4,520 miles as against 1,508 miles at the beginning of 1910. Of the bumper crop enjoyed in 1915 approximately 30,000,000 bushels were taken to market by the guaranteed railroads. Without these railways there would not have been such a crop nor such prosperity.

The Government in deciding upon the guarantee policy under which fifty-six per cent. of the mileage built in the last seven years has been constructed, did so with a deep and abiding confidence in the future of the province, and nothing has developed to shake that faith in the slightest degree. Alberta's future is as assured as that season follows season, and for that reason it was felt that the province could well afford to give the railway companies the benefit of a guarantee which would facilitate the raising of the money necessary to build the roads. That the policy has been justified is strongly evidenced in the fact that up to the outbreak of the tremendous struggle now in progress in Europe, capital was more than willing to assist in developing railways in this province, and there is not the slightest doubt that on the resumption of peace, money will be available for railway and industrial development, and that the ideal will be fully attained, namely, that there should be a railway sufficiently near every farmer to permit of a trip to market and home again in the one day.

No greater example of the success and advantages of Government ownership of a Public Service Utility, over private ownership, could be cited than the Alberta Government Telephone System which has been extended more rapidly and over a much larger but more sparsely settled territory than any other system on the North American Continent.

The first duty of a public utility, such as the telephone, is to serve communities and then the individual. For this reason and also because the very nature of the business makes it imperatively essential, the long distance and toll lines connecting the various cities, towns and villages are constructed first, then follow the accommodation toll and rural lines radiating from these established exchanges of centres of trade, to serve the districts and individuals tributary thereto.

Rapid Development

A telephone service with 16,780 wire miles and 4,095 pole miles of long distance and toll lines, 32,322 wire miles and 9,593 pole miles of rural lines extending in all directions over an area of approximately 80,000 square miles, serving over 600 cities, towns, villages and communities, giving a universal interchange service to more than 37,000 subscribers' stations in Alberta and over 100 cities and towns in Saskatchewan and British Columbia, is an achievement that has never been equalled or approached by any other system in such a short time.

Almost every well settled community within reach of the system, with a few exceptions, mostly in the more recently settled portions of the province, is enjoying to a greater or lesser degree the benefits of this rapidly and widely extended service. While there are still many without this convenience in their households, they are, in the great majority of districts, within a reasonable distance of a means of communication in cases of sickness or other emergencies.

Distribution of Lines

While the amount of construction work that it is physically possible to complete in any season is limited, the various services have been extended and distributed throughout the length and breadth of the province as equitably as possible, consistent with demands made upon the Department and the amount of work possible to undertake and complete.

Owing to manufacturers of telephone wire and supplies devoting their best efforts and working their factories to their utmost capacity in turning out war materials, the Department found it absolutely impossible to secure deliveries of sufficient material to enable them to undertake the extension of any new lines anywhere in the province this year, and while the Department has a few poles on hand barely sufficient for one-third of an average year's program, nothing could be done without the other necessary material, but this cessation of work is only temporary.

Future Activity

As soon as conditions again become normal it is the intention to continue the former aggressive policy by extending the system as rapidly as warranted by requirements and conditions.

A system, economically constructed, covering such a large and sparsely settled area, regulations governing the extension of service more generous, rural lines built to a greater distance, at the initial rental rate; subscribers' service rentals and long distance rates lower than any other system; a night rate of one half the day rate (given by no other system in Western Canada) and the whole operated at a lower cost than any other system, this, with a sinking fund and reserve sufficient for all needs of the immediate future, are features of this publicly owned utility in which every Alberta citizen may feel a justifiable pride.

Department of Education

An Efficient and Progressive Educational System

The Department of Education for Alberta has attained the proud distinction of establishing a system of education equal to the best in Canada, and far in advance of what unorganized educationalists look for in a young province. It has established schools in all the settled portions of the province and has formulated plans for reaching children of isolated settlers living beyond the boundaries of a school district, adapting for its motto, "An Education for Every Child in the Province."

