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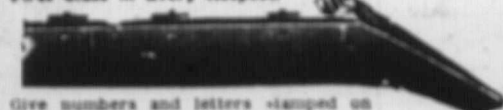
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# The Railway Problem

Article VIII.—Provincial Guarantees, and the Simplicity of Provincial Legislatures.  
The Free Pass Evil—Waterways, Railways and Parliamentary ways.

By E. B. Biggar

The report on "Railway Statistics" of Canada for 1915 shows that the provinces of Canada have given to the private railway corporations cash amounting to over \$37,000,000, the municipalities nearly \$18,000,000, and the Dominion government over \$183,000,000. If we count in the cash loans of former days which were cancelled, the debts which were repudiated and the cash aid of \$23,000,000 voted during the last session of parliament, we have a total of about \$300,000,000 given into the hands of corporations, a large portion of which, in time past, has not gone towards the reduction of the cost of the people's transportation, but to swell the fortunes of a few individuals. This total does not comprise the Dominion and provincial governments' guarantees, which have a softer sound than hard cash, but yield the same reality of endorsement on the national credit to perpetuate private profits. These authorized guarantees now amount to \$409,869,165. The curious thing about the provincial guarantees and cash subsidies is that they are given in respect to railways which have since become integral sections of interprovincial and transcontinental systems. Hence these provinces and municipalities have given their endorsements to bonds over which they have absolutely no individual control. The function of railway transportation in British Columbia is linked with the same function in Prince Edward Island by links of a kind that cannot be broken by either province, except to its own damage. Even if this self infliction were attempted the intervening provinces could not permit it. But Prince Edward Island, having only government owned railways, and having escaped the attentions of the railway companies, is free of such uncontrollable endorsements, nor owes a dollar of interest thereon, while British Columbia has made herself liable to the railway companies to the extent of \$80,932,000 of guarantees, in some cases amounting to \$42,000 per mile, or a liability of about \$180 for every man, woman and child in the province. To state it in another form, the people of British Columbia are liable to an annual interest bill of over \$3,600,000 for the work of two companies whose rates they cannot control, whose property they dare not seize, the chief security for the debt being beyond the provincial boundaries. And all the while British Columbia and the prairie provinces are paying taxes to the other provinces to the extent that the rates imposed on them exceed the general average rates. Even the railway dividends, furnished in part by British Columbia labor and industry—go to foreign (that is non-Canadian) capitalists in the proportion of \$9 to \$1. (Only about ten per cent. of the stock of the C.P.R. is owned in Canada). At the other end of the scale is Prince Edward Island, with one system of government owned railways, with railway rates of about one-third those of British Columbia, and not one dollar of liability for a kind of "competition" whose only effect is to increase the cost of service.

What has been said of British Columbia is true of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, with variations in the amounts. The railway bonds guaranteed by Manitoba amount to \$25,221,380, by Alberta to \$59,410,450, and by Saskatchewan to \$41,625,000. Then there are the land grants to railways—aggregating over 44,000,000 acres, when allowance is made for grants by municipalities—the possession of which has no relation whatever to the specific work of transportation, except as to land actually used for right of way and stations. Such an alienation of the public domain is in itself a proof of the improper influence of the private corporation on government.

## The Free Pass Immorality

In the United States the free pass evil—which the companies had encouraged that legislators, judges, and others might be well disposed towards the railways, but which, by the abuse of

the practice, was bringing grave trouble on the companies—has been abolished by law, but in Canada the evil goes on unchecked. Passing by the horde of pass-seekers who obtain favors of the railways either by some pull or some form of blackmail, there are two classes whose use of railway passes is a violation of the spirit of public law—the members of parliament and the judges.

Prior to 1906 the law provided each member of parliament with a travelling allowance sufficient to cover his railway fare to and from the seat of government. With a few exceptions the members accepted passes from the railway companies and then drew from the public treasury the travelling allowance which the law allowed them and which, by the way, was provided for them to save them from the suspicion attaching to such personal favors. Since 1906 every member of parliament receives from the Clerk of the House of Commons a free pass over all the railways in Canada, so that they are no longer subject to the suspicion attached to free passes over railways. It is generally understood, however, that the members of parliament still receive from the railways passes for their families and that this abuse has become as great or greater than the original.

It comes with a shock like that of finding a skeleton in your closet to learn that Canadian judges—and these are not confined to the inferior courts alone—very frequently travel on free railway passes. This evil varies in different parts of Canada, but in some portions of the country it is declared that the judge who pays his railway fare is the exception and not the rule. That some of these passes are offered by the railway companies and not asked for by the judges, may satisfy the consciences of some judges but it will not secure an honorable acquittal before the court of public opinion.

In one respect the free pass evil is the crowning immorality of private ownership. For no calamity can befall a nation like that by which the law makers and the law administrators lose the respect of the people. We send members to parliament to frame our laws that we may have liberty and better moral government, not merely to safeguard the people's property, and we look up to our judges as the very incarnation of liberty and justice. Is it possible for members of parliament and judges to hold the confidence and respect of the people when they habitually accept personal favors from men whose business methods are in perpetual conflict with the principles of representative government? If the railways were owned by the government it would be possible for members of parliament and their families and judges to use passes under the authority of the law and without any loss of dignity or independence.

## Steamship Control On Great Lakes

The waterways system of Canada presents a problem of scarcely less importance than that of railway traffic; but it is a subject to which public men have given but little thought. Born and educated, as this generation has been, under the conception that the only defense against the exactions of a railway company is the rivalry and competition of some other company, we look upon water transportation only as a check by competition upon the extortions of the railways. Years ago this competition was effective, and summer passenger and freight rates went down on the railways when navigation opened on the lakes and canals. That was at a time when many of the railway managers really believed in the effectiveness of competition, especially when they could inflict a direct loss upon a rival and gain a little popularity for themselves. It was such an idea that led the West Shore Company to carry immigrant passengers from New York to Chicago for ten cents, as they did in 1883, the people of Canada paying for this experiment by the loss in-

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