

, THE WARTIME ROLE OF THE STEAM RAILWAYS OF CANADA*

Since the advent of steam transportation, railways have played a role of great economic and strategic importance during periods of hostilities. Contributions to Canada's war effort by the Canadian National Railways and the Canadian Pacific Railway are but another though an outstanding example of this fact. The transportation services provided by them have made possible the expansion of this country's war production on a scale far in excess of anything ever thought possible. Despite all the pre-war criticism of over-expansion, had this Dominion's transportation systems been developed on a more restricted scale it would have been an economic impossibility for her industries to have expanded along lines which have enabled them to supply this country's own war requirements as well as fulfilling all commitments to the Allies under direct purchase or Mutual Aid.

Canada's extensive railway mileage (42,346 miles of single track), which is exceeded only by Soviet Russia and the United States both of which have populations far in excess of the Dominion, can be considered as having been one of this country's most efficient peacetime measures of defence. The railways have been the principal conveyers of raw material to war factories and of finished products from such plants to seaboard for shipment to the war fronts of the world. Railways have likewise played an important part in the mobilization and movement of the Armed Services and the transportation of war workers to industrial centres.

The war at sea has had the effect of diverting to the railways much of the freight previously carried in coastal shipping, and gasoline rationing has had the effect of greatly limiting motor trucking as a competitor in short-haul traffic, thus further complicating distribution facilities for domestic requirements. Shipping casualties on the high seas have been heavy and as a result it has been necessary to reduce ocean hauls to a minimum. Railway transportation to East Coast ports has, therefore, continued at a high rate at all seasons throughout the year and much of the ocean shipping on the St. Lawrence River has been discontinued. Many ships on Canadian coastal and inland waterways have been diverted to war use thus throwing an additional burden upon railway transportation.

The volume of both passenger and freight traffic carried in 1944 was more than double that of immediate pre-war years: the freight carried was three times that of 1933. Compared with the peak year of the War of 1914-18, freight carried to-day is more than twice as great, and the average movement of a ton of freight has increased from 30 to approximately 50 miles, or by 65 p.c., reflecting the industrial expansion of the country and the greater responsibilities of the transportation systems.

The Canadian railways found themselves at the outbreak of war with not only an actual shortage of rolling-stock but with much of their equipment outdated and showing signs of hard wear following the retrenchment necessary during the years of depression and the period of readjustment which followed. Much of the equipment in operation was older than would have been the case in times of peaceful prosperity and most of the rolling-stock was not designed to transport the heavy and bulky pieces that make up the "sinews of war". To this initial condition was added the difficulty of securing new equipment and obtaining replacements and parts for repairs. The urgent needs of the war fronts brought about the necessity for restrictions and regulations being imposed governing the manufacture of articles

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