In regard to agricultural instruction, the Department has established a thorough system of instruction in agriculture in the public schools, also a Summer School for Teachers to thoroughly qualify them to teach this course, and by special money grants has encouraged school boards to supply the facilities and teachers to do this work efficiently. The Department has also had prepared an excellent text-book on agriculture for use in the public schools, and furnishes the same free of cost to the pupils.

Improved Rural Schools

The Department has improved the efficiency of the Rural School by establishing a Teachers' Bureau to keep schools supplied with teachers, by encouraging school boards to operate their schools for the whole school year, by establishing and putting into effect an organization for ensuring enrollment and regularity of attendance of all pupils, by careful inspection and supervision, by a competent staff of inspectors, and by establishing consolidated schools where practicable and desired by the category.

A Library Branch has been organized which supplies the best in books free to school districts. Each rural school house can by this means become a community centre and have within reach a public library, suitable to old and young.

Special Services

Model plans and specifications for one and two-roomed rural school buildings, which save districts using them many hundreds of dollars and gives them up-to-the-minute buildings suitable to the needs of rural education, are supplied free.

The Deliberate Branch sells the bonds of school districts direct to the investor at a mere fraction of the charges made by brokers, and by grouping several offerings places them on the market in sufficient amounts to command the highest price. This branch has saved school districts much expense, has secured them a higher price for their bonds than would have otherwise been possible, and is rapidly becoming very popular throughout the province, the town and city school boards having availed themselves of its services as well as the rural and village districts.

The Department has fostered patriotism in schools, by supplying an abundance of good literature on the war and its causes, by providing for instruction on the principles and operation of the British Constitution, by requiring the hoisting of the Union Jack over every school house, and by building up by every possible means an intelligent citizenship.

Excellent Normal Schools for the training of teachers have been established at central points in the province.

Technical Education

The Department has given every possible impetus to technical education by encouraging all school boards with special Government grants to furnish equipment for giving instruction in Manual Training and Domestic Arts, by furnishing courses for teachers at the Summer School to qualify them to give this instruction, by supervising and encouraging the work through the Director Technical Education, by organizing, supervising and financially assisting night schools for women in the coal mining centres of the province, by the establishment of an Institute of Technology at Calgary, which gives advanced scientific and technical instruction to mechanics, miners and tradesmen, and by co-operation with the Dominion Hospitals Commission gives special vocational instruction in certain trades to returned, partially disabled soldiers, thus fitting them for useful occupations.

A Provincial University entirely independent in its operation has been established, so that citizens of Alberta are afforded the privilege of a higher education with the maximum of efficiency at a minimum of expense.

EFFICIENCY is the watchword of the Department. In making appointments qualification and merit have been the only considerations.

Position of Women in Alberta

In her "Legal Status of Women in Alberta," Mrs. Henrietta Muir Edwards, of Macleod, the author, in the preface states:—

"The women of Alberta, except in dower rights, are more favored in regard to legal status than are those of any other province in Canada. The Government's appreciation of the work of the women in standing shoulder to shoulder with their men folk in the development of their country has been shown by giving to them this premier place in the Dominion."

The objection raised by the author was removed at the last session of the Legislature. Under the Dower Act the wife, or widow, is maintained in possession of the homestead for life. This homestead in the country is defined as one quarter section of land upon which the residence is situated, and in the case of cities, towns or villages, not more than four lots upon which the residence is situated. No matter what the terms of the husband's will may be, the wife's rights cannot be interfered with. The husband cannot mortgage, sell or otherwise dispose of the house without the written consent of the wife.

With the conferring of the franchise the Alberta Government went much further than the Province of Ontario. In that province the right to vote was conferred, but the demand for the right to a seat in the legislature was refused. Alberta women not only have the right to vote, but every other political privilege enjoyed by man, so that a woman is equally eligible for every office conferred by vote of the electors or by appointment of the government.

