

C. P. R. Rates

Another question of prime importance to the West that was discussed in the house of commons this week, was that of the freight and passenger rates of the C.P.R. The matter was brought up by W. F. Maclean (Independent) South York, on Tuesday, when he moved "that this house hereby declares that steps should be at once taken to ascertain the rights of the public using the Canadian Pacific Railway to a reduced tariff because of the provisions in that regard contained in the act of parliament ratifying the agreement with that company, or any other act."

In order to fully understand this question it is necessary to find out something of the history of the C.P.R. In 1881 in consideration of the financial and other assistance which was given to the C.P.R. by the government, a contract was made by which it was agreed that parliament might reduce the tolls of the company from time to time provided such reduction would not bring the net profits of the company to less than ten per cent. of the capital expended on the construction of the line. In 1894 an attempt was made by the government to find out what was the amount of capital expended on construction with a view to securing a reduction of rates, and a case was prepared for submission to the supreme court. Great difficulty was experienced in this, and the C.P.R., rather than submit to an investigation of the matter, agreed for the time being, to admit that the road came under the general railway act and submitted to the jurisdiction of the board of railway commissioners. The question as to whether the C.P.R. must reduce its rates as long as it pays ten per cent. on the cost of construction (which of course is considerably less than the well watered capital of the company) or whether it is merely subject to the jurisdiction of the board of railway commissioners like the other railways, has consequently never been settled, but Mr. Maclean was careful in his motion to anticipate this difficulty by referring to "the provisions in that regard contained in the act of parliament ratifying the agreement with that company, or any other act."

Excessive Profits

Mr. Maclean showed beyond all doubt that the C.P.R. has for a number of years been paying to its shareholders profits considerably in excess of 10 per cent., the shareholders in addition to the dividends of 7 per cent. receiving additional distributions of profits on account of the sale of lands as well as having the privilege of purchasing new issues at much less than the market price. Altogether, Mr. Maclean declared the profits during the past few years were fully 18 per cent., and he maintained that it was the duty of parliament to take immediate steps to ascertain whether the time had not come for a reduction of the rates. This action, he considered, should be taken before the railway commission. Mr. Maclean reminded the house of the repeated complaints that have been made against the exorbitant charges of the C.P.R. and quoted a passage from the memorial presented to the government by Mr. Jas. Bower, president of the U.F.A., on

December 16, to show the feeling of the West.

Hon. Geo. P. Graham, minister of railways, followed Mr. Maclean, reviewing the whole history of the question and contending that the resolution was unnecessary as in his opinion the railway commission was quite able to deal with the matter as they had with the express rates.

R. L. Borden, leader of the opposition, took the same ground, adding that he did not see why the C.P.R. should have been singled out for attack. He agreed with Mr. Maclean, however, that it was the duty of the government to see that federal legislation was enforced, and he considered that it was the duty of the government to bring this matter and any others of a similar nature before the railway commission.

Hon. H. R. Emmerson, the former minister of railways, came forward with the suggestion that Mr. Maclean should become the Lloyd George of Canada and devise some scheme by which the C.P.R. and other wealthy corporations should be made to contribute largely to the revenues of the country.

E. M. Macdonald, (Liberal) Pictou, and Major Currie, (Cons.), Simcoe, spoke against the motion, but although Mr. Maclean specially invited Western members to give voice to the grievances of their constituents, there were no other speakers, and when a division was called for, the only member to stand up with the mover in favor of the motion was Capt. Tom Wallace, the conservative member for Centre York.

Various explanations have been given by Western members of their refusal to support Mr. Maclean's motion, but most of the conservative members point to their leader's speech as a sufficient reason, while the majority of the liberals declare they were unable to support the motion because it was a motion of want of confidence in the government, and to have carried it would have been to put the party out of power. Dr. Neely, of Humboldt, informed THE GUIDE correspondent that apart from this, he could not have supported Mr. Maclean's motion because while railway rates were high enough they were not higher than in the United States, and anything which would lessen the prosperity of the railway companies would tend to prevent the construction of new lines, of which the country was in great need.

M. & N. W. Charter

The bill to extend the charter of the M. & N.W. branch of the C.P.R. from Shebo to Prince Albert, came up again in the railway committee of the house of commons on Tuesday. The objections of the Saskatchewan members to the granting of the extension were not nearly so strenuous as on the previous occasion, and finally it was agreed to amend the bill by making the charter good for three years instead of five as asked by the C.P.R.

