

The 'Canadian Miller and Grain Elevator' of March, 1910, refers to alleged mill mergers. That paper says:

It is believed that about ten mills are being considered in connection with the merger.

The Hamilton 'Times' of February 21 talks about a proposed consolidation of all the gas companies in the Haldimand field. Various references have been made in the press to a formation of a giant merger of all the canned fruit and vegetable interests of eastern Canada. The Hamilton 'Times' of March 2 deals at some length with this merger. The Montreal 'Star' of February 16 refers to an alleged combine of four of Cobalt's richest silver mines. The Toronto 'World' of December 30 refers to an amalgamation of the leading electrical machinery construction companies in Canada for the purpose of avoiding future cutting of prices. The Montreal 'Star' of December 9 refers to the big works of the Toronto Bolt and Forging Company, Limited, at Sunnyside and Swansea, employing some hundreds of men, and said to be the centre of a big consolidation that will represent at least \$1,000,000 of invested capital. The Toronto 'Star' of February 11 talks about several navigation companies alleged to be forming a consolidation. The Toronto 'Globe' of January 21 refers to a combine in the asbestos trade. The same paper of February 24 refers to a combine among some of the Montreal railway and power companies. The Montreal 'Gazette' of January 26 refers to mergers of the various properties of the Canadian Electric Company, the Quebec Railway, Light and Power Company, the Jacques Cartier Light and Power Company, the Frontenac Gas Company, and the Quebec Gas Company. The 'Mail and Empire' of February 1 has a reference to a merger in the fish business on the Atlantic coast. And another reference to that merger is made in the Toronto 'Star' of February 16. The Manitoba 'Free Press' of December 1 speaks of a grain combine among the grain dealers. Mention is also made in the Toronto 'Star' of February 11 of an alleged combine among Canadian insurance companies, and the Manitoba 'Free Press' of December 11 also takes up that question. The Montreal 'Star' of March 7 had reference to several companies in the oatmeal and cereal business, forming a large combine. The Montreal 'Gazette', March 31, speaks of a merger of ice dealers; the Montreal 'Times' of April 2nd, talked about an amalgamation of three soap manufacturing concerns in St. John; the Montreal 'Star' of the 10th of last month has a rumour of large mergers of lake concerns. Then we had the following interesting reference in the Montreal 'Star' of March 14th of the

present year, to a combine among the ocean steamship companies in the matter of ocean rates, I will read that extract to the House. It is headed 'Ocean rates may advance this spring. Canadian importers fear increase on west bound freights next month. Trade commissioners suggest that charges are regulated by combination of North Atlantic lines.'

That the next publication of tariffs will find an increase in freight rates between Europe and Canada is an opinion widely expressed by importers in the business district. In this connection the statement has been made that the Canadian North Atlantic Westbound Freight Conference is a combine in the fullest sense of the word.

There have been gradual increases of freight rates and after an investigation of the conditions, Mr. Richard Grigg, His Majesty's Trade Commissioner to Canada, wrote: 'It is alleged and very generally believed that an understanding exists between the Canadian North Atlantic Westbound Freight Conference and lines of steamers from Great Britain and the Continent to New York, Boston, and Portland, and that freights are therefore regulated by combination.'

Lessen British Preference.

The natural result of such a condition would be to lessen the value of the British preference, while United States products carried by rail, and therefore not subject to the same increased charges, would profit by the handicap to British trade. This, it is asserted, is actually happening.

Boards of Trade in Canada interested themselves in the matter, that of Toronto making a particularly strong protest against any advance in rates. The Montreal body also joined in protesting against any increase.

A Monopoly Control.

It would appear that a further increase based, not on competitive conditions, but on a monopoly control, may be expected to reduce the tonnage carried and prove a source of injury to British trade.

Attention of Government

That these matters will receive the attention of the government is hoped by persons who are affected and in this connection the Bill introduced last month by Mr. Mackenzie King, entitled 'An Act to Provide for the Investigation of Combines, Monopolies, Trusts or Mergers which may enhance prices or restrict competition to the detriment of consumers,' promises to be of interest.

