

Railway relief departments are organized and managed by the companies with the co-operation of the employees. They act in cases of sickness or accident, also in cases of death. Nine American companies, having a total mileage of 31,000 miles and 320,000 employees, two-thirds of whom are members, maintain such departments; the annual expense for the whole would be about £400,000. Employees relief associations form, as a rule, small organizations exclusively among the employees, and managed entirely by them. The companies do not interfere in the management, but occasionally subsidise these associations. In France, retirement funds are maintained to a great extent by the contributions to the companies, and they insure a pension in proportion to the average salary of the last years of service, with a reversion to the widow and children. The pension matures when the years of service exceed a certain limit, or in case of accident.

In connection with this important question, I went to some trouble in preparing a paper dealing with the New Zealand Superannuation Fund. I regret to say, however, that through the discourtesy of the President of the section, I was prevented from reading it. The incident occurred in this way: The South Australian representative had just spoken, and I desired to follow on. The President immediately asked in French if any member desired to speak. It was not interpreted in English in accordance with the rules, consequently I was unable to comprehend what he said. I protested that I was in order on behalf of myself and others; but to no purpose. The meeting was largely composed of Frenchmen, and the British and colonial representatives were outvoted every time. The New Zealand Superannuation Fund in my opinion stands in the forefront as a liberal and wise measure. I much regret that I was debarred from explaining its provisions.

SECTION 5.

17. INFLUENCE WHICH THE CONSTRUCTION OF LIGHT RAILWAYS MAY HAVE ON THE TRAFFIC OF MAIN LINES.

Co-operation of the main lines in the construction and working of light railways.

Reporter.—All countries—Mr. De Burlet, General Manager of the National Light Railways of Belgium.

Conclusions of Congress.

It may be said in general that light railways when they are really tributaries to main lines are unquestionably useful auxiliaries to the latter; consequently the friendly co-operation of the main lines and concessions by the latter of desirable facilities are fully justified, and it is to be desired that all railway managements should adopt as broad and simple conditions as possible to facilitate junctions, and the operation of interchange of traffic with light railways.

18. DIRECT FINANCIAL CO-OPERATION BY THE STATE (GENERAL GOVERNMENT) AND BY LOCALITIES INTERESTED (COUNTIES, DISTRICTS, PARISHES, ETC.) IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIGHT RAILWAYS.

Results obtained in Belgium by the institution of a central authority for studying the projects, supervising the construction, and organizing the working of secondary railways, constructed with the financial assistance of the State and of the districts affected.

Reporters.—France, Belgium, Germany, and England—Mr. Colson, Councillor of States, Chief Engineer of Roads and Bridges, Paris; other countries—Mr. E. A. Ziffer, Civil Engineer, President of the Lemberg-Czernowitz-Jassy Railway, Vienna.

Conclusions of Congress.

Light railways merit in the highest degree the attention of public authorities. Their construction makes it possible to encourage the progress and development of districts which previously have remained in the background, and it is accordingly not only in the interest but the duty of the Governments to assist them. It is desirable, therefore, not to adhere to the old types and old methods of construction, operation, and regulation, but to introduce every facility possible adaptable to local needs and available resources. It is also desirable that State Government and local authorities should accord to light railways, either under the form of subsidies, relaxation of requirements, or other methods of assistance, the support which they need both for construction and operation, so that all parts of the country may be adequately served. When the authorities of a country do not themselves construct or work light railways, but turn them over to private companies, it is indispensable that the terms of the concessions should be so defined as to harmonize the interests of the working company with those of the public.

Notes.

In France the first law relating to light railways dates from 1865, which authorised departments to establish lines, allotting to them according to their wealth subsidies of one-quarter, one-third, or one-half of the sum which the department and the other interested parties furnished. This law provided for construction only, and was amended in 1880, when provision was made for subsidising the working of the lines. About that time, 1880, nearly 2,250 miles of light railways were absorbed by the large systems, there remaining only as light railways about 625 miles, four-fifths of which were of normal gauge. Average cost of construction, 240,000 francs per kilometre, approximately £9,383 per mile. Average gross receipts in 1903, about 10,000 francs (£416). Net income about 2,400 francs (£100). The lines were consequently not successful financially. The results of the law of 1880 have been satisfactory. At the end of 1903 there were in operation 11,000 kilometres (6,875 miles) of light railways. In addition there are 3,300 kilometres (2,062 miles) either under construction or for which concessions have been granted. The gauge in general use is 1 metre. The cost of construction was about 60,000