

STATE RAILROADS.

THE LINES IN AUSTRALIA ARE OWNED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

Premier Turner of Victoria Tells How They Are Conducted—Primary Objects Are Development and Good Service. People Like the System.

Among the many directions in which our Australian cousins have extended the sphere of government there is none more interesting or instructive than in the creation of their great systems of state railways. The bulk of the railways in the Australian colonies are owned by the state, and in several instances the systems are entirely state owned. Altogether the public possesses some 13,000 miles of railway, which have cost it £130,000,000 to construct. Moreover, the colonial railway policy has been almost entirely dominated by what is called the highway theory—that is to say, that instead of making the earning of revenue the chief purpose of railway construction the primary object has been to secure a maximum development of the country by the provision of the cheapest and most efficient service possible. Both this policy, however, and the actual fact of state ownership have been subjected to a good deal of weighty criticism. A representative of The Daily News, therefore, felt that the presence of the colonial premiers here offered a unique opportunity for getting a summary of Australian experience and an epitome of opinion upon a subject of great and general interest. The results of his inquiries will now be given. Selecting Victoria first, as possessing certain circumstances peculiar to itself, our representative received a cordial invitation to meet Sir George Turner at the Hotel Cecil.

"How long have you had state railways in Victoria, Sir George?"

"Since we had railways there at all, except some suburban lines, which we purchased some years ago, so as to have complete control. At present the whole of the railways are in the hands of the government. In the suburbs of Melbourne there is a system of cable trams, which compete to some extent with our railway and which at present are in the hands of a company, but will eventually belong to the municipalities through which they run."

"What first induced the government to construct railroads?"

"Probably it was much more a matter of necessity than of inclination. You see, in the earlier days it was essential that we should construct railroads to open up the country by securing settlement. Private companies were not prepared to run the risk except under the guarantee of the state, and it was found that the only safe and certain course was for the community to construct railways itself. Of course we were not in a position in those days to raise the necessary capital except in the form of loans, and upon these we were compelled to pay a very high interest because the investor had not then the faith in the colonies he has today."

"I suppose there would be no difficulty today in getting private companies to either take over the existing railroads or to construct new ones if the government would agree?"

"No, I do not think there would be the slightest."

"But how would the Victorians view such a step?"

"I scarcely like to contemplate," replied our visitor, with a strange and frowning smile. "I am quite sure, however, that the life of the government who seriously suggested it would not be worth many days' purchase."

"Do they regard the state ownership of railways as more beneficial than private ownership then?"

"Unquestionably they do, and they would as soon think of handing over the postal arrangements to private enterprise as the railways. They take the view, and rightly, too, I think, that the public is not likely to get the maximum of good treatment from railway companies where the primary object is to provide the shareholders with a dividend. The true policy, in our opinion, is not to use the railways primarily as revenue earning machines, but after getting accounts to balance to cheapen rates and to improve facilities. In fact, we look upon our railroads as highways, the great object of which is to open up and fully develop the country through which they run."

"But have you not been severely criticised for pursuing that policy to the point of constructing railways in districts and through countries where there was not a reasonable likelihood of their recouping the cost of construction?"

"Yes, that is so; but a good deal of it has been uninformed, and therefore not of great value. There is no doubt, however, that up to the time when we altered our system as to construction and management, and when the control was not so rigid as it ought to have been or as it is at present, there were some lines constructed much too prematurely from the point of view of recouping. But such extravagance, if you like to call it so, was not an intrinsic part of a policy so much as a passing accident in the experimental stages of a new and great undertaking."

"Have not the critics talked about political corruption in connection with your railways?"

"Yes, they have, but the phrase is an entire misnomer and has really been wildly thrown at the colonies without any genuine regard for the actual facts. The only suggestion of evidence has been this overconstruction and the alleged employment of an excessive staff of men. Now, with this overconstruction I dealt in the last reply, but let me add one word. While I admit that there has been here and there cases of premature construction, the best justification of the general policy of treating the railroads as highways is to be found in the fact of our rapid internal development, and the fact that our railways are worth

much more than they cost and in the fact that we can now get all the money we want at 3 per cent. Then with regard to the employment of an excessive staff there has been a factor ignored in this connection. Our railway construction developed with great rapidity, and to keep pace with the abnormal pressure a very large number of men were taken on. When matters settled down to regularity and routine, it was found that the staff was in excess of the needs, and further—and this is the point—it was discovered that as civil servants their employment was recognized as permanent. This, of course, raised a great difficulty, but we bravely faced it, and by dint of a great effort and the loyalty of the electors we have managed to reduce the staff to essential proportions.

