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# UNITED GRAIN GROWERS LTD.

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## Our Ottawa Letter

*Railway Policy Outlined—Government Hears Delegation of Farmers regarding the Military Service Act*

(Special Correspondence of The Grain Growers' Guide)

OTTAWA, May 17.—Parliament failed to make the goal of prorogation aimed at this week. It will take part of next week to wind up the business still on the order paper of the House, but members expect to be on their way home by a week from today (Victoria Day). It has been an eventful and crowded week at the capital. Sir Robert Borden, in a statement on the government's railway policy, outlined a programme which may eventually result in National ownership, or operation at least of all Canadian railways. A farmers' delegation of unprecedented dimensions again protested against the order-in-council abolishing the principle of exemption insofar as young men between the ages of 19 and 23 are concerned, and received a refusal from the prime minister to interfere with the order. It was stated today, in newspapers close to the government, that plans are being made to deal with extreme cases of hardship. In the House, Sir Robert denied that this had been authorized. There is an interesting rumor going the rounds here to the effect that some of the members of the cabinet were inclined to the view that an effort should be made to meet the views of the farmers, but that Major-General Newburn, minister of militia, threatened to resign if he were over-ruled in regard to the matter.

Sir Robert Borden's announcement of railway policy was made in connection with the consideration of the bill giving the government authority to meet, or renew, all C.N.R. securities, bond issues, etc., maturing this year, amounting in all to something over \$76,000,000. The announcement had the effect of considerably reducing the amount of criticism of the government's C.N.R. proposals. In the end the members of the house, on both sides, appeared to be inclined to the view that while the railway situation is undoubtedly a serious one there is nothing for parliament and the people to do but to make the best of it.

#### State-Owned System

The government's idea of what is the best solution of the problem can best be set forth in Sir Robert Borden's own words: "I have some reasonable hope," said Sir Robert, "that when parliament is again summoned, the government may be in a position to place before it proposals which will involve the constitution into one state-owned system, the chief railways of Canada, except the Canadian Pacific. It may be possible, indeed I think it is probable, that at some later date, but not in the immediate future, all the land transportation facilities of Canada in the shape of railways may, so far as operation is concerned, be amalgamated into one system carried on under one management. The enormous waste and duplication, which have proved to be such a burden upon this country in the past, would be eliminated, for the future at least, in that way; and they have been eliminated to some extent during the past six months by the operations of the Canadian Railway Association for National Defence."

Sir Robert prefaced his general announcement with some references to the G.T.P. It was inevitable, for many reasons, he said, that the road should be taken over by the Government. As a national enterprise to which the credit of the people had been committed it was expedient to sustain it and not permit it to go into liquidation. In the west, C.N.R. branch lines would be good feeders for the G.T.P. which is paying a little more than operating expenses. In the past few months the road's earnings had exceeded operating expenses, but it cannot pay its interest charges and it was equally impossible for the Grand Trunk to meet the obligations it had incurred.

#### G.T.P. To Be Taken Over

Sir Robert proceeded, "As the G.T.P. is not self-sustaining, as it pays little

more than operating expenses, and as it cannot be expected, for many years to come, to pay its fixed charges, especially if it is divorced from co-operation and association with other railways in the west, it is manifest that only one of two courses is open. The government must either year after year, ask parliament to vote seven or eight million dollars, in order that the fixed charges of the road may be paid, or it must take over the road, connect it up as effectively as possible with the Canadian Northern and with the rest of the government railway system, and endeavor to make it part of a profitable system of government railways in the early future. I think, therefore, it is absolutely inevitable that the Grand Trunk Pacific be acquired."

Sir Robert then spoke of the necessity of taking over the Grand Trunk Railway, if the G.T.P. is acquired, otherwise, he said, the C.P.R. would dominate the whole situation, and the G.T.P. might have a great deal of difficulty in carrying on unless it should be released from its obligations to the G.T.P. He emphasized the difficulties standing in the way of securing the Grand Trunk. The government might take advantage of the situation and say to the Grand Trunk "we have you in our power in certain respects, and you must do precisely what we insist upon." But this, Sir Robert thought would not be good policy. The Government must act reasonably with the Grand Trunk. It must remember that a considerable portion of the road lies in the United States, with two great terminals in the West. The ownership of these lines is vested in United States Companies of which the Grand Trunk controls the stock. The acquisition of the Grand Trunk must depend upon negotiations.

"I may say," continued Sir Robert, "that we have negotiations outstanding with the Grand Trunk Railway. For the present, they are confidential. We have made what we would regard as a reasonable offer, somewhat along the lines suggested in the Drayton-Ackworth report, but somewhat more favorable to the Grand Trunk than the proposal made in that report. They have replied to us by making a counter offer, which was of such a nature that we did not consider we could ask parliament to accept it. For that reason we had to decline it, and we then made the suggestion to the management that, failing any agreement between the Government and the company, we would be prepared to submit the question of the annual payment to arbitration and we would do that without fixing any limit as we did in the case of the Canadian Northern Railway. It seemed to us that the two cases were distinguishable in that respect, and that we ought not to insist upon a maximum as we did in the case of the Canadian Northern. We proposed to follow the Drayton-Ackworth report in this respect, that whatever sum should be paid by the Government of this country for, let us say, a lease of the Grand Trunk Railway lines, should be distributed among the holders of the various stocks of the Grand Trunk Pacific by the directors of the Grand Trunk themselves, and that we should not attempt to interfere with or control that matter. It is anticipated that some members of the Government will have the duty of proceeding to Great Britain during this summer. A sub-committee of council has been appointed, and during the past six months has been dealing with general railway problems in this country, assisting in that regard the Minister of Railways and Canals, who is primarily responsible, and who had asked me to have such a sub-committee appointed in order that he might, without a formal meeting of council, have the advice of some of his colleagues in respect of matters of importance. Two members of that sub-committee of council will be in England during the summer."

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