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Editorial

In the Winter of 1913-1914 the National Transcontinental Railway was practically completed and from Cochrane, both East and West, a regular local traffic was maintained by the Government through an arrangement with a firm of contractors. In 1915 the Government took over the road in its entirety and commenced regular through traffic operations.

The assessed property value of the National Transcontinental within the limits of the municipality of Cochrane was in 1914 \$62,000, in 1915 \$287,166, in 1916 \$287,166, in 1917 \$283,166 and in 1918 \$283,166 all of which assessment was exempt from taxation as being Government property. In addition to this exempt assessment of the Canadian Government Railways there was the exemption of the property of the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway, owned by the Ontario Government. While various grants and concessions made to the town of Cochrane by the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway Commission would probably represent a reasonable compensation for the loss of taxes on their property previous to 1914, the assessment of this railway property within the limits of the municipality of Cochrane was in 1914 \$245,000, in 1915 \$205,000, in 1916 \$205,000, in 1917 \$200,900 and in 1918 \$200,900, all of which assessment was also exempt from taxation.

Owing to this heavy loss of revenue in taxes from the railways in Cochrane on account of their being Government owned and operated and thereby exempt from taxation, the private property in town has been assessed at full value and a high rate of taxation has in the past been levied on these ratepayers of the town who alone have had to bear the burden of imperative improvements in the municipality like the building of Roads and Sidewalks, Waterworks and Sewerage and School, for which even with the avowed policy of rigid economy, it became necessary to issue debentures at various periods, aggregating \$178,000 which with interest added, incurred a total liability to the town of \$308,992.

Furthermore the fire loss to the municipality of Cochrane in the Bush fire of 1911, in addition to losses covered by insurance represented \$38,500 and in the last Bush fire of 1916, in addition to losses covered by insurance, represented \$40,000 both of which amounts have been raised by debenture issues which, with interest added, incurred a liability to the town of \$134,719.80. For neither of these fires can the municipality of Cochrane be held accountable for negligence or lack of precaution, the cause as far as the municipality is concerned being absolutely uncontrollable.

The dire result of the first fire which took place during the boom days of railway construction was soon overcome and the town was rebuilt better and larger within twelve months from the devastation, but the catastrophe of 1916 has left its cruel mark to the present day. The single minded purpose of the prosecution of the war during the past four years and the thereby conditioned rigid economy in expenditures for the pursuance of a comprehensive settlement policy in the Cochrane district, occasioning a practical cessation of all public works and bringing general enterprise, not directly connected with

war work to a complete stand-still, left the town of Cochrane in the throes of the heavy burden of the consequences of the war without the compensating features of war activities in the shape of munition and other war work plants. All of which tended to bring the town financially to a period of stagnation, totally unable to incur any extraordinary expenditure, no matter how beneficial such expenditure might prove in the end.

Had the municipality been able to levy taxes on the railway property within the town limits at the rates levied on other property assessment since 1914, such taxes would have represented a revenue from the Canadian Government railways of \$30,188.21 for general taxes and \$14,741.44 for School taxes and from the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway of \$22,615.52 for general taxes and \$11,043.56 for School taxes or a total revenue of \$78,688.52 which amount would have fully covered the two fire losses sustained by the municipality and representing an annual revenue of over \$15,000 would practically take care of the yearly debenture payments on general improvements.

Under these circumstances, the progress of rebuilding the town would have been a more rapid one and the problem of furnishing housing accommodation for 250 soldiers in connection with the demobilization scheme of the Government would have found easy solution.

On the other hand it is obvious that the town cannot afford to lose this opportunity which will bring back a measure of prosperity in the opportunities offered for expansion and it is not too much to expect that the Government should give favorable consideration to any plan which will bring about the consummation of the scheme.

