The American railroad began as a dense network connecting the densely populated eastern states before expanding westward with the first transcontinental railroad. The primary impetus for the western railroads was the government’s desire to gain greater control over western lands both politically and militarily. As a result, the government issued land grants and loans to railway companies in return for building the western railroads which were not able to be profitable on their own. The Canadian government used a similar tactic of offering land grants to developers in order to drive the development of its rail lines. The Canadian railroad also had a unifying effect on Canada’s divided provinces similar to how it brought western lands into the United States. However, while the American railroads primarily served to extend the United States westward, the Canadian railways served to bring the disparate provinces into closer communication.