

CANADIAN PACIFIC EAST-BOUND RATES AND EMPTY CAR MILEAGE

An official of the Canadian Pacific Railway, in speaking of the freight rate situation, high eastbound rates and general traffic conditions, says: "Nearly 40 per cent. of our freight trains moving westward are made up of empty cars, and it costs nearly as much to haul an empty car as it does to haul a loaded one. This empty movement is one of the largest shown by an important division of any great railroad company, and it practically means that the rates on eastbound tonnage, in order to protect the company, must be high enough to cover the eastbound haul, and also the expense of returning the empty cars to the Pacific coast.

"The bulk of this traffic," he says, "consists of lumber, and for this are used principally the ordinary box cars, which are suitable for the haulage of grain or general merchandise. It is only the long timber that is hauled on flat cars. If the cars which now return empty could be loaded with grain or merchandise, the cost of the westward trip would then fall on the latter and the burden removed from the eastbound traffic.

"In the United States, roads that show an empty car mileage of about 20 per cent. are considered expensive to operate, and in our traffic we have an empty car mileage of approximately 40 per cent." He also points out that the Canadian Pacific has probably invested more money in roadbed and equipment than any other road moving a high percentage of empty cars. The line from Calgary to the coast has not yet become a profitable investment, but it was necessary to build the line in order to reach the large lumber sections and mineral deposits of British Columbia and to furnish an outlet for Canadian products to the Pacific coast.

On this division there is almost a total absence of local traffic, whereas it is on heavy local traffic that railroads principally depend for profits. The cost of road, he points out, is about \$100,000 per mile, equipment included, through the Rocky Mountain section, and yet the traffic developed up to the present time is considerably less than on most roads costing not more than about \$60,000.

Pacific coast extensions have proved a somewhat expensive necessity without an adequate return of profit, but it is in keeping with Canadian Pacific policy that this work is undertaken, for this road has always built far in advance of traffic demands. At present, Canadian Pacific is spending about \$2,500,000 for a new station and office building at Vancouver, and also a new pier at Vancouver Island.

A large westbound traffic in wheat, which may be reasonably expected in time, will have the effect of lowering rates on eastbound freight and incidentally enable manufacturers to extend their markets in Alberta, Saskatchewan and other eastern provinces.

THE UPPER ATHABASKA REGION.

The rapid linking together of the Grand Trunk Pacific to form a new transcontinental highway across central Canada opens another hinterland for the tourist. It makes easy of access a vast new section of the Rockies in central Alberta and the sunset province, and of all this area it is doubtful if there is a more interesting and inviting region than that embraced by the upper watershed of the Athabaska River and its several southern tributaries. The natural starting point for tourists intending to visit any of this country is Fitzhugh, a picturesquely situated frontier town in Jasper Park, some two hundred and fifty miles west of Edmonton.

How little of this region has been actually trodden by white men is evidenced by the fact that only four short summers ago the largest sheet of water on the entire east slope of the Rockies was found in its recesses. This beautiful mountain lake, some seventeen miles in length, and lying between green wooded slopes, forms a broad expansion of the Maligne River, and resembles a Scotch tarn in its far-melting vistas of water and crag. This lake is some thirty miles south-east of Fitzhugh, and twenty miles farther south is another large lake, where the trout fishing is excellent. The latter body of water forms the chief source of the Brazeau River. To the west of it, in Alpine grandeur, lies the region of wild, lofty peaks, dominated by Mount Alberta, where enormous glaciers give birth to the Athabaska and North Saskatchewan Rivers.

This region is also a noted game country. It lies far enough north to have escaped in part, during recent years, the far-searching reach of the Stoney Indian; bears of all kinds are still fairly numerous; the sheep (and more especially the goat) hunting is good, while scattered moose, deer, and even elk, may be occasionally seen.

Meantime, the crying need of the district, for tourist and fire-ranger alike, is the need for more and better trails. Hence, to provide a good and adequate system of trails will be the first and constant effort of the Dominion Forestry Branch in carrying out its recently assumed duty of administering this region, so as to protect its forests from fire and make every auxiliary resource contribute its part to the public welfare. During the present season the rangers in charge made a good start on this work, and next year it will be again pushed with vigor. Already, between Laggan or Morley, on the Canadian Pacific Railway, and Fitzhugh, an old through trail is in existence, a trail which promises to be a very popular Alpine tourist route when improved. It traverses the Brazeau, Clearwater and Bow River, forests, and everywhere its improvement will be promptly undertaken by the Forestry Branch.

The scenery in this upper Athabaska country is varied and beautiful in its color effects, and specially so in early autumn. From the deep green carpet of pine and spruce on the valley floor the eye passes to intermingled belts of blushing gold poplar and light green lodgepole, fringed above to timber line by sombre masses of Alpine fir. Higher still, the warm reds and ochres of disintegrating ferruginous rocks form a Joseph's coat of many colors, while over all loom the background of summits wrapped in their eternal snows.

THE AUSTRALIAN TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILWAY.

At Port Augusta, South Australia, on September 14th, the interesting historic ceremony of breaking the first sod in the construction of the Transcontinental Railway was performed by the Governor-General (Lord Denham). A large number of legislators and others interested in the work were present. This new line, to connect the State railway systems of South and Western Australia, will be 1,063 miles in length, and the gauge is the standard of 4 feet 8½ inches. The highest point on the line is an elevation of 1,354 feet and the steepest gradient 1 in 80. It is estimated that the work will be finished in from three to four years at a cost to the Commonwealth of, approximately, \$20,000,000.

The completion of the railway will open direct communication (independent of the existing steamer services from Adelaide, S.A., to Fremantle, W.A.), from the eastern states with Western Australia, which is the largest state in the federation, comprising an area of 975,920 square miles, with the present limited population of about 420,000.