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An address by Mr. George Hees, Minister of Transport, at the first Annual Meeting of the Sundridge Chamber of Commerce, Sundridge, Ont., January 31, 1958.

It is a pleasure to be able to meet, through the Chamber of Commerce, so many representatives from throughout this very important district and to be able, as I propose to do, to talk to you on the part that transportation and communications have played in the development of this country of ours, and its responsibilities in the immediate future.

If you will bear with me for a while, I would like to turn back a few pages of Canadian history to give you a broad picture of the part that has been played hitherto by transportation and communication.

It is needless to remind you that sailing ships brought to our shores the early Viking explorers, the fishermen from England, France and Portugal and eventually our early settlers. With water the main vehicle of transportation, it is understandable that our coastal areas and the lower St. Lawrence River should have witnessed the first settlements and, later, to have seen such settlements extending further up-river and into the Great Lakes.

From the early days of the French regime, our waterways were developed in the promotion of the fur trade. French traders and explorers extended the lake and river routes as far afield as the foothills of the Rockies and the mouth of the Mississippi, while the "Gentlemen Adventurers Trading Into Hudson's Bay", as the Hudson's Bay Company was called when it was established in 1670, developed a network of fur trade routes extending from Hudson's Bay as far west as the Pacific Ocean. The accounts of the travels of these intrepid adventurers, explorers and traders, whether French or English, are filled with excitement and interest and are a fruitful source of Canadian history.

The development of passenger and freight traffic also followed the Canadian water routes from Quebec and Montreal up the St. Lawrence River to Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, and from York, as Toronto was then called, to the Georgian Bay and Lake Huron, via Lake Simcoe. On these routes, however, an elaborate system of portages was required - the Niagara portage particularly was very slow and expensive - and no improvement in this system took place until canals were built to bypass the rapids and the other obstacles to navigation.

We find that the first attempt to build a canal in Canada was made in the early part of the eighteenth century. The Sulpician Order attempted to construct a shallow canal to by-pass the Lachine Rapids, but due to a lack of funds, the project was never completed. The first successful project was the series of locks and canals built by the Royal Engineers between 1779 and 1783 to provide 2-foot draft navigation between Lake St. Louis and Lake St. Francis.

The advent of the steamship to Canada in the early 1800's brought about a real improvement in transportation on the St. Lawrence and on the lakes, but it was still necessary to resort to various time-consuming expedients to surmount the obstacles on the waterways. Frequently stage coaches and flat-bottom "Durham" boats were used in the portaging operations in conjunction with the steamships.

Only minor canal works were carried on from time to time until 1821 when the building of a 5-foot canal at Lachine was undertaken, and in 1825 when private interests embarked on the building of the Welland Canal to provide eight foot navigation between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. Since then, Canada has been engaged, almost without interruption, in the extension and development of her system of canals, the main purpose being to provide navigation facilities from Montreal through to the Great Lakes.

And now in 1958, we find ourselves engaged, with the United States, in the construction of one of the greatest engineering feats of the day, the St. Lawrence Seaway, a vital part of the St. Lawrence - Great Lakes waterway which has rightly been described as the world's greatest inland navigation system. This waterway extends more than 2,000 miles from the Atlantic Ocean to the western end of Lake Superior and overcomes a difference of 600 feet in water levels.

When the Seaway is completed and opened for navigation next year, we shall have a waterway in which we can take great pride because the new locks are to have 30 feet of water over the sills and all channels, including even the Welland Canal, will have been dredged to a depth of 27 feet.

Reverting back to early days of transportation, a curious development took place during the first period of canal construction. It was the building of several portage railroads, of which the most significant was the "Champlain and St. Lawrence Railroad" which covered the distance of 16 miles between St. Johns on the Richelieu River and Laprairie on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, a few miles west of Montreal. This was the first railway to be built in Canada, and was designed to facilitate the movement overland of goods and people so as to avoid the longer voyage by water and to by-pass the rapids in the Richelieu River.

Needless to say the portage lines were soon lost in the general scramble to build railroads on a much larger scale because it was soon realized that they afforded a real solution of the transportation problem which then existed. History shows that railroads served to strengthen the links between the various centres of population and helped to bring about the economic, political and social integration of British North America in the mid-century.