The interests of women have also been carefully safeguarded in the Marriage Laws and the laws relating to inheritance, guardianship of children, benefits under life insurance policies, and in the Factory Act.

In one sentence it may be said that the privileges enjoyed by man politically are equally bestowed on women; and what man can do in business, such as the right to enjoy, hold and administer property, a woman can also do.

The Government and The Farmer

Much of the recent legislation enacted in the province in recent years has been directed to the benefitting of the agricultural population, and as a consequence the Government has been charged with legislating too much in the interests of the farmers. While the farmers of Alberta have been more than ordinarily successful in their requests for legislation, the Government has been solicitous for the interests of all classes, realizing that in an agricultural country the prosperity of all depends upon the success of the farming community. Two of the most vigorously contested acts passed in the interests of the farmers have been the Alberta Elevator Act and the Farm Machinery Act, passed in 1913, both of which have proved of great value in assisting the farmers of the province. A number of important Acts for the benefit of agriculture were passed at the recent session of the Legislature, including the following:—

- The Alberta Farm Loan Act.
- The Alberta Co-operative Credit Act.
- The Livestock Encouragement Act.
- The Reclamation Act.
- The Seed Grain Act.
- An Act to Amend an Act Respecting Seed Grain, Fodder and Other Relief.
- The Stallion Employment Act.
- An Act to Amend the Agricultural Societies' Ordinance.
- An Act to Amend the Wolf Bounty Act.
- An Act to Amend the Game Act.
- An Act to Amend an Act to Incorporate the Alberta Farmers' Co-operative Elevator Company.
- An Act to Provide for the Guarantee of Certain Borrowings of the Hail Insurance Board of Alberta.
- An Act to Amend the Private Ditches Act.
- An Act to Amend the Drainage Act.
- An Act to Amend the Municipal Co-operative Hail Insurance Act.
- An Act to Amend the Rural Municipality Act.
- An Act to Amend the Local Improvement Act.
- The Municipal Hospitals Act.
- An Act to Amend the School Ordinance and the School Assessment Ordinance.

Every Alberta farmer should be familiar with the provisions of the above legislation which are outlined in a "Synopsis of Important Acts," giving a comprehensive review of the legislation passed at the last session of the Legislature of the province, which has been prepared for free distribution.

Progressive Legislation

A review of the legislation of the past three or four years shows that not only has the Government of Alberta been responsive to public opinion, but in the enactment of progressive legislation has not been surpassed by any other Government under the British flag. Here are a few of the progressive measures given the people of Alberta:—

- Direct Legislation.
- Womanhood Suffrage.
- Patriotic Contribution Act.
- Schools of Agriculture.
- Wild Lands Taxation Act.
- Farm Machinery Act.
- Co-operative Elevators.
- Acts for the Protection of Workmen's Wages.
- Married Woman's Relief Act.
- Acts to provide for Relief and Rescue Work in Coal Mines.
- Act to Establish Co-operative Associations.
- Workmen's Lien Act.
- Corporations' Taxation Act.
- Juvenile Courts' Act.
- Rural Municipalities' Act.
- Extra Judicial Act for Protection During the War.
- Drainage Act to Permit the Reclamation of Large Areas of Waste Lands.
- Act for the Relief of Voluntary and Reservists.
- Act Regulating the Sale of Bonds and Shares to Protect Investors.
- The Fire Prevention Act.
- The Women's Institutes Act.
- Municipal Co-operative Hail Insurance Act.
- Public Utilities Act.
- Fortnightly Pay for Miners.
- Building Trades Protection Act.
- Acts for the Protection of Women, regarding Insurance, Property Rights, Stander, etc.
- School Acts Building up a system second to none.
- Municipal Acts giving the people the largest possible measure of home rule.
- Telephone System owned and operated by the people.
- Railway Policy which has added a mile a day to the railways of the province.