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EDITORIAL.

**Rural Electric Railways.**

The widespread interest now taken in the development of rural electric railway lines has suggested to the "Farmer's Advocate" the desirability of making a special enquiry by members of our staff into this subject, the results of which are given herewith.

Before considering the question of building a rural electric road, three important conditions must first exist: First, a sufficiently large population to be served by the road; second, it must be a car-riding population; third, the mileage must not be excessive for the population served. Other conditions, such as the topography of the country, the cost of the right-of-way, special incentives for using the roads, etc., have a slight bearing on the situation, but the three enumerated factors are those which determine the success or failure of the enterprise.

The first condition, that of a large population to be served, is always of first consideration, because on the carrying of passengers, and not on the handling of freight, electric roads almost entirely depend. The primary necessity is two centers of population for terminals, and the distance of these centers apart must depend upon the density of the intervening population in villages or purely rural districts. As the intervening population decreases, so the line must shorten in mileage if the road is to pay. So far it has been impossible to say how much of a population will support a given mileage of road. It would appear, however, that the sparse rural population enjoys the advantage of electric-car service largely because the latter is so much patronized by townspeople.

The second condition, namely, the nature of the population, may so vary that the first condition would seem of lesser significance. A population that is composed largely of the middle classes is the best for electric railroad patronage. The rich drive and the poor walk, but the middle classes always have the car fare, and so are the best patrons. In this connection, a glance at statistics shows that Canadians are more liberal patrons of the car than Americans. In Harrisburg, Pa., the returns from the street railway for 1902 was four dollars per head for the whole population. In Hamilton, Ont., a city of about equal size, the returns were five dollars per head. Among the greatest special sources of income are the summer theatre and excursion trips to parks run by the companies, and to these enterprises the rural population does not very largely contribute, but they are maintained almost wholly by the middle classes of the towns.

The question of mileage is one of the most difficult considerations with which the electric road promoter has to deal. In this connection, not only must the distance between terminal points be considered carefully, but the question of competition is also involved. When considering mileage, the number of competing miles of steam road already in operation and the number of miles likely to be built in the immediate future have to be considered as so many miles of road already at the service of the public. In neither of these cases can a fixed rule be established that would determine the number of miles of railroad that a certain number of population would support, or the distance apart of terminal points based on their number of population, largely be-

cause the class of population is one of the prime factors in the operation of the road.

As a competing concern with the steam roads, the electric road holds a unique position. The past seven years have been considered good for steam roads in America, yet in that time the number of passengers carried on United States steam railways decreased by over twelve millions. This does not imply that people are travelling less frequently than formerly, but that the electric railways are securing the short-haul business, as further proved by the fact that the average passenger haul increased in those seven years from 23.59 miles to 27.9 miles. Electric-car riding is a habit that grows, and these lines create business for themselves. As a freight handler, the electric road also caters to the short-haul, small-parcel business, and also for heavier freight in districts that are not served by a steam road. Developments in this line, however, are taking place every day, and the future may be expected to reveal wonders in the freight-hauling business.

Being so largely dependent upon the population and existing conditions of railway service for their existence, it is at once seen how difficult it is to determine whether in a certain locality an electric road will or will not pay. To sum up all the conditions and make correct deductions requires a person who has given the question long study and who can carefully weigh every detail. In many cases promoters make calculations and conclude that if the municipalities through which their road would run would grant substantial bonuses the road could be made to pay. It is when such a proposition is made to the farmer that an electric road becomes an interesting study. Property would increase in value, the city stores and schools would be brought within reach of the farm, and many other conveniences would accrue, but if a large bonus has to be paid for these advantages, then they are at once discounted. Experienced rural electric-road managers find that bonuses entail exacting conditions, and subsequent friction, which interferes with retaining the good will of the people, upon which success depends.

The day of bonusing railroads is, or ought to be, past, and electric or steam roads should only be paid for the service they render the public. Municipalities should be guarded in dealing with applications for long franchise, tax exemptions, and other favors, now that these projects are being so generally exploited.

In this connection a short sketch of the Woodstock, Thames Valley and Ingersoll electric road will be interesting as well as valuable to our readers. This line, about ten miles in length, was completed in July, 1901, and has been running steadily since. It connects Woodstock, a city of about ten thousand of population, with Ingersoll, having about five thousand five hundred. It passes through a very good farming country, and can be said to be a typical rural electric railroad. The little village of Beachville lies about midway between the terminals. It has also been a paying investment from the start, despite the competition of two parallel steam roads, the C.P.R. and G.T.R. The single fare is 20 cents from Ingersoll to Woodstock; return, 35 cents. Except on one day, and then only temporarily, traffic has never been interfered with by snow. In riding over the line and back, we noticed that a great many of the passengers rode through from Ingersoll to Woodstock, or vice

versa. The promoters, an American company, after carefully studying the situation, decided to build the road. They asked no bonus or highway allowance. The City of Woodstock granted them free use of the streets and exemption of taxes for ten years. Ingersoll charges an annual rental for use of the streets—\$100 for the first year, then \$200, \$300 and \$400. The outside right-of-way was purchased from the farmers, and is parallel with the highway. The site for the power-house was purchased about half a mile west of Woodstock. Cars run between the two towns hourly in winter, and quarter-hourly in summer. The road serves between sixteen and seventeen thousand of a population, who spend two dollars per head yearly upon street car fares. The company is capitalized at \$200,000 in stocks and \$120,000 in bonds. The dividends from the Woodstock and Ingersoll road have been sufficient to warrant the company in venturing further, and they have accordingly built a road from Brantford to Paris. Judging from the success of this company, it would appear that rural electric roads could be made to pay without municipal aid, provided the population were dense enough.

Roads like the Newmarket and Toronto line, or the Galt, Preston and Hespeler road, cannot be taken as typical rural lines, as they are dependent upon special conditions that do not exist in average localities. The Newmarket and Toronto line is in connection with the greatest center in Ontario, passes through a district that is not served by steam roads, and has a considerable population along its line. The Galt, Preston and Hespeler road is used as a feeder for the C. P. R. Passengers and freight are taken from the outlying towns and villages to Galt, where the C.P.R. is at their service. A line built for this purpose by a powerful company like the C. P. R. cannot well be said to be typical of a rural electric road such as the Ingersoll-Woodstock line which we have described, and which affords a fair idea of the conditions under which such roads can be successfully run.

Another condition which may soon vitally cheapen the running of rural electric roads is the accessibility of power, if properly conserved for the use of the people, from such sources as the Niagara River.

**Siftings.**

In the five years preceding the closing of British ports against Canadian store cattle, about 88,000 head, both fat and "store," went from Canada to Great Britain per annum; but during the ten years since 1892, 98,000 head, all fattened in Canada, were received there. There was also an increase in the dressed meat shipments from Canada from 370,000 cwt. in 1891 to 722,000 cwt. in 1901.

The C. P. R. have purchased a large fleet of steamers to ply between Great Britain and Canada.

How very simple and easy it is to be pleasant under shining skies. Anyone can do that, but few there are who practice calmness under adverse conditions.

To see faults in your associates or members of your family—that's easy; in so doing no brains are required. It is a noble virtue, however, to be able to emphasize their good qualities.