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## AUSTRALIA MAKING BIG MOVE WITH THEIR RAILROADS

Frederick M. White from Fremantle is playing an important part in the unification of the railroads of Australia, which, according to present plans, is to be undertaken by the Commonwealth Government at an estimated ultimate cost of \$57,000,000. About a year ago Mr. White was appointed a member of the Royal Commission to study and make a report of the project of unifying the railroads of Australia. He has just passed through Honolulu on his way to the United States after eight months of employment in the work of the commission in that country. The other members of this commission are Rastat Blake, a civil engineer of London, England, and John J. Garban of Australia. Mr. White was formerly with the New York Central Lines.

Railroad mileage of Australia is 25,729 miles, made up of many different systems and of various gauges. Practically all the railroads there are either owned by the different states or by the Commonwealth Government. In New South Wales there are 6,000 miles of 4-foot, 8 1/2-inch gauge; Victoria, 5,161 miles of 3-foot 3 1/2-inch gauge; South Australia, 1,319 miles of 3-foot 6-inch gauge and 1,195 miles of 3-foot 3-inch gauge; West Australia, 1,139 miles of 3-foot 6-inch gauge; Queensland, 6,973 miles of 3-foot 6-inch gauge; Commonwealth Government, 725 miles of 3-foot 6-inch gauge and 1,121 miles of 4-foot 8 1/2-inch gauge.

Recommendations of the commission are in substance that the first work toward this unification should be confined to that of the transcontinental line between Fremantle in West Australia and Melbourne, a distance of 2,181 miles, thence to Brisbane by way of Sydney, a total distance of 3,488 miles from Fremantle. The mileage is by the present route, but it is proposed to make the unification that there shall be several changes of modifications of the track, which would reduce the total mileage between Fremantle and Brisbane to 3,265 miles.

The suggestion is made by the commission that the work of unifying the gauge of the trunk line between Fremantle and Brisbane should cover eight years and that total unification work of all of the railways of Australia should be completed within thirty years. The cost of the unification of the gauge of the trunk line of 3,265 miles is estimated at approximately \$35,400,000. It is proposed that the Commonwealth Government shall bear one-fifth of the total cost and that the remaining four-fifths shall be borne by the five states on a per capita basis.

There exists at this time an excessive surplus of railroad mileage in Australia, that country having per unit of population 2 1/2 times the railroad mileage of the United States. Railroads have been built in Australia instead of highways. In this statement of the total mileage of railroads in Australia the lines on the Island of Tasmania were not included as it is not proposed to change their present gauge.

One of the most important features of railroad construction in Australia is that it is to be undertaken as soon as financial conditions improve will be the building of a north and south line between Oodnadatta and Emuquallen, about 1,100 miles. This proposed road will run through the heart of Australia and will give Port Darwin on the north coast, a direct connection with Adelaide on the south coast.

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## "CAN'T-STRIKE" PLAN AGAIN PROVEN FAULTY

Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.—Among the latest to acknowledge that the Australian "can't-strike" law has failed is T. R. Ashworth, president of the Victorian employers' federation. At the annual meeting of the federation, held in this city, Mr. Ashworth also frankly blamed employers for present conditions.

"Strikes for inadequate reasons, and in defiance of the award of industrial tribunals," he said, "have caused prolonged suspension of many industries, and these consequent coal mining and shipping have caused widespread stoppage of work in other trades."

"The truculent attitude of labor has lessened the investment of capital in the expansion of existing industries and in launching new enterprises. But while as employers we are keenly alive to the short-comings of labor's policy, we should remember that in such cases they are a reaction against the inevitable errors of the past which were associated with the development of a new industrial system. For instance, if labor is making the mistake of striking for unduly short hours, we are inclined to go slow methods, we must admit that in the past excessive hours were worked and the pace was forced, with the result that efficiency was impaired through physical and moral deterioration."

"Can not employers and wage earners both realize that they are still largely in the grip of error and unite their force to slay this economic enemy? Criticisms by each of the policy of the other is the best weapon for the purpose."

## NO CHANGE IN FOOD COSTS

Washington.—There was practically no change in food costs from October 15 to November 15 in nine of the principal cities of the United States, according to the bureau of labor statistics.

In six cities the decrease averaged but 1.5-6 per cent, as follows: Cincinnati, 3 per cent; Indianapolis, Milwaukee and Portland, Me., 2 per cent; Chicago and Omaha, 1 per cent.

Houston reports an increase of 1 per cent and Newark an increase of four-tenths of 1 per cent. Buffalo reports no change.

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## LESS RAIL ACCIDENT

Washington.—Fewer people were killed in 1920 on American railroads than in any year since 1895, according to the Interstate Commerce Commission.

Last year's figures show that a railroad passenger's chances of getting killed was one in 5,973,000.

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## INJUNCTION AIDS ROADS.

Washington.—Nothing that courts can do will more quickly destroy public confidence in their own integrity than continued abuse of their own power," says President Gompers in a public statement on an order issued by Federal Judge Landis in which the railroad labor board is restrained from publishing its decision against the Pennsylvania railroad for violation of an order.

"It may be permissible," says the A. F. of L. executive, "to recall the fact that the government stood ready to use all necessary force to compel coal miners to operate the mines when mine wages were in dispute. Indications are that the last riot gun would be summoned to compel workers to accept decisions adverse to labor."

"But the Pennsylvania railroad goes into court and gets a piece of paper which not only stops the award, but prevents its publication. "The railroad labor board is in itself an institution of more than doubtful worth, but the fact that a court can stop the publishing of a decision reached by any government agency is repugnant to every ideal of democracy. The effect of the injunction is to prohibit the people of the United States from reading the decision of a government agency and the principle is exactly the same as it would be if the courts were to forbid the people from reading the president's message."

## LIVING COSTS ALARM.

New York.—High rents and other increased living costs has junked the propaganda that high wages is responsible for high prices.

One information service for contractors and builders tells its patrons that the turn in the cost of living will make radical wage reductions in building labor an unsafe element to figure on. Secretary of Agriculture Wallace reports that the farmer is receiving less for his products, considering the purchasing power of his dollar, than ever before. Wages have been hammered down, in many instances, to almost a pre-war level, but living

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