Before the war, among the public works designated for the town of Cochrane was a colonization building which was to be used in connection with a vigorous immigration policy and the completion of the National Transcontinental Railway. It should be possible to persuade the Government to put up such building immediately and use it for the housing of the returned soldiers during the duration of the demobilization period, even if meanwhile temporary barracks will have to be erected to have accommodation ready within the course of a month or at least six weeks. On the other hand such barracks could in very little longer time be constructed on more solid lines and be used after the completion of the demobilization as a colonization building. The cost to the Government in either case will be in no comparison to the advantages gained in making Cochrane one of the demobilization centres, for the sake of providing for the soldiers the incentive of a healthful and profitable return to civil occupation.

In a letter to the press, Mayor McCoubrey of Iroquois Falls gives expression to the general indignation felt in this Northern end at the train service which the Provincial Government through the T. & N. O. Commission are at present giving us. He says in part:

"A service of 232 miles straight, plus a couple of branch lines surely warrants the traffic which it carries being handled like an ordinary railroad would handle it. Think of their evil smelling, rattle trap day coaches."

And further on he says:

"Why cannot the Pullman come through from Montreal as formerly or better still a Buffet Car, of which latter I understand, there are two lying around North Bay. We boast of our Gold and Silver Mines, and our Pulp and Paper Plants, mines that up to June 30th last had paid in dividends eighty-eight and one quarter million dollars (\$88,122,289.70) and Pulp and Paper Plants that are shipping four hundred and fifty tons outward every working

day. Yet we sit down and take the service at present being handed to us. They probably think we are "easy marks" and will take anything that is handed to us, so I say again, is it not time to wake up. I for one think so and would ask every person who uses a train, to sit down and let me know in half a dozen words what they think."

While entirely agreeing with the substance of the complaint, yet we cannot overlook the fact that we were asked originally to bear with the inferior service as a requisite of absolute necessary war economy and the end of the war is of too recent date to have yet given time for relief in this direction. We have no doubt whatever, that even now the Commission has the question of better train accommodation under serious consideration, nevertheless we fully agree with our correspondent that the time is ripe for making strong representation in which all towns of this northern end of the road should join, to the Commission who, we are sure, will be found amenable to any just demand and who, we are equally sure have found us in the past far from being "easy marks."

The November issue of the Monthly Commercial Letter of the Canadian Bank of Commerce has the following timely admonition:

The coming of peace will not justify any relaxation in our efforts to increase the thrift and economy of the nation in order to keep the public purse filled. Fighting may soon end, but our men will require to "stand to" for an indefinite period until many difficult international problems have been settled, and in the meantime the war-racked and devastated countries of Europe must be supplied with many necessities. In providing these the burden of the financial aid required will fall upon those of the Allies who are able to supply the necessary funds from their own resources.

The industrial welfare of Canada for some time after the cessation of the war will depend largely upon the manner in which individual enterprise is gradually substituted for the government control of business which has prevailed during the war. During the period of transition the Government will be justified in using its credit on a diminishing scale for affecting the change. Employment for those of our people who have done good service in the manufacture of munitions may be provided by new foreign business, which, pending the determination of the important geographical and political questions arising out of the war, will be controlled largely by the allied Governments. Only if they are backed by a full purse, can our representatives at the allied councils confidently assume the responsibility for a large share of the rehabilitation which is immediately necessary. If the country is to be saved from a period of serious industrial depression, it is of the utmost importance that our people should not relax their efforts to save, so that they may be enabled to give generous financial support to the Government whenever needed. To provide for the cost of demobilizing our expeditionary forces and for our share in restoring the war-devastated areas, additional Government loans will be necessary from time to time, though on a lesser scale than during the war.

Those undertaking new enterprises should not be obliged to wait for the direction of the Government, but should be able to rely upon its encouragement and protection. While the peace plenipotentiaries are settling boundaries and indemnities, the springs of normal trade will commence to flow. New goods will have to be found for new markets, new problems of credit and transportation will have to be faced and those who handle them with skill and tact will secure the victories of peace.