



Does the West need more railway facilities? Melfort, Sask., answers with this striking picture, taken there last fall. All the elevators were full, and the grain was stacked up in the railway yards.

If I Were a Westerner

What I Would Do to Preserve Prosperity and Sane Development

By NORMAN PATTERSON

FEW men are able to put themselves into the other fellow's place and fully estimate the results of such action. Nevertheless this is a pastime in which we all indulge. One of the commonest prefaces to an expression of an opinion is "if I were he I would" do so and so. In all probability the speaker is absolutely wrong. If he were the other fellow he would probably do as the other fellow does. Yet even with this idea in my mind I intend to be foolish enough to write an article entitled, "If I Were a Westerner."

I am not a Westerner. As in the case of my parents, I was born in Eastern Canada. I have the Eastern Canada viewpoint on most things. True, I have friends and relations in the West and I have at one time or another visited each of the Western cities. I have been from Nelson to Edmonton as well as from Winnipeg to Victoria. It has been my business to give some attention to Western as well as Eastern problems. Therefore while I may not be a Westerner, I think I am as well fitted as any other Eastern man to hypnotize myself and say what I would do if I were a Westerner.

ONE of the first things I would do would be to read the history of the many cities on this continent which have been well planned, carefully laid out and thoroughly boomed, yet have failed to grow up. I should also read the history of the various American and Canadian cities which were badly planned and never boomed and yet which became great. Take Toronto for example. Toronto is a mere accident. Nobody ever intended that it should be a city, and nobody ever boomed it until it was up to a hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants. It never advertised. It never had a publicity commissioner. It never paid bonuses to manufacturers.

Yet in spite of all these things Toronto is a great city, and it is going on to be greater. It is showing more rapid progress than any other city in Canada with the possible exception of Montreal. In speaking of Montreal, was there ever anything more impossible than Montreal's greatness? And yet it is great, the greatest city in Canada. To my mind it will be the greatest for another fifty years at least.

In short, I believe that some of the Western towns would make more progress if they weren't overboomed. Led by the prodigal and affluent bank managers the price of real estate has been run up to such an extent that everybody wants to sell it. Three-quarters of the people who are buying city land in the Northwest are buying to sell, not to make use of it. Toronto and Montreal were built up by people who bought land for occupation and use.

Of course millionaires are interesting features of the national landscape, but there is no reason why land in Calgary should be selling at double its value just so that this young city should have fifteen or sixteen millionaires, when it is only entitled to one or two. They are making millionaires in Western Canada faster than they are in Eastern Canada. In the East we are fighting to keep the growth down; in the West their one wild, long warwhoop goes through the country every time a new millionaire is born—or created, or whatever you call the process.

It is a dangerous thing to say, but if I were a Westerner I would form a league to drive the

man out of the country who boosted the price of real estate beyond its earning capacity. As for the man who sold town lots outside the limits, I would treat him as they treated the horse-thief in the days when Western Canada's population was smaller and Western Canada's morals of a different type.

A GAIN, if I were a Westerner, I would stop talking about the amount of wheat the country will produce in 1921. It is not really necessary and there is just a possibility that some of these prophecies will go wrong. For example, Saskatchewan has had an exhibit in the Government Building at the Toronto Exhibition and over it a streamer which says:

"By 1921, less than a decade hence, Saskatchewan will be producing 500,000,000 bushels of grain."

Personally I hope this will not be true. I hope that the farmers of Saskatchewan will have more sense than to try to produce so much grain. I hope they will be producing cheese, butter, bacon, eggs, poultry and all the other little things which go to make an attractive menu card when you sit down to dinner. Just now, they are mining wheat in the West, and they are doing to Saskatchewan exactly what the wheat miners did to Dakota and Minnesota.

If I were a Westerner I would advocate mixed farming even if it made me unpopular. I quite understand that unpopularity is a crime in this age. Nevertheless, it is sometimes the only way in which a man can have his name written in the hall of fame. There are some men in the West, acclimated Westerners, who are preaching this doctrine. The Canadian Pacific Railway and the Canadian Northern Railway are preaching it hard. But the mad haste to exhaust the soil of the Northwest goes greedily on. The farmer who can produce ten consecutive crops of wheat on the same six-hundred-and-forty-acre field is dubbed a wonder when he ought to be dubbed an ass.

If I were a Westerner I would say some of these things—and probably be driven out of the country.

