

## THE STATUS OF THE INDUSTRY AS SHOWN BY STATISTICS

A great deal has been said during the past few years about the condition of the electric railway industry, but no descriptive statement could illustrate so clearly and pointedly the actual status of the electric railway lines of the country as the statistics in regard to miles of track built and cars ordered during 1912 published in the last issue of this paper. In brief, they show that while the number of cars ordered is in excess of those ordered during 1911—in fact, is greater than during any one of the past five years during which the *ELECTRIC RAILWAY JOURNAL* has compiled statistics of this kind—the length of new track built or electrified is practically the smallest during the same period.

We use the word "practically" because, while nominally the miles of track built or electrified in 1912 were more than those built during 1909 by 63 miles, the excess is more than accounted for by the extensions of two electric railways which are not properly either city or interurban railways and so should not be considered as being included in the class of roads which we are now discussing. One of these was the electrification of part of the main line of the New York Central & Hudson River Railroad, which amounted to 58 miles, and the other was a 78-mile extension of the Oregon Electric Railway, which is controlled by the Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railroad, a steam railroad. These two extensions alone account for 136 miles, or more than 14 per cent of the total. The fact clearly shown by these figures is that while the business on existing electric railway lines is increasing, owing to the increased population and expanding business of the country, and cars have to be purchased by electric railway companies to carry these passengers, the construction of new lines and of extensions to old lines has almost ceased.

It should be remembered in this connection that during the past year there has been on the whole a marked revival of business and that the population of the country has been increasing at the rate of about 2 per cent a year. Normally one would expect the electric railway lines to increase in length in about this proportion, especially because of the small amount of track built during the previous few years. But in such a state as New York, outside of the main line of the New York Central Railroad, already mentioned, and the New York, Westchester & Boston Railroad, which was also built practically for steam railroad conditions, there was only 17 miles of new track, or an increase of less than one-half of 1 per cent, although during the decade from 1900 to 1910 the population increased at the rate of 2½ per cent yearly. Similarly, Massachusetts last year reported an increase of only a little more than 13 miles, also less than one-half of 1 per cent of its trackage. Ohio reported only 16 miles and Indiana only 13 miles. Several states, including Georgia, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Nebraska and Virginia, reported less than 5 miles of track each.

It would be foolish not to attach significance to these figures. No one, we believe, will claim that the real needs for transportation facilities in the states mentioned increased only at the trivial rates which this added mileage would indicate. We do not intend here to discuss the

causes, but the facts disclose a condition which is of serious import to the public at large, if city and interurban railways are really as great factors in the prosperity of urban and interurban communities as they are generally credited with being. The question is not one simply of concern to the railway companies. They need not attempt to serve any more territory, but can devote their attention to the more intensive cultivation of the lines which they have. But how will such a plan help those communities which are not now served by any existing railway line and hence are deprived of the transportation facilities which might be a factor in their growth? We bring this question and the figures already quoted to the attention of the legislatures which are now meeting in most of the states in this country.

## NEW MOUNTAIN ELECTRIFICATION

The announcement made this week of the decision of the Chicago, Milwaukee & Puget Sound Railroad to electrify some 440 miles of its main line between Harlowton, Mont., and Avery, Idaho, proves the correctness of the arguments often advanced by electrical engineers on the desirability of electric locomotives for service on mountain grades. Not only is the available fuel in the far Western mountain districts of low grade, but water-power is usually near at hand. Finally, the capacity of the locomotive, and hence of the track, can be greatly increased by the substitution of electric for steam power, as shown in the article on this subject by Mr. Armstrong published in this paper last week. The proposed installation will be similar in general character of service required to that of the Denver & Rio Grande proposed electrification, announced a few weeks ago, but will be considerably more extensive, as nearly four times the length of track to be equipped electrically is mentioned in the dispatches. On neither of these lines has a definite selection been made yet of the electric system to be used, but in an interview a prominent official of the company in Chicago is reported to have said that the chances favored the use of 2400 volts. This is, of course, the voltage adopted for the Butte, Anaconda & Pacific Railroad, which will also be supplied with electrical energy from the same power distribution system, and possibly the choice for the Butte, Anaconda & Pacific road was made in contemplation of the future electrification of the main trunk line. Recuperation, an especially valuable factor on mountain-grade divisions, is also mentioned as a probability, although whether this was, or will be, a factor in the choice of the electric system to be used is yet simply a matter of conjecture.

In one respect it seems at first somewhat of an anomaly that the superiority of electric power to steam power should have been recognized first at what appear to be the two extremes of railroading, namely, for rapid transit commuter service near densely populated cities and in the sparsely settled mountain districts of the country. But these two classes of service have this point of similarity, the question of increased track capacity is a very important one, and electric power affords the cheapest means of securing it. On the whole, the outlook for an increase of heavy electric traction lines during 1913 is promising.