"But that there is any political corruption in our railway system is quite untrue. Indeed, our state system has in no way been marred by many of those unfortunate political features which have been constantly incident to the railway company promotions in the United Kingdom. Nor have our traders and farmers been troubled with that costly and futile litigation and those grossly unfair preferential freight rates of which we have sorrowfully heard so much in the old country."

"And do your railways pay?"

"What we are doing is making a profit of about 3 per cent above working expenditure, but as we have loans raised at 4 and 4½ per cent still unredeemed we are not commercially on the right side, but we are rapidly improving our position, and as a deliberate matter of policy we prefer to give comparatively low railway rates than to make a net profit at the expense of our trade and agriculture, and this we find to be one of the great advantages of state as opposed to private railways. We can afford to be independent of profit so long as the colony is developing."

"And what is the method of control?"

"Under the scheme of reconstruction we now have a practical railway manager as commissioner appointed by order in council for seven years, with fairly large discretionary powers, subject to certain control by the ministry, but only removable by a vote of the two houses. Originally the railway department was just like any other department of state, with its head in the cabinet and therefore changeable with his party. Then we tried a permanent commission of three, with practically absolute powers, but this we did not find satisfactory. Hence our present system, which works well and promises better, so far as can be judged. It seems to secure the maximum of expert efficiency, without the dangers of mere bureaucratic control, freed from the democratic voice. Overconstruction is guarded against by the most ample precautions, without being arrested by bureaucratic pedantry."

"Do you contract your work of construction or do it by direct employment of labor?"

"Certainly, by direct employment of labor, which we find much more economical and generally satisfactory. As a partial indication of this we have just completed the most cheaply constructed line in the world. It is a good and substantial piece of work, and has only cost us £1,700 per mile. Of course we had the wood for sleepers fairly close, and the ground was pretty easy and under our new system did not cost anything, as the district interested has to give us the land without compensation, and, moreover, the people who use our lately constructed lines have to pay higher rates until the line pays working expenses and interest, but even then every one will admit it to be a great achievement, when your average in England is £45,000 per mile, with labor cheaper than with us."

"And what of the outlook?"

"It is very bright. We have had many obstacles, and the depression of a few years ago hit us badly, but things are looking up, and the prospect before the state railways is full of fair promise. With fair seasons and the gradual reduction of interest as we renew the loans I believe the railways of Victoria will soon pay working expenses and interest on capital, and this is all we want, as we have no dividends to provide. State ownership has proved the right policy and will, I believe, continue to secure greater justification year by year."—London News.

Co-operation in City Government.

The co-operative theory requires not that the city use its franchises to tax the people, but that it extend the services along all classes and furnish them at cost, or even free of cost, by meeting the expenses out of the taxes. Thus Glasgow's municipal railways carry workmen mornings and evenings at half fare. Australian cities carry children free to and from school. Berlin steam roads charge \$4.50 a year for a ticket to and from the city—five miles—as often as you please. In American cities this would cost from \$30 to \$50. The telephone in Paris is \$10 a year; in New York, \$240. Thus the co-operative theory places the great inventions of our day within the reach of every family, enables the people to scatter their homes in the suburbs and at the same time greatly increases the opportunities of the city for successful business enterprise.—Professor Comans in Kingdom.

Why Christ Was Crucified.

What was Christ killed for and who killed him? He tramped all the way from Nazareth to Calvary. He was born in a borrowed barn. Respectable sinners he called "whited sepulchers." He walked into a temple he did not own and drove out some money changers he was unacquainted with, though he was neither sheriff nor undersheriff. Right down at the bottom Christ was killed for his sympathy with the poor and contempt for the rich and unjust. He was regarded by the respectable classes as an outlaw and a felon, and, if you please, an anarchist.—Rev. Myron B. Reed.

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It Adds to the Beauty of Maid as Well as Matron.

There are many things in the lives of women which tend to develop a carriage of the body anything but upright, says the Dietetic Gazette. Girls who tend the baby become one-sided because they carry the little one on one arm more than on the other. They might be taught the better way by their parents or teachers. There are multitudes of little girls in all large cities whose chief business is to tend the baby while their mothers work. Deformity is common among them. If a girl has any pride in being upright in body as well as in morals she can, even if she has an occupation which tends to make her crooked, do much herself to prevent it. In the first place carefully cultivate the sense which tells her when she is standing straight and when she is not. By paying attention to this muscular sense it becomes in time very acute. By neglecting it the sense becomes dull—is paralyzed. Cultivate it daily or several times a day by assuming the upright attitude. Stand before the glass and see when you are straight, or get a friend to tell you, and then put yourself in this attitude whenever you stand or walk or sit at any labor in which you are engaged. If you have only to walk across the room do it in an upright attitude. If you have only to stand and converse with a friend in the street, on the road, at a party, get yourself so accustomed to the upright attitude that you will feel uncomfortable in any other. In time an upright habit will be established and constant attention to it will not be required.

