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October 18, 1916

THE GRAIN GROWERS' GUIDE

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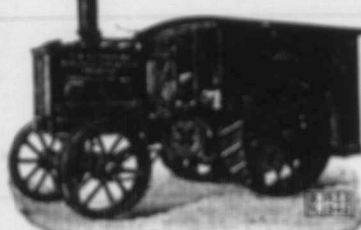
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ter carriers who would make their rounds at about the same hours of the day. Is such a system, which would be thought lunacy in the work of the post office, to be maintained as national economy in the working of a railway system? The plain truth is that national economy was not considered in the premises at all by the directors of these companies, who built the second and third lines between these two cities simply because traffic there in profitable volume at the old rates was ready at hand. Had the requirements of the whole Dominion governed this situation it would have been sufficient to have a double track line from Montreal to Toronto, and when traffic increased more trains could have been put on, giving accommodation at different hours; and the money spent in building three lines over practically the same strip could have been handed back to the people in the form of cheaper rates; or spent in giving railway facilities to the great hinterland north of Lake Ontario, where, for lack of such facilities many have had to abandon their homesteads, and the remnant of the population are living and bringing up their children in a state of poverty, ignorance and immorality that are a disgrace to the country.

In the triplication of railways over the Montreal-Toronto strip over \$50,000,000 have been wasted in construction, not to speak of the greater waste in maintenance, while an area north of the lake equal to a European state lies waste for want of railways to open it up. We need not attribute this misdirection of public funds to pure malvolence on the part of a railway company. It is one of the natural consequences of two divergent ideas of railway development—one in which a profit in operation is confessedly the first purpose, with public service a secondary consideration as the means to the end; the other in which the most extensive, most equitably distributed and most economical service to the whole nation are the primary purposes, the question of profit in carrying on the service being the least of the considerations. But if national policy requires the levy of that form of taxation, then all the surplus goes to the benefit of all the people. Once we grasp the truth that the railways of a country are its national highways, we become conscious that this national service is no fit subject for either private investment or private profit.

Duplication Nation Wide

What has been said of the situation between Montreal and Toronto under our present railway policy may be said of every part of the country where second and third lines have been laid between centres of population for the sake of getting ready-to-hand traffic at high rates, while stretches of country remain waste for want of access by rail and road. Resources to which there is no access remain as fallow as if they never existed; and if the many millions that have been misappropriated in this way in the past seventy years had been distributed under a policy conceived in the national interest we would today have had an area of developed country which would be profitably sustaining a population ten times greater than the present.

The way to rationalize the railways is to nationalize them, and the sooner it is done the less the people will suffer. The experience of other countries has been that when the railways are taken over from private hands after a long hesitation the owners, anticipating the change have allowed the equipment to run down, neglected needed improvements and looted the assets, so that when the government assumed charge they have had to rebuild the roads, and then the cost of this rehabilitation is used as a proof of extravagant management under state ownership. The false notion so carefully taught by our political educators of the past that vested interests are to be held high and holy, and human rights of little value when they come in conflict is now losing its force in the present shaking up of things, but whatever vogue it still holds will add to the dangers of delay, and to the country's financial loss. Out of this public loss a few men will retire with misfit honors and millions of the people's money.

In the main, the cost of living is

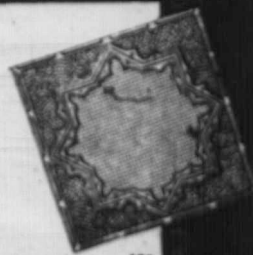
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