A bill to provide for the granting of railway charters by the railway commission instead of by parliament has been introduced in the upper house by senator T. O. Davis, of Prince Albert, and received second reading on Wednesday.

The bill embodying the proposals of the government in the matter of the terminal elevators is now in course of preparation, and will probably be introduced in the house of commons within the next two weeks. It was expected that the bill would have been ready for submission to the house immediately after the Christmas holidays, but when the matter came before the cabinet a few days ago it was deemed advisable to consolidate all the federal legislation dealing with the grain business and a new bill to replace the Manitoba Grain Act and to include the new elevator law is now being prepared. It is understood that the new act will not provide for the immediate acquisition of the terminal and transfer elevators, but for the appointment of a commission somewhat similar in nature to the board of railway commissioners to administer the law and detect and prevent improper practices, power being given to the government to take over any elevator if it may desire to do so. Heavy fines and imprisonment, it is understood, are to be provided for the punishment of grain mixing and other violations of the law.

Co-operative Bill

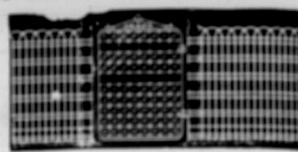
It is now apparent that the bill respecting co-operative societies which has been introduced by W. M. Martin, of Regina, has no chance of becoming law this session

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unless it is taken charge of by the government. As a bill introduced by a private member it can only come up for discussion on a private member day, of which there are now two in each week, Monday and Wednesday, and after a few weeks on, of these days and finally both of them will be taken up with business initiated by the government. There are a large number of other private bills and resolutions which have precedence over the co-operative bill, and its chances of even being discussed as a private bill are consequently very remote. Mr. Martin is, however, making an effort to induce the government to take up the bill, and in view of Sir Wilfrid Laurier's promise in this regard at Regina last summer it is expected that this request will be acceded to. The bill, of course, will meet with opposition. Apart from the opposition of the Retail Merchants' Association, objection is taken to the bill because it contains clauses enabling a society to be formed by seven men, each holding one 81 share, and gives such society power to transact a banking business. This part of the bill, however, has been introduced separately by J. D. Monk, in a bill respecting co-operative credit societies, and if that feature is eliminated from the general bill its passage will be facilitated.

PROBE TO GO DEEP

Danville, Ill., Jan. 20.—That the grand jury which has been ordered to investigate vote buying and selling in Speaker Cannon's home county will uncover a nest of political corruption was made evident today by the announcement of a local attorney who is said to have handled great corruption funds, that he expects to go before the jury voluntary and present a book in which he has kept the names of all the persons whose votes he has purchased and the amounts paid them. It is believed that the appearance of this man before the jury will be followed by wholesale confessions of men whom he implicates and that each will name several others to whom they have sold their ballots. The grand jury today maintained that they expected between 3,500 and 5,000 voters would be disfranchised as a result of the probe. Isaac Woodward, the foreman of the grand jury, declared today he expected to invoke the law regarding criminal conspiracy as well as the law relating to the buying

and selling of votes. Under the laws governing vote selling, the grand jury cannot investigate acts further back than eighteen months while under the criminal conspiracy act it can go back as far as three years.

TO PEACE RIVER VALLEY

Edmonton, Jan. 22.—With \$9,000 in his pocket, five teamloads of supplies and an unbounded faith in the country and himself, a settler started from Edmonton for the Grande Prairie last week. He was a native born American who had come up from the States to farm on a big scale in the northwest. This settler will operate a big farm in the Grande Prairie. He sold his farm in Montana, and came to Edmonton with the cash in his pocket. After purchasing his supplies and farm implements, he had \$9,000 left. He bought five teams and started out.

A letter to the immigration agent here from Minnesota asks for information for a wealthy party coming next spring. There are 25 farmers in the party. Each of them have from \$2,000 to \$5,000 in ready money in their pockets, and will bring their wealth with them. They want to go into farming on a big scale in a big country and have heard much of the Peace River. That is where they will strike when they come north next summer. "One thousand people will go into the Peace River and Grande Prairie country from the Pacific Coast," said one man who is conversant with the conditions. "The eyes of the Coast people are on that country, and some big land will be taken up by some of them next summer."

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Yours truly,

W. E. METCALF, M.D.

Martinus Dysthe

353 Beverley Street, Winnipeg, Man.

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