

# IS THERE A RAILWAY MUDDLE?

**W**E have in Canada three transcontinental railways. The Canadian Pacific was completed from Montreal to Vancouver in the early eighties. The men who built that road had no choice but to build it across the mountains through the Province of British Columbia to a port on the Pacific. The primary purpose of the undertaking was to connect British Columbia with Eastern Canada, and thus carry out the terms of the Union. We may, therefore, take it for granted that no one now objects to our senior transcontinental having built into and across the Province of British Columbia. Much criticism, however, has been directed against similar, or what is sometimes rather unreasonably called "parallel" construction by the Grand Trunk Pacific, and the Canadian Northern.

The advocates of what we might call "bobtailed transcontinentals" argue that neither the Grand Trunk Pacific, nor the Canadian Northern should have built through the unsettled regions of Ontario, or across the mountains. They say that these roads should have acquired running rights over the Canadian Pacific along the north shore of Lake Superior. Whether they will have the hardihood to suggest that all three roads should have crossed the mountains on the one right of way, we are unable to predict. We submit, however, that the junior transcontinentals had little choice but to build across the mountains, and we believe that the future will vindicate their extension to the Pacific Coast.

Fully fifteen years ago there rose a vehement and persistent demand for a transcontinental railway to compete with the Canadian Pacific. It was in response to this demand that the Grand Trunk Railway Company of Canada acquired a terminal site at Port Simpson, and declared its willingness to extend its system westward from North Bay across the mountains to the Pacific Ocean. Those who recall the discussion in this country over the Alaskan Award will also remember that Canada's chief complaint arose from the fact that territory was ceded to the United States which so commanded Port Simpson as to make that place unavailable as the terminal port of a transcontinental railway.

In 1903-4 it was definitely settled that the Dominion Government and the Grand Trunk between them should construct a line of railway from Moncton, N.B., to a port on the Pacific Coast north of Vancouver. The new line was to open up a new country as far as possible, and to run westward from Winnipeg to Edmonton. Thence it was to cross the mountains by the Yellowhead Pass, and run through British Columbia to what is now the port of Prince Rupert. Many objections were taken to the bargain made by the Government with the Railway Company, but no one suggested that the new line should stop at the foothills of the Rockies, or go south from Edmonton to Calgary, and thence west over the Canadian Pacific to Vancouver. Many alternative plans were proposed, but none of them, as we remember, contemplated that the new line should not cross the mountains on its own right of way, and establish a new port for itself on the Pacific Coast.

**T**HUS, the Grand Trunk Pacific, as the Western Division of the National Transcontinental, was constructed after its merits and demerits had been the subject of bitter controversy at two Dominion general elections. But the line, under more or less Government supervision, was built slowly, and even when completed did not satisfy the popular demand for a transcontinental railway to compete with the Canadian Pacific. The new Trunk line with branch lines and feeders yet to be constructed, did not furnish the desired competition. The two roads were everywhere far apart in the Province of British Columbia. On the Prairies a far greater percentage of the grain grown was gathered by the Canadian Northern, which, in 1911, was finding its way to Atlantic tide-water, but as yet had no access to the Pacific. A general demand for the construction of a third transcontinental was heard, especially in the West, where men were quicker to realize the tremendous results that might ensue from the opening of the Panama Canal. Parliament, in passing some legislation in 1911, respecting the Canadian Northern line between Montreal and Port Arthur, clearly indicated its desire that the road should extend without delay from sea to sea, and took occasion to solemnly declare:

"Whereas, having regard to the growth of population and the rapid development of the production and trade of that portion of Canada lying west

## *Fifth of a Series of Articles on the Railway Situation in Canada*

### **V—WHY THE RAILWAYS BUILT INTO BRITISH COLUMBIA**

By C. PRICE-GREEN

♦♦♦♦

of the Great Lakes, and to the rapidly expanding trade and commerce of Canada generally, it is in the interests of Canada as a whole that another line of railway—designed to assist in the direct and economic interchange of traffic between the Eastern and Western provinces of Canada, to open up and develop portions as yet without railway facilities, to promote the internal and foreign trade of Canada, to develop commerce through Canadian ports, and to afford the government system of railways in Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, an interchange of through traffic—should be constructed from the Pacific Coast to the city of Montreal."

The third transcontinental, therefore, was not to be of the bobtailed variety; it was not to extend from the foothills of the Rockies to the city of Montreal, but "from the Pacific Coast to the city of Montreal."

Evidently a great railway system, with many branches and feeders, extending from the ports of the St. Lawrence, through the provinces of Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, was bound in any event to enter British Columbia. But there were commanding reasons in 1911 and 1912 for the Canadian Northern pressing on to the sea.

At that time, it must be remembered, that the whole commercial world was awaiting with keen interest the opening of the Panama Canal. It seemed to mean, and we think it will eventually mean, that nearly one-half of the grain crop of Western Canada must find its way to Europe via the Pacific Coast.

We can all remember the grain blockades and grain embargoes that used to occur every year at the head of the lakes. The farmer, who could not sell his wheat before the close of navigation, was glad to take almost what he could get for it. Until the National Transcontinental and the Canadian Northern built their up-to-date lines from Winnipeg and Port Arthur East only ten per cent. of all the grain grown in the West found its way to tide-water by an all rail route.

