

no less than 1,500 miles in operation and which is doing a large and highly profitable business. This system is to be extended through British Columbia to the western terminus, and apparently the people of this province will soon be called upon to consider what assistance they will afford the company. By the Act of the session of 1902 the Province offered the company a cash bonus of \$5,000 a mile for 480 miles on the mainland of the Province, that is between Yellow Head Pass and Bute Inlet, and a like sum per mile for 150 miles between Seymour Narrows, Vancouver Island, and Victoria. It was generally understood at the time that this amount of aid would not be regarded by the company as sufficient, and it is currently reported that the Legislature will be asked to supplement it by a land grant.

It is not intended in this article to discuss the desirability of acceding to the wishes of the company in this regard, but only to present some suggestions which present themselves in connection therewith. A very important consideration, and one that will naturally have great influence with the Legislature, is the question of route. It would probably be found impossible to carry a subsidy bill through the present House unless provision were made that the main line of the railway shall be extended to Vancouver Island and Victoria is made a terminus. There is little use in discussing the advisability of adopting such a route or of attempting to show that another one would be more in the interests of the Province. The members for the Island constituencies, with an eye to future elections, will make the Island section of the line and the Victoria connection a *sine qua non* of their support. There are reasons why the company might prefer such a route. Naturally they will be desirous of having the western terminus of their system at a point where there is already obtainable business and the possibilities of Vancouver Island are of themselves sufficient to lead any new transcontinental line to desire to participate in the business certain to be developed there. So important from a traffic point of view is a Vancouver Island connection likely to prove in the by no means distant future, that it is easy to understand that a company, even if it contemplates ultimately making its chief ocean terminus at Kitimaat or some other northern harbour, would be not only willing, but quite desirous, of making this connection an integral and essential part of its undertaking, provided sufficient inducement in the way of subsidy is forthcoming. Therefore it is not likely that the attitude of the Island members will at all interfere with the plans

of the company, or that insistence upon the Island connection will in the least delay the undertaking.

How the proposal will commend itself to the members from the Southern Mainland constituencies is not at this time very clear. The vote on the subsidy bill of last session does not afford any reliable criterion as to how the House will deal with a new proposal. From a strictly local point of view, it may be said that Yale-Kootenay and the Lower Fraser Valley have no great interest in the Canadian Northern, if it is to be constructed through Cariboo and down by way of the Howathec Valley, Bute Inlet and Vancouver Island to Victoria. But it is likely that the people of those localities will not be influenced by such a narrow view. They will, we think, be inclined to regard the question broadly from the Provincial standpoint, and enquire as to what extent such a railway will open up new regions for exploitation.

Existing transportation facilities affect only a comparatively small part of this Province, approximately only one-fourth of its entire area, leaving three-fourths, or say 250,000 square miles practically in a state of nature in this respect. Some highways have been built and trails have been cut, and on some of the rivers steamers ply more or less regularly, but speaking generally it may be said that this vast area, which is twice as great as that of the British Isles and far greater than any European country except Russia, is practically without modern means of transportation, and it is to the interests of the country that these should be afforded at any reasonable price. Those familiar with the history of British Columbia are aware that it was to the development of the territory through which it is now proposed to build the railway that the early settlers looked for the future importance of the Province. At a time when Kootenay was an unknown and unexplored region, Cariboo was considered the most important section of British Columbia. Even before the discovery of gold attracted attention to this field, explorers had reported favourably upon the resources of what was then called New Caledonia. North of Cariboo is a great extent of country of which much may be reasonably expected. Northern British Columbia is of less average altitude than the Central and Southern parts of the Province, and this difference in elevation compensates to a very considerable degree for the difference in latitude. There is not the least doubt that the area along the Northern portion of the Province is quite as well adapted for settlement and the prosecution of various industries as is the Central portion.

At the present time the only concrete proposal be-