Canada's first railroad era belongs to the 1840's and more particularly to the 1850's, during which time more than 2,000 miles of operating lines were built - largely in Central Canada - and more than $100 million was invested in railroads. Up to the late 1850's, railroads afforded the most efficient means of tapping Canada's rich natural resources. For example, the Northern Railway from Toronto to Collingwood, which was completed in 1855, was not only instrumental in opening up the fertile agricultural country north of Toronto and in tapping the dense pine forests of Simcoe County, but it also made of Collingwood a port which by 1861 was handling some $2,500,000 of trade, principally grain from the United States.

The first railroad era, like the first period of canal construction, may not have been the financial success that so many appear to have expected, but it was none the less one of the key steps in the great enterprise of building the Canadian nation.

The second era of railroad building followed Confederation, when the opening up of the west resulted in the expansion of the Canadian economy to include the Prairies and British Columbia, for which transportation facilities had to be provided. Pursuant to the terms of Confederation the Intercolonial Railway, with government assistance, was built from Riviere du Loup to the Maritimes, and was completed in 1876; and as a further part of the broad plan of a Confederation to extend from one ocean to the other, the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed in 1885. Between 1867 and 1885 operating lines increased from 2,000 to 10,000 miles, largely as a result of the construction of these two projects which gave Canada a railway system extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The great commercial boom which preceded the First World War and a number of other factors, such as a large influx of settlers, sparked the third era of Canadian railroad history and accounted for the construction between 1900 and 1917 of an additional 20,000 miles of new lines. Construction of the National Transcontinental and the Canadian Northern, completed in 1914 and 1915 respectively, opened up the northern regions of the Central and Prairie Provinces.

Despite the economic difficulties through which railways have passed since the third era of railroading, we find that the railways are still extending out to areas where natural resources await to be developed and where bulk traffic requires mass transportation. I need but mention places like Atikokan and Manitouwadge in northwestern Ontario; Kitimat in British Columbia; Chibougamau in Quebec; and the new Little River Community around the Heath Steele mine at the end of the Bartibog line now under construction.

Coming to commercial aviation - the most recent form of transportation - I need but say that it commenced only after World War I. By 1920, aircraft were being used in forest protection work and aerial surveys and by 1921 the discovery of oil in the MacKenzie River basin led to the first attempt to establish air transportation on a large scale in the Far North. Later on, in 1924, Laurentide Air Services inaugurated the first air transport service for passengers and goods to meet the needs which resulted from the expansion of the mining industry in northwestern Quebec.

I need not dwell on the development of the aviation industry. Suffice to say that governmental assistance, supervision and control has kept apace with the industry. In the early '20's, a Civil Aviation Branch was created in the Department of National Defence and this became an integral part of the new Department of Transport on its creation in the early '30's. Today, the Air Services of my Department operates some 15,000 miles of controlled airways crossing and re-crossing this country in an east-west direction, extending southward to connect with airways across the border and fingering northward into our Canadian Arctic.

Facilities for the travelling public and for the airlines serving Canada are constantly being improved and every provision is made for the efficient control of aircraft on the airways and to ensure the maintenance of proper standards of safety.

The carrying out in the years since World War II of an integrated program of developing airport and airway facilities has been one of the outstanding features of Canadian aviation. The work which has been done has included the lengthening and strengthening of runways at numerous airports; the building of improved terminal buildings and other facilities

for the public; the installation of instrument landing systems and high intensity lighting to facilitate landing in poor weather; the provision of Ground Control Approach at the International airport of Gander; the installation on the trans-continental airway of the Visual Omni Range (VOR) for the better guidance of pilots in flight; the expansion of the Air Traffic Control service; and the installation of 15 sets of surveillance radar which is expected to facilitate greatly the control of the ever-increasing volume of air traffic.

The first task undertaken by the Department of Transport in the immediate post-war years was the development of runways adequate to meet the needs arising from the rapid growth of civil aviation. By the early fifties, the national network of civil airports had been brought to a point where planes in standard commercial use could land at any of the main Canadian airports.

The program for the development of runways is now being revised to take account of the requirements of the aircraft we expect to see in operation in the 1960's including the provision, where necessary, of runways suitable for use by large turbine-powered aircraft such as the British Britannia, Douglas DC8, Lockheed Electra 7 and Boeing 707.

Plans initiated some years ago to provide new terminal buildings at the main airports across Canada are now well advanced, some of the new buildings have been completed, others are under construction, and more are to be started both during 1958 and 1959.

