

**RAILWAY
NATIONALISATION AND
THE AVERAGE CITIZEN**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649392469

Railway nationalisation and the average citizen by William H. Moore

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NEW YORK:
E. P. DUTTON & CO.
681 FIFTH AVENUE

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INTRODUCTION.

A country extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific across the widest part of the North American Continent, must needs have a railway problem.

But at present we Canadians are more than usually troubled about our railway affairs; although only a few years ago we believed the solution of all our transportation difficulties lay in the palms of our hands. At that time most Members of Parliament, Members of the Legislatures,—and, yes, the Average Citizen—thought the country's best interest lay in state-assistance, for the extension of tracks throughout the land. If anyone feels inclined to question this statement, let him examine the voting registers of Parliament and Assemblies, and delve into the records of the polling booths, when at general elections railway assistance was the supreme issue.

If we were right in our confidence then, we are wrong in our despair now. But we may have been wrong then. There are men that say we were wrong, very wrong, many of them

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doctors of journalism, that once upon a time, not long ago, cried aloud the slogan of development through transportation, and now lay a charge of intoxication against those who listened to their call. "A debauch in railway construction," they charge. In these days of prohibition, men resent being accused of intoxication, even if the cause be non-alcoholic.

If the Average Citizen would investigate the railway situation, he must needs depend upon the press for information. The question is of vast importance, but it is economic; and Canada has no economic literature. Perhaps that is putting it a little too strongly, but the few books written on economic subjects can scarcely be said to constitute a literature; and, as far as I know, not one has been written on the present railway question.

In England and in the United States there are scores of books on the various phases of the railway situation, written by men that seek only to supply facts for the public; but the Average Citizen of Canada is compelled to make up his mind as to what is best to be done with this highly-complicated and most-important business, upon the incomplete information con-

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tained in newspaper editorials, magazine articles, the published extracts of House of Commons debates, and the occasional semi-public lectures delivered on the subject.

The newspaper has no room for relation of the facts that have led up to the present situation of the Canadian railways, no room for co-ordination and analysis of these facts; and without this, it is impossible for the Average Citizen, who must ultimately pass judgment upon them, to make an intelligent decision. The question is too big for even its salient points to be assembled in the pages of a periodical; and yet there is urgent need of study with the main facts on the table. Further, the newspaper is a political partisan and, while often independent and invariably clever, it naturally sways with the party. That's a paper's business in Canada.

It is possible that I may be accused of partisanship myself, since I have been in railway service during practically all of the period under review. It may be that the experience of those years has warped my judgment and unfitted me for the task of dissecting the case. And yet, when I think it over, how is anyone, who has not followed the events of those

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strenuous years with daily interest, to analyse and untangle the present situation? The man who realises that he lives in a glass house, is the more apt to be on guard. I have taken pains to have the figures used in this book, checked by hands more competent than my own, and believe them to be correct. I have attempted to escape the rules applied to literary diction by frequently assuming the freedom that belongs to informal talk, with, I hope, a benefit to my subject and the Average Citizen whom I have sought as a companion. Confident of my facts, convinced of the need for their presentation, I still hold on to the painter, fearful for the fate of my craft in the hands of the literary critics. But "I do not expect this book to stand upon its literary merits; for if it is unsound in principle, felicity of diction cannot save it, and if sound, homeliness of expression cannot destroy it." Whatever the reader may think of the other merits of this book, having finished it, I trust he will be able to say: "It has been honestly done."

May, 1917.

W.H.M.