

FOOLING THE INSURANCE COMPANIES

BEFORE the new year an order was passed by the Canadian Railway War Board to the effect that all freight charges must be paid in advance, in cash. This order would mean great inconvenience to shippers, and guarantee Companies, perceiving an opportunity to extend their business by performing this service for shippers, secured the right to guarantee such payments and to have such guarantees accepted by the railways.

This order was originally to go into force on January 1st, but was postponed until the first of March. Meanwhile guarantee companies advertised the special contracts which they had prepared for this business, had special forms prepared and had actually completed arrangements with many shippers. These preparations represented a considerable expenditure of money. Among the companies who had prepared for this business were the National Surety Co., Canadian Surety Co., London Guarantee and Accident Co., Imperial Guarantee and Accident Co., General Accident, Guarantee Co. of North America, Maryland Casualty Co., and the U. S. Fidelity and Guaranty Co.

On February 28th, however, just one day before the order was to go into force, an announcement was made by the Canadian Railway War Board to the effect that the execution of the order was postponed until June 1st. Meanwhile the preparations of the insurance companies were entirely at their own risk. There is nevertheless an obvious inconvenience caused both to the companies and to the shippers by handling orders in this way.

CANADA'S SHARE IN THE INDEMNITY

THE position taken by the United States to the effect that it does not desire any share in an indemnity from Germany is one which thoroughly forestalls any allegation of mercenary motives. The same attitude should be taken by Canada which, like the United States, entered the struggle thoroughly prepared to pay its own expenses for the sake of establishing principles in which it believed. There is no parallel between expenses incurred in the prosecution of a war and losses resulting directly from military activities such as have been suffered by France and Belgium. Resolutions such as that recently introduced by Mr. P. R. Du Trembley in the House of Commons, claiming for Canada a share in an indemnity from Germany may result in popularity but they do not constitute high statesmanship.

REACHING THE BAY

NORTHERN interests are anxious that the Timiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway should be extended to Hudson's Bay. In view of the fact, however, that Canada has already constructed one railway to Hudson's Bay, with the exception of less than one hundred uncompleted miles, it would seem to be a more economical expenditure from the point of view of natural interest, that the Hudson's Bay Railway to Port Nelson first be completed. Whether or not this line will be profitable, it at least has better possibilities than would a line from Northern Ontario. The main object in building the Hudson's Bay Road was to secure a more direct and cheaper transportation service from the Canadian west to Europe. Engineering opinion was not by any means agreed as to the practicability of the route, but if the work was worth commencing it is surely worth completion. If the physical difficulties can be surmounted, plenty of business is assured. This is not the case with any line which would serve Northern Ontario.

Western men especially are urging the completion of the work, which has been suspended for some time past. A

sub-committee of western members in the Dominion House has been appointed, comprising W. J. Blair, of Battle River, representing Alberta; J. F. Reid, of Mackenzie, representing Saskatchewan, and F. L. Davis, of Neepawa, representing Manitoba, with J. A. Campbell, of Nelson, secretary of caucus, to prepare a resolution for submission in connection with the matter.

It is understood that all the westerners, with the exception of some of the southern Alberta and British Columbia members, strongly favor the completion of the road. There are only 98 miles of steel to be laid and the grading is completed. To finish the work it is estimated that something like a million dollars will be required. From thirteen to fifteen millions have already been expended on the work and the western men rightly contend that it is but poor economy to refrain from making a complete job.

The Repatriation and Employment Committee at Ottawa intimates that in four months labor will be scarce in Canada. If this is the case still further discrimination should be exercised in the plans for government expenditure.

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A proposal has been made that the war debts of the allies should be consolidated. This is a suggestion which will be looked upon with favor by the weaker financial powers but it does not meet with the approval of the larger nations. A proposal for the repayment of the war debts by a gigantic lottery now comes from an Italian financier. This method is a relic of the dark ages of finance and will not meet with favor at the present time.

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The Amherstburg plant of the Brunner-Mond Company was recently halted because of uncertainty as to the future of the Canadian tariff. This company is a subsidiary of the Solvay Process Company and the Amherstburg plant was nearing completion at a cost of approximately \$15,000,000. The evil of a reduction in the tariff or of an increase in the tariff might not be greater than the uncertainty which at present exists and which not only hinders the introduction of new capital but also hampers the operation of industries already in existence.

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An interesting side light upon the relations of government with railway enterprise is found in a recent transaction in New Brunswick. The Beersville Railway, Kent County, N.B., has been sold for \$12,000. This road was built by means of provincial and federal subsidies for purposes of serving the coal fields of Beersville, where the mines are still in operation. New Brunswick put at least \$16,000 in the road and has been carrying that amount together with accrued interest for many years. The purchaser has been able to dispose of the property for \$30,000. It is evidently the intention that the road will be sold for scrap provided the price of steel remains high.

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A member of the Alberta Legislature, Mr. J. S. McCallum of Vegreville, Alberta, recently introduced a motion that the federal government should be urged to extend a cash grant to every soldier in lieu of land or other benefits. The motion, however, was withdrawn before debate. It was intended that this grant should be irrespective of the gratuities scale at present in force. The principle of a cash grant apart from a sum sufficient to cover the expenses of the returned soldier until such times as he is employed, is entirely wrong. The service of the state can best be rendered in the form of education for employment and assistance in the obtaining of that employment. The great majority of war veterans wish merely to return to civil life upon a footing equal with that of civilians. This is to be obtained in the case of disabled men by pensions granted on principles already adopted by the Pension Board and in the case of those without disability by such training as will enable them to recover skill in such occupations as they formerly pursued.