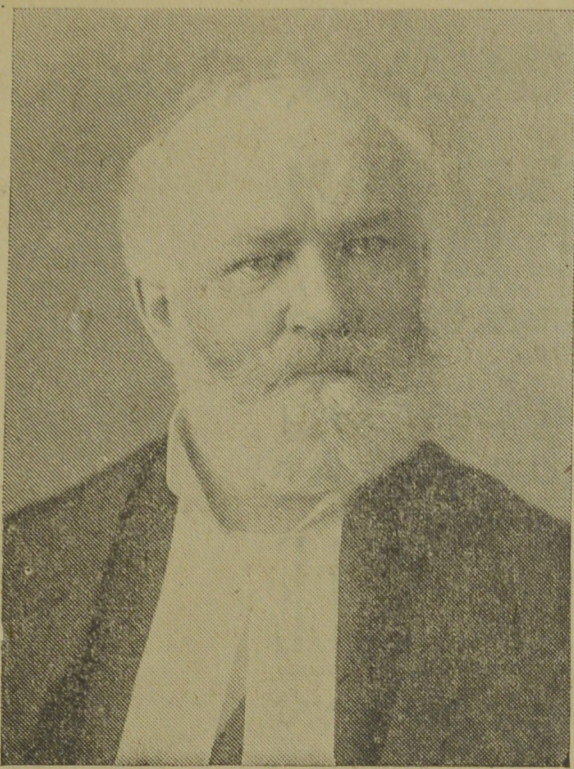




GREAT YEAR FOR THE I. C. R.

Mr. Blair Made Important Statements to Parliament.

ROAD SHOWS A SURPLUS OF \$125,000.

Ottawa, May 29.—Hon. A. G. Blair delivered in the house yesterday the best speech that he ever placed on Hansard. This is saying a good deal, as the Minister of Railways has made many very good speeches.

Yesterday's deliverance, which was given preparatory to taking up the estimates of the department, was not only eloquent and forcible, but full of valuable information. The position of the Intercolonial, now one of the best equipped railways on this continent, with excellent road bed and well managed, was made so clear and definite that the critics of the government line were left without any means of attack or escape.

Mr. Blair approached the question from every standpoint. He showed that the receipts had doubled, that more than \$1,000,000 more had been expended for exactly the same class of supplies and services as were paid out in 1896, and that more than \$1,000,000 extra were now paid in wages.

The carefully prepared argument, which the minister advanced in favor of government railways, will go far to disabuse the public mind on this important question. The facts and figures which he produced will help along that education which has been making so many converts of late in favor of the government owning and operating railways.

Had any one a few years ago, when the I. C. R., was regarded here as a sink-hole for public money, and a disgrace to the country, make a speech in support of extending that road to the Pacific, he would not have been listened to.

Could there, then, be any greater testimony to the minister who has succeeded in bringing about this change by placing the government road in the front rank of Canadian railways?

The minister of railways gave the house a detailed statement of the operations of the Intercolonial Railway during the last couple of years, preliminary to taking up his estimates.

The earnings for the year ending June 30, 1902, were \$1,770,941 for passengers, \$3,644,513 for freight and \$255,931 for mails and express, or a total of \$5,671,385. Compared with the year before, the passenger receipts were \$1,607,166, freight receipts were \$3,121,006, a total of \$4,728,172, or a betterment of \$699,000, over the year 1900-01.

In the year 1901-02 there were 1,314 miles in operation in both years. The earnings per mile were \$3,782 in 1901 and \$4,213 in 1902, or an increase of \$573 per mile.

The increase in passenger receipts over the year before was \$164,300, in freight receipts \$523,500.

Compared with 1895 the freight receipts had more than doubled and the passenger earnings had almost doubled.

Adding to the mileage in operation in 1896 fifteen per cent., so as to make a perfectly fair comparison, he found that in 1902 there had been an increase over

1896 of \$653,822 in passenger earnings, and of \$1,587,379 in freight earnings.

Working expenses for the year 1901-02 had been \$5,574,563, thus leaving the net earnings for the year \$496,822.

The working expenses in 1896, allowing for the different mileage, were \$3,464,751, or an increase last year of \$2,069,812.

In the former year there had been spent out of earnings on the improvement of the road \$1,532,000. Last year the sum was \$2,030,930, or half a million more.

The earnings to the end of March last were \$447,000, as against \$418,400 in the corresponding nine months of 1901-02 and the working expenses were \$477,500, as against \$419,750 in the previous year.

On June 30, 1891, the road showed a deficit of \$60,000 and on March 31, 1902, a deficit of \$13,000, and yet it showed a surplus of \$96,822 at the end of the last fiscal year.

Mr. Blair's estimate was that at the end of the present fiscal year, the Intercolonial would be able to show a surplus of at least \$125,000. If the government had not spent \$500,000 more out of earnings on betterments last year, than had been spent in 1896, it would have been able to show a surplus of \$696,000. These betterments, however, all tended to put the road in a better earning position.

