

## PART II.—RAIL TRANSPORT\*

### Section 1.—Railways†

Since Confederation the railways of Canada have been the principal transport facility throughout, and beyond, the nation. The two great transcontinental systems, supplemented by a major north-south line on the West Coast and a number of 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.

The two national railway companies control a wide variety of Canadian and international transport and communications services. The government-owned Canadian National Railway System is the country's largest public utility and operates the greatest length of trackage in Canada. It is the only railway serving all ten provinces and has completed a branch line to serve the Great Slave Lake area of the Northwest Territories. In addition, it operates a highway service, a fleet of coastal steamships, an extensive express service, 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. The Canadian National, jointly with the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, operates a national telecommunications system that employs modern microwave, high-speed teletype and private wire networks, telex, data and weather facsimile transmission and movement of telegrams to any point in the world. The Canadian Pacific Railway Company is a joint-stock corporation also operating a transcontinental railway, an express service, a domestic truck and bus network, a fleet of inland, coastal and ocean-going vessels, a chain of year-round and resort hotels, a domestic airline servicing points in British Columbia, Alberta and Yukon Territory, 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 Portugal, Spain and Italy, and a limited (one flight daily) transcontinental air service between Vancouver and Montreal.

The Pacific Great Eastern Railway, owned by the British Columbia Government, operates over a 789.5-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 section of this line opened up to development the vast interior of the province and brought to an end the largest railway construction job undertaken in North America for two decades. The PGE was the first railway on the Continent to be operated entirely by means of radio communication. Several northern extensions of this line are under construction or are in the planning stage.

#### 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.

There has been little change in total track milage since the 1920's. The milage peak was reached in 1959 and there has since been a gradual decline, new construction being more than offset by abandonment of unprofitable lines. In recent years, the development of a number of large projects in districts far removed from transport facilities and the opening up of the Northwest Territories have necessitated the building of branch lines. Those completed up to 1956 are listed in the 1957-58 Year Book, p. 815, and those completed

\* The statistical data in this Part were revised in the Public Finance and Transportation Division, Dominion Bureau of Statistics: more detailed information is given in the annual reports of the Division.

† A special article on operational and technological changes in rail transport appears in the 1965 Year Book at pp. 755-761.