These new lines, with their favourable grades, manifested their ability to haul grain East all-rail at costs which were not prohibitive. But, unfortunately, the Great Lakes are not alone vulnerable to the effects of frost; the ports of the St. Lawrence are closed during the five months when the grain should be moving in largest volume, and St. John, N.B., the nearest Canadian winter port, is 483 miles further on. Taking Saskatoon as the centre of the grain growing prairies, this means an average haul of 2,400 miles before grain can be landed at the Canadian Atlantic seaboard. From North Battleford to Vancouver is substantially the same distance as from North Battleford to Port Arthur, and taking into account the shipping charges from Port Arthur to the Atlantic seaboard it is reasonable to expect that for all the vast country lying between Battleford and the foothills of the Rocky Mountains the Panama Canal route will be the natural highway to British and European markets. From Saskatoon, which we have assumed to be the centre of the wheat belt, to Vancouver, the distance is 1,287 miles shorter than the overland route to St. John, N.B., the nearest of all-year-open ports on the Canadian Atlantic seacoast.

A grain gathering road in Western Canada had, therefore, no choice in 1911 and 1912 but to find a port on the Pacific. All the American Transcontinentals were spending gigantic sums in replacement, and reconstruction work across the mountains. They were double tracking, tunnelling, and reducing as far as they could their grades and curvatures, and enlarging their terminals on the Coast. Our own Canadian Pacific about that time commenced its famous Rogers Pass Tunnel in an endeavour to facilitate, as far as possible, access to the Pacific. It is true that up to date not much traffic has passed through the Canal. This is due to a variety of causes, among which the war is predominant, but the success of the Canal as a grain route is assured. 303,124 tons of grain were carried through the Canal in the first year of its operation. The Dominion

Government has opened a million bushel elevator at Vancouver, and we learn from the daily press that the Canadian Pacific is about to erect huge elevators at the same port which will cost in the neighbourhood of \$15,000,000.

At the present time it is said that there is a project on foot for the Northern Pacific and Great Northern Railways to spend fifty million dollars in building a thirty-mile tunnel through the Mountains to obtain access to the Pacific Coast on a favourable grade. This enormous expenditure by the American Roads is considered quite warranted, though it would result in their obtaining a grade three-tenths of one per cent. less favourable than that prevailing on the Canadian Northern for Westbound traffic.

**W**E can best realize how important a port on the Pacific was to Canadian transcontinental railways, in view of the opening of the new short-cut route to Europe, when we recall that under normal conditions eighty per cent. of the exports of the Dominion consist of raw materials, and more than one-half of the raw materials are grain, and particularly the kind of grain grown in the prairie provinces. The traffic of the Canadian Northern at that time contained, and for that matter still contains, a larger percentage of commodities destined for export trade than any of the other railways. It was, therefore, inexorably driven to find an outlet as soon as possible on the Pacific Coast.

Of course the ships that carry grain from the western coast of North America to continental Europe will return laden with goods for import, and in normal times carry immigrants to the United States and Canada. Before the war steamship companies were selling tickets from Berlin to San Francisco for thirty-five dollars, and they hoped to land 200,000 immigrants on the Pacific Coast during 1915. These hopes and expectations have been temporarily blighted, but few will dispute that after the war as many European immigrants will come to America through Pacific ports as will come through Atlantic ports. There is also likely to be many vessels in the near future plying in the coastal trade between Atlantic and Pacific ports via the Panama Canal. Their activities may considerably diminish the revenues of the transcontinental railways from through traffic, but they will create an ever increasing demand for transportation facilities from cities on the Pacific Coast to points in the interior.

We have dwelt at some length upon the great economic changes that are bound to flow from the opening of the Panama Canal. But had that Canal never been completed all three transcontinental roads would have found plenty of traffic in the ever increasing Oriental trade, and in the development of the almost boundless resources of British Columbia. About these resources we will have a word to say, but in the meantime it may be well enough to consider and briefly discuss some popular misapprehensions respecting the railway situation in British Columbia.

**U**NTIL the construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific there was little railway development, even on the mainland of British Columbia, except in the southern part. The Grand Trunk Pacific was built to Prince Rupert more than 500 miles north of Vancouver, and opened up a portion of the Province which up to that time had no railway service whatever. The Canadian Northern opened up still other territory not served by either the Canadian Pacific or the Grand Trunk Pacific. We are constantly being told that in British Columbia the Canadian Northern runs side by side for miles with the Grand Trunk Pacific and then for even a longer distance parallels the Canadian Pacific. As a matter of fact, it only parallels the Grand Trunk Pacific in that Province for a distance of fifty miles. Then it makes its way as a pioneer railway with no competitors through the valleys of the Albrede and North Thompson. The Canadian Pacific and the Canadian Northern are on opposite sides of the valleys of the Main Thompson and the Fraser, and it will not be denied that the construction of the Canadian Northern opened to settlement many fertile districts in those valleys that had been practically inaccessible for lack of railway facilities.

It may be argued with some force that the Grand Trunk Pacific made a mistake in locating its port so far north as Prince Rupert, but we must remember that when its line was located little thought was