

THE QUESTION OF THE HOUR

To the Editor of the Guide:

Dear Sir,—The mountain has labored, and brought forth a mouse. In other words the three Premiers have considered the proposition of the Interprovincial Council, and their answer is, No.; and that is the only thing I give them credit for. They were manly enough to give no uncertain sound; they have said no, and no doubt they mean no, but when they come to give their reasons for saying no, they are not quite so frank.

They assume it is necessary to make the storage of grain at shipping points a monopoly, and then bewail the fact that they have not the constitutional power to do it.

They allege it is essential to the success of a system of internal elevators to have a monopoly notwithstanding that no man or company has ever had a legal monopoly and still the elevators flourish and new ones are constantly being built.

But though no company has ever had a legal monopoly, and as they got that monopoly, so may our government get a monopoly.

Why cannot our government take a leaf out of the book of the trusts. When the Standard Oil Co. wanted to get a rival out of the way they offered him a little less than his plant was worth, and if he was wise he took their offer, for if he did not they sold so cheap in his neighborhood that he was forced to the wall.

Now, we do not want our government to wrong any man or company, but if the government announce their intention of establishing a system of elevators and let the owners of elevators know they mean business there is not an elevator on the plains they cannot get for its value, and why should our government hesitate to use in the interests of justice a weapon that the trusts use for greed.

Let us see how our premiers compare with premiers we have had. In 1887 our province groaned under railway monopoly. The Dominion Government had covenanted with the C.P.R. to allow no other railway to build into the Canadian west. The provincial government

chartered a railway across the boundary, but the Dominion government disallowed the charter.

What did Premier Norquay do under the circumstances? The law was against him and the constitution was against him and he had far more excuse for masterly inactivity than our premiers have under the present circumstances. But John Norquay said: "Though they refuse to charter railways and though they disallow our charter they cannot hinder us building a railway in our own province." And he projected the Red River Valley Railway. Take another instance. Some years ago it was more than suspected that Manitoba wheat did not reach the old country markets as it left Manitoba. It was believed that Ontario and Manitoba wheat were mixed and sold as Manitoba wheat. Premier Greenway asked the Dominion Government to make certain regulations with a view to stopping the mixing. The Dominion Government did not do so. Did Premier Greenway bemoan his lack of power and shield himself behind the constitution? No. He sent the present warehouse commissioner, C. Castle, to Ottawa to inform the Dominion Government that if they failed to make the desired regulations he would inaugurate a system of provincial inspection and that he would decry Dominion inspection on every market in Great Britain.

And then they say it will cost a lot of money. Now, Mr. Editor, I do not want to say anything unkind, but it does seem strange that they can find money to buy telephone systems and bonus railways but they don't think they can afford to build shelter for the chief product of the country. It would be just about as sensible to say you could not afford to build a bank to hold gold as to say you could not afford to build an elevator to hold grain. Grain will pay its way.

What are the G. G.'s going to do about it? Are they going to accept the crumbs of comfort the Premiers so generously offer them and hope things will right themselves, or will they continue the fight until victory is theirs?

A grave responsibility rests on the central executive at this time. Much depends on the action they take, but



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