The intention to introduce such a Bill was announced by Sir Wilfrid Laurier when ministers received a deputation from the Boards of Trade of Montreal, Toronto, Quebec and Hamilton, demanding investigation of the portage charge made by shipping companies and applying only to Montreal and Quebec, which is in reality an increase in the rate of freight; and protesting against an important increase in the rate of ocean freights by the Canadian North Atlantic Westbound Freight Conference.

Scope of New Bill.

The scope and bearing of Mr. Mackenzie King's Bill does not appear as yet to have been fully realized, and it has so far received little public notice but its object is so important that it is not likely to suffer from continued lack of attention. It indicates no less a fact than the beginning of the inevitable conflict between the government of Canada and the abuse of power conferred by combination.

And there is the essence of the whole of this measure. It is not aimed against combinations as such, but against the abuse of their power by combinations:

A subject which has long absorbed attention in the United States and provoked bitter controversy. In Canada, the active principle of the Trust has not yet assumed dimensions so portentous as those exhibited in the case of her neighbours, but there is evidence that beginnings have been made and the government may properly feel that it is better to meet the issue early than wait the development of opposing forces.

Now, it is interesting to notice, in connection with the discussion which has been going on in the press in regard to these large combinations, that the largest industrial combinations of all in this country have escaped criticism altogether, namely, the great railway concern of Canada. I think that fact is of particular significance in connection with the legislation we are contemplating at the present time. It shows clearly that the public are not opposed to large combinations as such; it shows clearly also that the public are not opposed to these large combinations extending their influence, widening their sphere of action, and obtaining new facilities in different directions. But what the public are looking to this government to do in connection with large industrial concerns is something along the line of what we have already done in regard to these great railway interests. The difference between the two is this. The railway companies at the present time are subject to investigation by a body known as the Railway Commission. That body has power to inquire into the business of these companies, to see how they manage their business, to find out whether their rates are excessive, and the fact that such a body does exist has given confidence throughout the country in the minds of the public that their interests are in some way being protected. And I feel that once the legislation the government is offering at the present time in regard to other industrial concerns, is put upon the statute-book, a great deal of the agitation which we have been having in this country against combinations as such will cease altogether, because the public will then realize that we have in this machinery an effective means

of preserving the public against any combination which is using its powers in a manner detrimental to their interests.

Now, Sir, several questions have been asked me as to whether I thought that combinations were wholly responsible for the increase of prices that has taken place. In accounting for the rise in prices and consequent increased cost of living, many causes have been assigned, and if the truth is to be stated, it is to a variety of causes rather than to any single cause that this is due. Nor is it to be supposed that in some respects this rise in prices is not a good thing. In so far as the rise is due to the discovery of new sources of wealth, to the increased investment of foreign capital in the Dominion, to the opening of new areas of cultivation, to larger and wider markets, to increased settlement of hitherto unsettled parts, to the increased number of people who have to be fed, to increased transportation, storing and refrigerating facilities, to the prevention of waste, to improved methods of production and distribution, the rise is to be welcomed as an actual increase in the wealth of the world, and as reflecting the increased prosperity of our time, a prosperity in which the farmer, the mechanic, the business and professional man have all shared to a greater or less degree. I think in regard to any study of the history of the movement of prices in this country, it will be seen that the causes I have just mentioned have operated in a very large measure to bring about that increase. In connection with that subject, I have received many letters since this measure was introduced, and in particular I have a very interesting communication from one of the largest manufacturing houses of this country, a company of pork packers and provision merchants at Toronto. I would like to read an extract from this letter, as showing what, in the opinion of the gentlemen engaged in this business, has been the cause of the increase of prices in some of the raw materials and raw products. The letter is dated February 1st, and I will read this extract therefrom:

In earlier years when there was less efficient transportation, less excellent refrigerated car service, less controlled temperature on board steamships, and less refrigerated establishments at central and inland points, for many lines of food products produced on the farm at the period of the year when the quantities marketed were largely in excess of immediate requirements, the price sank to a very low point. With the advent of the modern refrigerator, experience has demonstrated that during this surplus period perishable product can be purchased and stored for later marketing. It has been found that well selected and well stored product, with improved transportation, permits of the shipment of such products to remote markets