

Parliamentary Work of U.C.M.

In presenting my Report on the work of the Parliamentary Session, I have to point out that the private bill legislation was considerably less than in previous years. The number of applications for railway incorporations was fewer, the reasons for which are obvious. Canada generally is well supplied with railways, the total mileage on December 31st last being 20,794. It may be of interest if I show the division by provinces. The figures as given in the Government Blue Book on Railway Statistics are:—

	Miles. Increase.	
Nova Scotia	1,365	5
Prince Edward Island	279	..
New Brunswick.. . . .	1,839	295
Quebec	4,043	57
Ontario	9,255	255
Manitoba	4,076	32
Saskatchewan	5,089	438
Alberta	2,545	332
British Columbia	1,978	27
Yukon	102	..
In United States	223	..
Total.. . . .	30,794	1,491

To the end of the past year 11,472 miles of new railway had been surveyed, and 5,521 miles of railway were under contract. The reference in the foregoing table to mileage in the United States applies to those sections of the Canadian Pacific and Canadian Northern Railways which happen to cross American territory and form parts of continuous lines passing from one section of Canada to another. A very large railway mileage in the United States is owned by Canadian corporations; but none of it is included in the foregoing table.

No estimate has been made of the prospective mileage for which charters have already been granted by the Parliament of Canada, and on which no work has been done. It must certainly exceed 100,000.

Although a few new charters were granted last session, yet the difficulty of securing capital in the British money market, and the fact that there is no present lack of railway transportation facilities in those sections of Canada where they are really needed, would seem to show that the necessary authority to build these new roads has been secured with a possible eye to the future development of the Dominion rather than for the reason that the roads are required at present.

Five companies came to Parliament seeking for extension of time or other powers, viz.:

The Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway Company.

The Essex Terminal Railway Company.

The Montreal & Southern Counties Railway Company.

The Toronto Eastern Railway Company.

The Vancouver, Victoria & Eastern Railway and Navigation Company.

Only two new railway charters were granted, as follows:

Incorporating the Brule, Grand Prairie and Peace River Railway Company.

Incorporating the Entwistle and Alberta Southern Railway Co.

With regard to these seven Acts in question, the five old ones and two new ones, the Railway Committee of the House of Commons again followed the well-established rule of inserting the standard sections for the protection of municipalities. It is gratifying to find that the Railway Committee of the Senate equally with that of the Commons is in accord with this line of policy.

The Bill to confirm an agreement entered into between the Canadian Northern Ontario Railway Co., the Georgian Bay and Seaboard Railway Co., and the Campbellford, Lake Ontario and Western Railway Co. (C.P.R. new line to Toronto) was withdrawn owing to the strong opposition of a municipal delegation from Belleville, which required definite guarantees regarding subways. The Company proposed before the Board of Railway Commissioners takes action to proceed now under Section 364 of the Railway Act, the City of Belleville will doubtless be given an opportunity of being heard.

The Bill to confirm an agreement between the Canadian Pacific Railway Co. and the Canadian Northern Railway Co. respecting terminals at North Toronto was also withdrawn, because at the time the bill was reached the agreement had not been executed. It is assumed, of course, that the City of Toronto has been consulted respecting the arrangements which the two railway companies propose to make.

As the last session of Parliament was essentially a war session, the bill to consolidate and amend the Railway Act which was first introduced in the session of 1914, was not proceeded with to the great regret of many members of Parliament, and others who were anxious to see the railway legislation of Canada liberalized by the insertion of amendments in the public interest.

Mr. Armstrong, member for East Lambton, introduced an amending bill which proposed to provide that when a railway or express company grants any privilege or concession to any person or class of business in any part of Canada, the Board of Railway Commissioners should be empowered to discontinue, modify or extend such privilege or concession to any other person or class of business in any part of the Dominion. The bill also proposed to bring steamboats under the jurisdiction of the Commission, and provided that all traffic agreements, classifications of freight charged, and tariffs of tolls should be submitted to the Board. The measure was supported by the Toronto Board of Trade, the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association, and other similar bodies.

Some difference of opinion was manifested with respect to the jurisdiction of the Board over agreements and concessions, Mr. Armstrong citing instances where the Commission itself had decided that it could not deal with agreements entered into with parties over whom it had no jurisdiction. One of the delegates present pointed out that early in the season, on account of the lack of fruit necessary to fill a car completely stop over privileges under which cars could be held for a short period at different stations to be filled was absolutely necessary, but the railways had refused to grant this concession.

The bill was withdrawn, after a statement from the Minister of Railways that this and other questions would be taken up when the general discussion on the Government's railway bill was resumed, but Mr. Cochrane did not intimate whether the Consolidation Bill would be submitted to Parliament next session.

Although not referring particularly to municipalities, but as bearing on the public interest generally, some reference may be made to the measure authorizing the Canadian Pacific Railway Co. to sell, lease or charter its steamships to a subsidiary corporation, with an English charter, to be known as the Canadian Pacific Ocean Services, Ltd. The measure was opposed by Mr. Maclean of South York, and others, as a step towards the dismemberment of the great national enterprise. He contended that the effect would be to deprive the Parliament of Canada of control over freight rates charged by the Canadian Pacific Railway steamships. The discussion led to an important pronouncement by the Prime Minister. Sir Robert Borden said the English Joint Stock Companies Act under which the Canadian Pacific Ocean Services Limited was to be incorporated was very strict in regard to capitalization and the returns should be made to the Government. He did not think, therefore, that any company would go to England for incorporation with a view to obtaining any undue advantage with respect to its capitalization. The Prime Minister pointed out that the control of rates on the Atlantic was a very different thing from the control of rates of railways situated within Canadian territory. Legislation to regulate ocean freight rates would have to be framed with the greatest care with regard to varying conditions, or it might have the effect of driving tonnage elsewhere. Sir Robert announced that the Government had under consideration the possibility of joint action by Canada, the United States and other countries. He assured the House that the bill under consideration would not prevent Parliament from exercising control over rates in the future, and in view of this definite statement by the first Minister, the bill became law after certain amendments had been made.

Respectfully submitted,

FRED COOK