The nationalization of railways

Davies Albert Emil
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BY
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CHAPTER I
THE GROWTH OF THE MOVEMENT IN THE
UNITED KINGDOM

For years past, railway nationalization has been in the
air. Its precise place in politics in this country is in-
dicated by the fact that, like old-age pensions, it has
been the subject of discussion in debating societies for
years past, but it has not yet found a place in the pro-
gramme of either of the two great political parties.

One or two things have contributed to bring the
question of railway nationalization into the foreground.
There was the advent of the Labour and Socialist party
in Parliament—which, it may be remarked, despite
the vast degree of attention it has attracted, does not
muster quite as many members as the number of rail-
way directors in the House of Commons (35), not
to speak of 71 railway directors in the House of Lords. Then came the agitation on the part of the railway workers for better pay and conditions of labour. Furthermore, the efforts of certain influential sections of shareholders to enforce reform methods of working on the respective Boards, and the increase in the number of serious accidents, have also played their part in bringing the whole working and administration of the railroads before the public.

The most representative assembly of the commercial men of the United Kingdom is probably the half-yearly meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom. At the meeting held at the Town Hall, Liverpool, in September 1907, which was attended by 328 delegates representing 97 Chambers of Commerce, the President, Lord Brassey, in his opening speech said—

"Throughout the inquiry by the Royal Commission on Canals the railways have been under review. The managers of the leading lines have appeared before us as witnesses. They have tendered a large body of evidence. As might have been expected, railway men are not favourable to canals. They think them out of date. Meanwhile the trader complains. He compares rates on British railways with the charges in Continental countries. It is not at all times and by all persons sufficiently considered that it is impossible to carry for short distances at as low a cost per ton and per mile as where distances are long. And I venture to say that the advantages which British traders enjoy