

# What Can Our Railways Do In Providing New Labor?

They Need Rails, Cars, Bridges—Roadbeds Need Repairing  
—Four Million Ties—Government Railway Situation.

What can Canada's railways do in bridging the industrial gap between the end of the war and the resumption of normal business?

In particular, what part can Canada's own railways, including the Canadian Northern and Intercolonial, play in the adjustment process?

The Board of Directors appear to be fully seized of their responsibilities. They are proposing programs to the Government. Will they be adequate? Will the Government accept them, quickly and vigorously?

Canadian Government railways, and work ordered by them, can absorb a portion of the labor being released from war industries. Some of this labor can be taken on right now; more can be absorbed month by month as the railway program grows and the war business gradually comes to a full stop.

To-day the railways need men in their repair shops in Winnipeg, Stratford, Toronto, Montreal. Locomotives and cars have been out of commission for long periods because there was no one to fix them. Here is one field for ex-munition men.

## RAILWAYS CAN NOW GET RAILS.

The railways need rails. None of the systems are at that point of road efficiency where they would like to be. For years there has been the keenest rivalry between munition works and railways for steel. The Government has tried to give the railways a little share, but they have never had what they want. The steel plants can now turn to rails.

The Dominion Iron and Steel Company, of Sydney, have an order for 125,000 tons of rails, and the Algoma plant, at the Sault, have an order for 75,000 tons both from the Government.

To this total of 200,000 tons there should be added another 10 per cent., or 20,000 tons, for other kinds of steel used in connection with rails—such as angle bars, joints, bolts. Other steel companies are sharing in these contracts.

Railways need cars, and this work is likely to begin at once. The Government railways are badly in need of more rolling stock, and the other roads are in a similar condition. To handle such orders there are, among others, the Canadian Car and Foundry Company, with plants in Montreal, Amherst, and Fort William; the Eastern Car Co., at New Glasgow; and the National Steel Car Co., at Hamilton.

Both these lines of work, rails and cars, can be carried on in the winter, and will take care of the amount of labor required, without any break.

In regard to the building of cars, much of the work has previously been done in the United States. At the earliest moment steps will be taken to have it done in Canada. Interior furnishings of passenger cars, couplings, springs, and steel tires have not been made in Canada at all, or, as in the case of the last two items, in small quantities. If they were made here that much more work would be provided for our people.

## GRADED LINES IN WEST TO COMPLETE.

As soon as spring comes the railways, and especially the Government roads, will launch out into a big development project, including the re-laying of rails and ties, regrading, and providing new lines on the 250 or 300 miles in Western Canada, which have been laid out to serve good districts, and have been already graded.

In this enterprise the Government would not only be helping the labor situation; it would be increasing the permanent assets of its own property by improving the standards of efficiency.

The Canadian Northern, in the normal course of business, will require 3,000,000 ties. If the development program is adopted another million will be added to this. Picture the number of men who will be given employment in the lumber camps on this one item!

Government roads may also, where desirable, replace present wooden bridges by steel ones—another way to keep labor fully employed in the steel industry.

As a more local detail, but one which illustrates a prevalent condition, the Canadian Northern needs houses for its employes at Leaside. There has been almost a complete cessation of domestic building, but it will start again with a bound. In this particular case men now have to be taken, morning and night, between Leaside, the site of the terminals and car shops, and the North Toronto Station, on the way to their homes. The Canadian Northern plans a first instalment of 75 or 100 houses at Leaside, and their official example is sure to be followed by private building companies.

## NO RAILWAY MEN WILL LOSE JOBS.

In Government railways to-day there are about 25,000 men employed; during the summer this figure reached nearer 35,000. None of the 25,000 now engaged will lose their jobs by the coming of peace. On the contrary, hundreds of men could be taken on now, and the number will constantly increase.

If, as should be done, the Grand Trunk also is incorporated in the Government system and becomes a part of the people's railway, the Government will then be a still larger employer of labor, and will be able to in-

fluence the whole situation for the benefit of the community to an extent that much greater.

Meanwhile railways offer one of the safety-valves in this period when so many people are being thrown out of work. Do the best we can, the coming winter will be a difficult one; but some of the best-informed business leaders of Canada firmly believe the transition period will be a short one. They think that by the middle of next summer there will be such activity in industry in lumbering, in building, and in agriculture that we will wonder why we ever did worry.

### TIME A VITAL FACTOR FOR LABOR.

This may be a reassuring prospect to trade and commerce, which can afford to take rather a long look. They can view with equanimity a break in good times if it is of comparatively short duration.

But what about the people themselves? What about the thousands of men who will have no work after December fourteenth?

They cannot look ahead to the summer.

For labor, two weeks' unemployment is a misfortune, and a month's would bring them to the edge of a precipice.

As for next summer, such an interval of no-work would bury them.

The Government, in dealing with this problem, must view it with the eyes of the common people, not with the eyes merely of trade and commerce.