

and a few regional independent railways, are the only carriers able to transport large volumes of freight at low cost in all weather by continuous passage over Canadian transcontinental routes. Though highway and air competition is increasing, the railways still retain their primary position in the freight transport field. However, growing public preference for air travel on long trips and for the use of private automobiles over short distances has greatly affected railway passenger services. Passenger trains have been eliminated on some branch lines and reduced on certain main lines, and economies have been derived from the wide use of rail diesel cars.

The two national railway companies control a wide variety of Canadian and international transport and communication services. The government-owned Canadian National Railway System is the country's largest public utility and operates the greatest length of trackage in Canada. In addition, it operates a fleet of coastal and ocean-going steamships, a national telegraph system connecting the principal points of Canada with other parts of the world, an extensive express service in Canada and abroad, a chain of large hotels and resorts, and a scheduled air service connecting all major cities across the country and Canadian with other North American and European points. Its chief competitor, the Canadian Pacific Railway, is a joint-stock corporation operating an extensive transcontinental railway supported by a national telegraph system with connections throughout the world, a large fleet of inland, coastal and ocean-going vessels, a chain of year-round and resort hotels, a domestic north-south airline which is one of the world's great air-freight carriers, a transpacific airline service to the Orient and the Antipodes, air services to Mexico, Peru, Chile and Argentina, a transpolar air route connecting Vancouver and Amsterdam, a transatlantic service to Lisbon, Madrid and Rome, and a limited (one-flight daily each way) transcontinental air service between Vancouver and Montreal. Also included in the company's operations are a world-wide express service and a domestic truck and bus network.

The Pacific Great Eastern Railway, owned by the British Columbia Government, operates over a 788.6-mile route from North Vancouver to Fort St. John in the Peace River area of northeastern British Columbia, with a branch line from Chetwynd to Dawson Creek. The completion in 1958 of the northern extension of this line opened up to development the vast interior of the province and brought to an end the biggest railway construction job undertaken in North America for two decades. With the completion in May 1959 of the last link in the microwave system, the PGE became the first railway on the Continent to be operated entirely by means of radio communication.

The statistics of Subsections 1 to 3 of this Section cover the combined railway facilities of all companies operating in Canada, including intercity freight and passenger services of electric railway companies. Details relating to the Canadian National Railway System are dealt with separately in Subsection 4. A special article covering the consolidation and organization of the CNR appears in the 1955 Year Book at pp. 840-847.

Subsection 1.—Milage and Equipment

Construction was begun in 1835 on the first railway in Canada—the short link of 14.5 miles between Laprairie and St. Johns, Que.—but only 66 miles were in operation by 1850. The first great period of construction was in the 1850's when the Grand Trunk and the Great Western Railways were built as well as numerous smaller lines. The building of the Intercolonial and the Canadian Pacific Railways contributed to another period of rapid expansion in the 1870's and 1880's. In the last period of extensive railway building (1900-17), the Grand Trunk Pacific, National Transcontinental and Canadian Northern Railways were constructed.

Only a gradual increase has taken place in the milage of single track line since the 1920's. Recently, however, the development of a number of large industrial projects in districts far removed from transport facilities has necessitated the building of branch lines.