

## British Columbia Electric Railway Employees' Strike.

We have been favored with the following statement in reference to the recent strike of the British Columbia Electric Ry. Co.'s carmen and the causes which led to it:

The employees were working under an agreement entered into by the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees of America and the company on Sept. 16, 1916. This agreement was supplementary to an unexpired agreement between the same parties, which was executed on Sept. 1, 1915, providing for certain schedules of pay for the employees who were members of the association. In view of the increased cost of living the company voluntarily offered the men certain increases, which resulted in the supplementary agreement above mentioned, although the agreement of Sept. 1, 1915, was not due to expire until "six months after the cessation of the war, provided that the period for which the agreement shall continue shall not be less than 12 months nor more than 22 months from that date." In view of the revised agreement, the period of the contract was extended to June 30, 1918, or at the expiry of six months after the close of the war, whichever date came first. Under that agreement conductors and motormen received the following wages per hour: 1st year, 27c; 2nd year, 29c; 3rd year, 31c; 4th year, 33c; after 4th year, 35c. Conductors and motormen on interurban lines received 1½c an hour in addition to the above rates. In the early part of May, the men governed by the agreement mentioned above made a demand through their union for an additional increase in wages. As the men's demands were too much for the company to consider, a counter offer was made them of a war bonus as follows: 15% increase to men receiving up to \$60 a month; 10% to men receiving more than \$60, and not more than \$70 a month; 5% to men receiving more than \$70, and not more than \$80 a month. The men refused to accept this offer, but modified their original demand and asked for increases as follows: For trackmen, 27c an hour for the first 6 months, and after that 35c; a minimum wage of 35c an hour after 6 months service in all departments; all men on a monthly salary to receive an increase of \$10 a month; conductors and motormen on city and suburban lines, car repairers, etc., 1st six months, 27c an hour; next 18 months, 35c; 3rd year, 36c; 4th year, 38c; 5th year and after, 40c; conductors and motormen on interurban lines to receive 1½c an hour in addition.

The men voted to strike when the company refused to meet these demands, and as a consequence no cars were operated on June 13 in Vancouver, North Vancouver and New Westminster and on the interurban lines between Vancouver and New Westminster, known as the Central Park and Burnaby Lake line. The following day the men on the Victoria lines, and the Saanich interurban line, on Vancouver Island, ceased work. The service on the company's other interurban lines, the Lulu Island and Fraser Valley branch, continued to operate, as the trainmen working on these divisions are members of the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen, and are not associated with the Amalgamated Association, but as the rolling stock on these lines was maintained by members of the Amalgamated Association, the company was forced to suspend operations on the Lulu Island line on June

17, and to reduce the service on the Fraser Valley branch from 3 car trains to single car operation. The equipment on these lines had been looked after since the beginning of the strike by the foremen, but the company was notified by the Electrical Workers Union that it considered this a breach of the arrangement whereby the company promised not to employ strike breakers, and in order to give the electrical workers no excuse for ceasing work and jeopardizing the light and power service of the district, it removed these foremen from maintenance work, and as a result of being unable to keep the rolling stock on these divisions in proper repair, the operation on the Lulu Island line ceased.

The company considered that the offer it had made of war bonuses was adequate for the increase in the cost of living, and moreover the company's revenue would not permit the payment of the increases demanded and the continuation of operation.

On the Vancouver and Victoria city systems a fare of 4 1/6c is charged, while in North Vancouver and New Westminster, which are separate systems, a straight 5c fare is charged. On the interurban lines liberal concessions in the form of books of tickets have been made by the company from time to time, and on many of the suburban lines on the city system of Vancouver similar reductions of fare have been granted. These arrangements and agreements were entered into several years ago, on the strength of the traffic carried on the shorter city lines. Since Dec., 1914, the revenue which the company expected to receive from these shorter rides has been seriously depleted by jitney competition. When the strike occurred, about 150 jitneys were operating on the paved car line streets in Vancouver. The jitneys limited their operations to the paved streets and car line streets, and also the short hauls, and did not give transfers, consequently a much larger proportion of the long non-paying hauls was imposed upon the company. The City of Vancouver has passed certain regulations respecting jitneys, but these had no effect upon the number operating.

After the street cars had ceased operation for several days, the Retail Merchants Association took action and passed a resolution recommending the elimination of the jitney as the first step towards obtaining a resumption of the car service. This resolution brought action by the city council, which invited the company's officials to a conference. The officials told the city councillors that it was not possible to pay the demands of the men while the jitneys were allowed to operate, but as the city wished to receive proof of this statement, it was agreed between the council and the company that the whole transportation situation be investigated by a commission to be appointed by the British Columbia Government. The city council agreed by resolution to put into effect whatever recommendations this commission should make. The company agreed to endeavor to resume operation immediately in the meantime. The company's officials therefore met the union's officials and after negotiations agreed to pay the men their demands, stating that they did so in the interests of the public, and also because they felt assured that the investigation by the commission would relieve the com-

pany of many of the onerous burdens under which it now operates, and the operation of the system was resumed provisionally, depending upon the rectification of the economic conditions by a provincial commission. The Provincial Premier invited Prof. Adam Shortt, head of the Dominion Civil Service Commission, to be chairman of the special commission, and Sir Robert Borden has agreed to allow Professor Shortt leave of absence to undertake the work.

Adam Shortt, who was appointed commissioner as above mentioned, arrived in Victoria, July 10, and had a conference with the Attorney General and other members of the government, representatives of the municipalities interested and B.C.E.R. officials as to the scope of the enquiry. The commissioner held his first sitting at Vancouver, July 13, when the B.C.E.R. was represented by G. Kidd, General Manager; W. G. Murrin, Assistant General Manager; V. Laursen, Solicitor, and W. Saville, Comptroller. The municipalities interested and the jitney league were also represented. After preliminaries had been settled the investigation was adjourned to July 16, when the taking of evidence was begun. The enquiry is expected to last some time.

### Winnipeg Electric Railway Suburban Fares.

The Manitoba Public Utilities Commission has issued an order fixing fares from Winnipeg to Kildonan Park. For traffic between any point in Winnipeg and Templeton Ave. in Kildonan, which is the terminus for service to Kildonan Park, the rate shall be as follows: Single cash fares to be 5c each from any point in Winnipeg to Templeton Ave., or from Templeton Ave. or any point south to any point in Winnipeg, with a transfer if required. Provided that tickets shall be sold as follows: White tickets, good at all times, 6 for 25c. Red tickets, good going north, on Sundays and other days, within the hours specified for use of same, but only good going south on Sundays, 8 for 25c. Tickets for school children to be used only on school days, and for the purpose of attending school, 10 for 25c. Children under five years of age, when accompanied by parents or guardians to be carried free.

A Manitoba court, on July 12, granted the Winnipeg Electric Ry. and the Winnipeg, Selkirk & Lake Winnipeg Ry. authority to appeal against the decision above mentioned, but refused to grant a stay of proceedings as against the order. The effect of this is that the new fare schedule becomes operative at once, while the appeal against it cannot be argued until September.

**Accident on the Niagara Gorge Ry.**—Owing to heavy rains a portion of the track was undermined about 50 ft. south of the cantilever bridge above the whirlpool rapids, Niagara Falls, July 1, and a car with from 50 to 60 passengers was precipitated into the river. Some disagreement has occurred as to the number of passengers actually on the car, and missing, but it has been accepted that 10 were killed and 31 injured. It is feared that the bodies will not be recovered from the whirlpool, although at times some of them have been seen. One was recovered July 11. An enquiry has been held.