A GAIN, if I were a Westerner, I would stop talking so much about freight rates and I would talk much more about transportation facilities. Before I called the present railways "robbers" and "murderers" and such, I would look up the figures in Poor's Railway Manual to see whether the Canadian railways were charging more than the American railways. If any Westerner did this he would get the following results:

The revenue received by each railway for carrying one ton of freight per mile is, according to the standard authorities, as follows:

Northern Pacific Railway	.....	.9030	cents.
Great Northern Railway	.....	.8096	"
Chicago and Northwestern	.....	.9000	"
Union Pacific	.....	1.0030	"
Southern Pacific	.....	1.1750	"
Canadian Pacific	.....	.8100	"
Canadian Northern	.....	.8490	"

It will be noticed that there is only one of the five United States roads in this list which is carrying freight at a lower rate than the two Canadian roads. In other words freight rates are higher in the United States than they are in Canada in spite of their larger population and their tremendous

traffic. If I were a Westerner I would know these figures, and knowing them, I would be less likely to talk foolishly.

Taking the passenger rates for a similar comparison the results are as follows:

Northern Pacific	.....	2.276	cents.
Great Northern	.....	2.273	"
Chicago and Northwestern	.....	1.810	"
Union Pacific	.....	2.199	"
Southern Pacific	.....	2.215	"
Canadian Pacific	.....	1.930	"
Canadian Northern	.....	2.428	"

These are the figures showing the net returns per passenger per mile on each of these roads. Only one of the five United States roads shows a lower rate per mile for passenger traffic than the Canadian Pacific. The Canadian Northern rate is high, but this is probably due to the fact that the Canadian Northern in recent years has been more of a pioneer road than the Canadian Pacific.

THE railways are well worth watching. Like the men who grow wheat in the West and the men who sell town lots and choice central property, they like to get a big price for what they sell. Even journalists and special writers have that failing, and it is said that doctors, lawyers and other professional men sometimes demand high fees. Yet a comparison of the rates charged by the Canadian railways with those charged in the United States in approximately similar conditions, shows that our railway managers are not the robbers that some demagogues would have us believe. Rates in this country should be secondary to facilities. What the West needs is more railways and better railways.

If a man has a thousand bushels of wheat rotting at a railway siding because a car is not available the question as to whether he shall pay twelve cents instead of thirteen cents does not interest him greatly. He would probably remark in a loud tone something to the following effect:

"I don't give a continental whether the rate is twelve cents or thirteen cents or fifteen cents per bushel. Make it twenty cents if you like. But for heaven's sake give me a box car into which I can put this wheat, and show me the locomotive that will pull it out of here quick."

There are hundreds of farmers in the newer parts of the Northwest to-day who are spending several valuable hours each week with a rusty pen writing letters to members of parliament, cabinet ministers, and railway presidents, asking them in the name of humanity to rush that new branch line so that the entire crop of that new district will not be wasted. Every year the railways are operating new branch lines in the West before they are ballasted, with considerable risk to the lives of employees and the safety of the rolling stock. The railways do not want to operate these unfinished lines, but the pressure from the public and the governments is so strong that they are forced to do so at considerable loss.

WESTERN Canada is more in need of railways than Eastern Canada. The railways themselves recognize this. Last year the Canadian Pacific Railway spent fifteen million dollars in betterments on its lines alone and over seventy per cent. of this was spent west of Port Arthur. It also spent over seven millions on constructing or acquiring branch lines, of which 100 per cent. were in Western Canada. If I were a Westerner I should be thoroughly satisfied with those percentages. They seem to be reasonable when it is remembered that there are a few more people in Eastern Canada than in Western Canada. If the West cries for more railways its cry will be heard. If it cries for a reduction of rates its cry may also be heard, but the result will be less beneficial.

Don't mistake me, the railway rates in the West will require readjustment. They will be readjusted. A bushel of wheat can be carried to-day from Saskatoon to Port Arthur for thirteen cents. There was a time when it cost that much to carry it half the distance. There have been readjustments in the past and there will be readjustments in the future. More railways and greater railway facilities always mean a reduction of rates. If the West gets more railways now, later it will get cheaper rates.

There is another feature that must be kept in mind. A trenchant campaign at the present time for lower railway rates might stop the era of railway building. To-day there are probably a hundred thousand men employed in railway construction. It is quite true that if the railways discharge this little army we would have plenty of harvest hands. It would give temporary relief to the labour market. It would probably reduce the rate of wages and make a lot of employers happy. But would it be best for the country? Would it be best for Western