

Editorials

THE RAILWAY PROBLEM.

What is the government doing in regard to the railway problem? The two reports presented by the Railway Inquiry Commission were brought down some weeks ago, but apparently no steps have yet been taken to relieve the situation. Both the majority and the minority reports agree that something must be done. Both suggest radical changes; and the commissioners are unanimous in stating that more equipment is needed.

It is sincerely to be hoped that the freight situation of last winter will not be duplicated—or worse—this coming winter. More freight cars, more coal cars and more engines appear to be an immediate requirement, regardless of what is done or left undone in reorganization of the Grand Trunk and Canadian Northern.

When the railroad report was first made, parliament was urged to give sufficient consideration to it, that the right course might be taken at this juncture.

There is no doubt that to make further mistakes in the railroad policy would prove extremely costly to the country. The greatest caution should be exercised before deciding to amalgamate under one management 25,000 miles of railway lines which, in respect of mileage and territory served, have no parallel; to acquire the control of their stocks; to operate the roads; to assume responsibility for the interest on their debts,—and all this during a period of world-wide unsettlement of business conditions.

But careful consideration by parliament does not mean pigeon-holing by the government. Thorough investigation and extensive parliamentary debate are necessary to the settlement of this question. If the proper time is to be given to the subject in parliament, the government should introduce a formal measure, which would precipitate the debate, soon enough for some definite and thorough-going action to be taken before another winter catches any of our railroads without the necessary equipment to meet the conditions experienced in this climate.

MR. ACWORTH'S VIEWS.

Members of parliament will no doubt attach the greatest importance to the fact that Mr. Acworth's views have coincided with those of Sir Henry Drayton. Prior to Mr. Acworth's appointment on the Canadian Railway Inquiry Commission, he said:—

"A careful study of the evidence has convinced me that in the long run state control ends in keeping down the best to the level of the worst, and that, taking them all for all, the private railway companies of England and the United States have served the public better than the government railways of the Continent, or of our Australian colonies, and, which is still more to the point, are likely to serve it better in the future."

Yet holding that opinion, Mr. Acworth joined Sir Henry Drayton in a proposal practically to nationalize the railways and to operate them by a permanent commission.

Sir Henry Drayton, in his recent Toronto address, drew attention to the fact that Mr. Acworth is familiar

with company management and finance, being a director of the Underground Railway of London, which controls the greater part of the transportation facilities, both street and underground, including the omnibuses, in and around the metropolis. He is a recognized authority on railway economics, he has written leading text books on the subject, and in the opinion of the practical railroad managers of America his knowledge and standing is such that he was engaged by them to give evidence last month in their behalf before the Congressional Committee on Transportation at Washington, in regard to the evils of political railway management.

The politicians at Ottawa may not like the references to politics and political management in either the majority or minority reports of the commission. There is sure to be extensive debate upon the whole subject, and the earlier the debate is started, the sooner a decision will be reached; and the sooner the situation is taken in hand and a solution found for it, the better will it be for all classes of the public, including even the owners and operators of the railroads themselves.

THE TYE AND TAIT REPORTS.

Before the appearance of the report of the Railway Inquiry Commission, the problem had been unofficially discussed in two pamphlets, both of which were published in full in *The Canadian Engineer* at the time they were issued. The author of one was Mr. W. F. Tye, for many years chief engineer of the Canadian Pacific Railway; the author of the second, Sir Thos. Tait, at one time a prominent administrative officer of the C.P.R., and for seven years chairman of the Victorian (Australian) Railway Commission, and since 1911 president of the Frederickton and Grand Lake Railway & Coal Co., which built in New Brunswick a railway that has been leased to the Canadian Pacific.

The influence of both of these private reports on the majority report of the Railway Inquiry Commission is marked. Many of the suggestions made have obviously been incorporated in the report of the commission.

This influence, brought to bear by private reports from two engineers, and reflected in the report made by a lawyer and a financial economist, is further evidence that commissions dealing with engineering subjects should include engineers. In all questions dealing with efficiency or management, engineers—by virtue of their training—can bring valuable help. When these questions deal with subjects so directly in the engineering field as transportation, it should be a first corollary of the government that engineers should be included in the make-up of the commissions.

Mr. Tye's work and Sir Thos. Tait's work should not be forgotten. We have no desire to pile cabinet timber at Sir Robert Borden's doorstep, but may we say that if the majority report of the Railway Inquiry Commission be adopted, the government will have no difficulty in finding at least two of the three able railway commissioners who will be needed on the Board of Trustees?