I think I should mention here that the Department is now evaluating a new electronic navigation system which is equally applicable to shipping and to aviation, whereby a piece of equipment in the cockpit of the aircraft or on the bridge of a ship registers the craft's exact position at all times. Canada is also collaborating with the United Kingdom in the evaluation of a trans-Atlantic navigation system which works on practically the same system. Evaluation tests have been carried out by aircraft, flying by instrument on this system all the way across the Altantic to Gander and from Gander, westward to Montreal and even further.

May I here make reference to the development of communications. This, the comrade-in-arms of transportation, dates back to the early part of the last century. The first electric telegraph was operated in England in 1823 and the first cable was laid across the English Channel in 1851. Canada adopted the telegraph system early in the last century and laid a cable across Northumberland Strait, a distance of ten miles, also in 1851. This was the first submarine cable laid on the North American Continent.

By 1871, on the advice of Sanford Fleming, then Chief Engineer of the C.P.R., a telegraph line had been laid as far west as Fort Garry and by 1886 had reached the Pacific Coast.

The federal Crown Company, Canadian Overseas Telecommunication Corporation, which reports to me, was party to the construction of the first trans-Atlantic telephone cable which went into service between London, Ottawa and New York in September 1956. Canada and the United Kingdom are now planning a second cable to meet the anticipated growth in traffic. This second telephone cable is expected to be ready for operation during 1961.

Now, gentlemen, I have attempted to give you an overall picture of the Transportation and Communication picture to date. Its history is something we have every cause to be proud of. The future of Canada hinges, in my humble opinion, on our ability to provide ever increasing transportation facilities to meet our growing responsibilities as a nation, and our leadership in Arctic development. In the years gone by, the movement of our young men was ever westward. Today, this new generation looks northward for its chances to create great things, to develop our unlimited northern resources and to harness the power of the future.

I am proud to be associated with a department of government which is so closely akin to past development, and which must, of necessity, be thinking years ahead of its time to keep Canada in the running in the transportation and communication fields. I therefore will take a leaf out of our books and do a little crystal ball gazing of my own.

I can foresee for transportation a continued expansion, unhindered by economic and climatic factors. We must be prepared to expand our aviation facilities so that flying into the Arctic is as safe as is flying across our more temperate zone. Our fleet of icebreakers must be so developed as to be able to pierce into the very heart of the Arctic and thus facilitate the transportation of cargo in far greater quantities than we have as yet attempted. Likewise, our railways must develop branch lines fingering northward to areas which are proven to be capable of providing much in the line of natural resources. Last but not least, I can foresee great developments by our scientists, as a result of which Canada will be among the leaders in the use of nuclear power for commercial purposes.

Today the railway is a dynamic, forward-looking transportation system with a respectable record of achievement behind it, and its most important service to the nation still ahead of it. These are still days of growth, of change, of new problems and of new opportunities for this transportation service.

Canada's investment in Civil Aviation runs into the billions of dollars and we have cause to be proud of our standing among air-minded nations. We today are able to successfully compete with the airlines of other countries for a fair share of international air traffic. But that is not sufficient. Lying as we are at the very crossroad of the air world, we must expand our air facilities to the far corners of our domain and must also retain our high standing in the air world, providing service to all.

As recently as September 1 last, the facilities at Frobisher Bay on Baffin Land were taken over by the Department as a civilian airport and two days later, the first civilian aircraft travelling the trans-polar route from Los Angeles to Paris touched down to refuel. This gives you some idea of the demands of the air world of today. Less than six months later, the airport at Frobisher is being used as a refuelling base by four airlines using the trans-polar route and more airlines are considering its use.

Airport terminal facilities at Frobisher are, to say the least, very limited. We are extending the runways to meet the requirements of the most modern aircraft; we have converted part of the hangar into a temporary public waiting room; we have provided two Neilson Huts for additional passenger facilities; and we have extended the room facilities at the new staff house that has been erected. Facilities we can provide the travelling public are still too limited for modern requirements.

I am drawing attention to conditions at Frobisher as an indication of the gigantic, and somewhat expensive, task we have to undertake up north. Not only do we have to expand existing facilities, but we have to open up new areas. We have to extend our airways, with all their facilities; to help develop this great northern country of ours. We have to provide for the safe navigation of airlines utilizing our northern air routes, and we have to provide for the safety of the air passenger, whether flying in the comfort of a modern airlines, or undertaking exploratory work which may lead to further developments of our Arctic northland.

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