A Man of the Period.



HEROIC ABOLITIONISTS.

Some of the Tortures Endured by Escaping Slaves.

The story of Calvin Fairbank, the fighting abolitionist, who spent five years in the Kentucky penitentiary, with almost daily terrible floggings on his bare back—with anywhere from twenty to a hundred lashes at each flogging—and then, after being liberated, went to freeing slaves again and was kidnapped and sent back for thirteen years more of confinement and flogging, recalls the many simple, heroic deeds of that day, says the Boston Transcript. Whenever we get hold of an old underground railroad man we feel ourselves in a time of prodigious heroism. The negroes who ran away from slavery invited sufferings worse than slavery. Think of the man who had himself boxed up like a corpse in the south—in Florida, the Listener thinks it was—and shipped to an address in the north. He had some scraps of food in the coffin and the corners were loose enough to let in a little air. But the box was square at the ends, and there was nothing to show which was the head and which the foot. Often the negro, almost dead with the rigid confinement, was left lying on his face; and once stood on his head, the box being leaned up against the side of a freight building, the feet end up. Very soon the man began to suffer agony, of course; he felt that he would die in this position. No matter; he would not reveal himself and go back to slavery. Any death would be preferable to that. So he kept still till he swooned away; and when next he came to himself he and the coffin were on a moving railroad train. And he did not get out of the box until he arrived at his destination in Massachusetts.

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Questions For Statemen.

Can you suggest any other source of prosperity than from natural resources? Do you know any other means of development than applied labor?

Do you deny that congress has power to authorize the stamp of legal tender?

Can you produce any material without the "authorized stamp" that is money?

Don't you know that the creation and issue of money is one of the highest constitutional functions of government?

Don't you know that it is the first duty of congress to provide money for sufficient production, distribution and business purposes?

Don't you know that the present national banking system is unconstitutional?

Can you deny that the power to declare war and draft men can as consistently be delegated to a corporation as the issue of money—a national function?

Is it not a betrayal of the people and treason to the constitution for congress to legislate the people into debt by "promises to pay notes to be redeemed and interest bearing bonds," while congress has the undisputed power to make "legal tender dollars," appropriate them and keep the government and people out of debt? Don't plead ignorance.

And now, in short, don't you know that if you cannot contradict these questions nor suggest any other source of prosperity your actions in the past place some of you in a very unenviable position if not that of idiots or knaves?—Knights of Labor Journal.

Postal Savings Banks.

As the postal savings bank proposition is an innovation those who are opposed to it are entitled to a fair hearing. None of its supporters ask that it should be adopted without discussion.

The objection that it would be an unfair interference with existing savings banks is entitled to its due weight. The objection on the ground of "paternalism" can hardly claim to have any weight. The whole existing postoffice system is a magnificent illustration of paternalism, against which no one raises any objection.

But these and all other objections are disposed of by the experience of other countries in which the savings department is as much a part of the postal system as the money order department or, we may add, the parcels post.

On such a question a very small amount of favorable experience outweighs almost any amount of adverse theory. And the experience of nearly every European country has shown that the postal savings bank greatly increases the volume of the savings and thereby promotes the welfare of the people.—New York World.

He Looked Sick.

A man traveling on a Missouri train, says an exchange, said he could tell by the looks of the passengers what political party they belonged to. "This man here," said the passenger, "is a Bryan Democrat." "Yes," said the passenger, "that's my politics." "That man over there is a sound money Democrat." "That's correct," responded the passenger. "That man in the third seat is a Populist." "Correct you are," said the Populist. "And that man down farther is a Republican and voted for McKinley." "No, I am not," promptly responded the fellow. "I've been sick. That's what makes me look this way."—Kansas Commoner.

Jack Rabbits For the "Frogs?"

Much abused Kansas (the most prosperous and most Populist state in the Union—except Colorado) is sending jack rabbits to Washington to feed the destitute of that God forsaken borough of plutocracy. Colorado has a few John rabbits to spare, too—who wants them? If Henry Clews can spread a carload or two around among the "prosperity" ridden idiots of New York, he can get them by simply wiring us.—Denver Road.

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