New and heavy engines enabled more work to be done with the same amount of labor and Mr. Blair remarked, in passing, "this is the largest item in the expenditure. It is over \$3,000,000 a year, of which \$240,000 represents advances which have been made in the wages of employees since 1896."

The acquisition of new cars had saved the road from heavy bills for the use of cars of other lines, bills larger than what is now being paid in interests on this expenditure.

At the end of the present year we will be able, he said, to show a surplus of \$125,000.

If the late government had spent as much on the road as the present, they would have to add to the deficit of 1896 \$60,000 more.

That was not only the conditions as compared between 1896 and 1902, but between every year. (Cheers.)

The road, said Mr. Blair, is a credit to the country, and the people of Canada. (Cheers.)

The modernization of the railway had a great deal to do with the increased traffic, the Intercolonial now took its place alongside the best roads in Canada, instead of being a disgrace to Canada, it was a credit to the people who owned it.

If the same wages had been paid now on the road as under the late government the surplus would have been very much larger. The increase in salaries was a very large item in the expenditure. But by the addition of larger locomotives, more modern rolling stock, very much more could be drawn by one train and in that way the increased pay to the employees could be earned.

At this point Mr. Blair made a very important statement in regard to the increased wages paid on the road. During the past year there was paid on the Intercolonial \$240,000 more in wages than was paid in 1896, in respect to precisely the same number and class of employees.

Mr. Schreiber, ex-deputy minister of railways, had prepared a statement showing that there was exactly \$1,075,000 more money paid out last year in wages alone on the road when compared with the total wages in 1896.

Mr. Blair next took up a new phase of the question, that was to the fallacious

ideas that existed in opposition to government control and management of railways. No such ideas could ever exist for anything ever seen on the Intercolonial. "I do not think," said Mr. Blair, "that the general idea prevails to any extent which did prevail so largely that political influences and political pressure and all these pulls that were alleged to exist upon the government railway exist at present. In the first place I deny that they exist, but suppose they do exist, they do not to any material degree interfere in the results of the opposition of the road.

An hon. member, hear, hear. Mr. Blair—My hon. friend says, hear, hear. He knows that so far as it is possible to make it so, that the I. C. R. is not a political machine. It never has been a political machine to my knowledge within the last six or seven years.

I say without fear of successful contradiction that all this talk about the management of the I. C. R. by the government's being wasteful in a mere bugaboo, and will not bear scrutiny. He had a careful abstract made of a comparison of the different items on the I. C. R. with the two great railways, the G. T. R. and C. P. R., and the I. C. R. was run more cheaply than either of the other roads.

Mr. Blair then pointed out the disadvantages of the Intercolonial railway in respect to location, and also in regard to competition all the way. There was only one side to the trade. He said that the rates of the Intercolonial were from fifty to 100 per cent. lower than those on the G. T. R. and Canadian Pacific. If the rates were increased say fifty per cent. there would of course be no extra expenditure, then the total earnings of the Intercolonial would be \$7,620,000, making a surplus of \$2,046,000.

Mr. Haggart—Why not put up the rates?

Hon. Mr. Blair—No, it would not do, as the rates are about the same today as when the road was taken over at confederation, and he had no intention of raising them.

I am not making, I hope, any personal or individual claim in regard to these results, only in a very small measure should I be entitled to do so. If I were to award credit for the showing we are able to make, I would award the greatest share to the good men and true, faithful in their duty and loyal to the public who give their best attention and employ their best energies to the discharge of their duties in the Intercolonial service. I think they are entitled to great credit, indeed, I venture to say you cannot travel over any railway in Canada where you will find a better class of men, more attentive, more courteous or more deeply interested in their work, and the welfare of the road they serve.

I am only claiming for the government that we realized what would be imperative if we would rescue the Intercolonial from the alarming condition which it was in. If we were to escape a continuance not merely of a half million deficit, but if deficits far in excess of half millions are realized that it was necessary that we should go to work in a business like way, and that we should adopt modern methods.

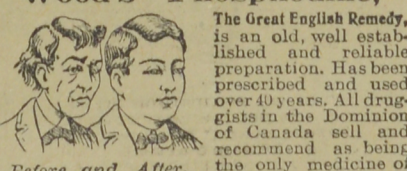
Mr. Fowler, Kings (N. B.), alleged that Mr. Blair had interfered with the railway vote in St. John and Westmorland and influenced it in favor of the Liberal party, but when pressed for his evidence he could only quote rumor and the ministers' speeches in these cities.

Hon. Mr. Blair—I want to take this opportunity of saying that what the honorable gentleman has said is absolutely and entirely without foundation. I invite him to take an early opportunity of reading my speeches to the house and they will show that they do not corroborate him.

Mr. Emerson made an excellent speech. He said that a great deal was talked about the expense of the I. C. R. while little was heard of the vast sums spent on the canals which rendered no revenues. As to book-keeping on the I. C. R. it was done now by the same officials and in the same manner as it always had been done, the dates were the same as was in force since 1867 and the I. C. R. was the best asset the dominion had. He made a strong and vigorous plea for government owned railways.

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