

Elevator Bill Becomes Law

On Tuesday night, March 15, the Manitoba Elevator Bill was introduced in the legislature by the government, passed its third reading and received the signature of the lieutenant-governor next day. In the agricultural committee on Tuesday afternoon two important changes were made, the appropriation clause being eliminated, while the sixty per cent. petition clause was amended, so that the pledge applies only to points where the government will be asked to construct new elevators. The bill, as finally passed, contained these amendments. No change was made in the character of the commission, and it will remain responsible to the government, and contrary to the request of the Grain Growers' elevator committee.

In Committee

At the committee stage of the Elevator Bill, J. T. Gordon moved that the clause providing for the purchase of existing elevators and the fixing of the price be amended by striking out the words, "but not allowing anything for franchise, goodwill or loss of business." Mr. Gordon said he thought the amendment should be passed in fairness to those who had vested interests in the elevator business.

The minister of education, Mr. Coldwell, said he could not accept the amendment. The clause was suggested by the memorial of the Grain Growers. He pointed out that since the expropriation clause had been dropped from the bill, this provision could only be taken advantage of in negotiating the purchase of an elevator. The clause would not be burdensome because the purchase of an elevator would be a matter of agreement between the commissioners and the owners.

The amendment was lost without a division.

The remaining clauses were passed without amendment.

Mr. Gordon moved the addition of a clause as follows: "Wherever, at any station, there is more than one elevator in existence at the time, the said government or commission shall decide to purchase or build an elevator, the policy of the government or commission shall be to acquire, if possible, all the elevators at such point."

Government's Policy

The minister of education again pointed out that the amendment merely stated a matter of policy and it was not usual or necessary to include statements or policy in a bill. The policy of the government in connection with the elevators had been discussed from time to time and it was clear that it was their intention to establish elevators wherever required.

The attorney-general supported the minister of education on this point and the amendment was defeated.

The bill was finally reported by the committee without amendment.

George Steele Objects

When the third reading of the bill was moved in the House, George Steele, member for Cypress, said he considered that he made his position on the bill clear when it was read a second time. He only wanted to supplement what he said on that occasion by again making his position plain. "I stated when the bill was being read a second time," he said, "that I would not oppose it on condition that the people who were asking for this legislation would produce figures to convince me that it could be made to pay. Now, sir, I hold in my hand the figures that were submitted by the committee of the Grain Growers' Association, and they are based not upon the clauses of this bill but upon their getting a monopoly of the trade. They get a surplus by getting all the grain that is grown in the province, by getting storage charges on all the grain grown in the province and the initial charges as well.

"I submit these are not figures that are of any use to this House. They are not the figures I asked for, because

Government Made Concessions on Two Points, but Refused to Appoint an Independent Commission

this is not a monopoly but a competitive system. I stated, on the second reading, that in my judgment the proper system, the proper way, was to make a monopoly out of the business, if possible. I think if the people who are asking for this legislation want to figure on a monopoly they should come here and ask for a monopoly. I submit that we have not been furnished with figures to show that it can be made to pay. Now, as I said before, that if the people who want this legislation would be willing to put up any deficits, all right. If you were going into competition with a business man—take for instance if you went into competition with the hardware man in your own town—you would want to figure out what business you were going to do, as it would not be safe to figure out that you were going to get it all, and the other man none. These figures are useless, to consider in connection with a competitive system, because they do not prove that the latter could be made to pay.

"If these people would take one or other side of the question I could understand them better. If they would say that the people asking for this legislation would put up for the losses, let them have it, but I say we have no business

ever, not satisfactory or sufficient. The amendment which provided that 60 per cent. of the farmers contributory to a proposed government elevator should only pledge themselves to support such elevator in the case of the building of the elevator, remained still unworkable. It was just as unworkable in the one case as in the other.

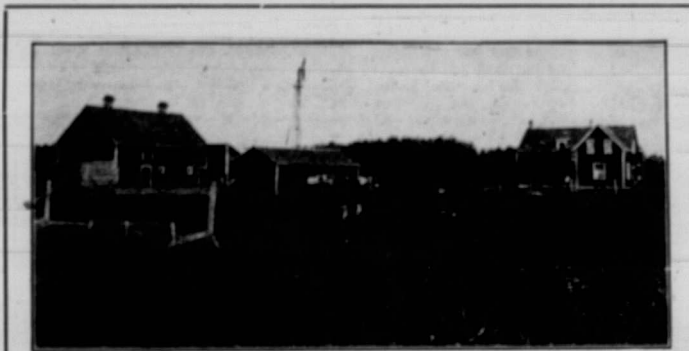
In connection with the commission to be appointed he did not think the scheme would be a success except under the control of an entirely independent commission. The responsibility for the carrying out of the scheme should be placed upon the commission and the commission should be responsible to the legislature. The commission should be entirely free from political control and from patronage, no matter what government was in power.

Mr. Norris then moved the following amendment to the amendment:

"That this bill be not now a read third time but referred back to committee of the whole with instructions to amend the same so as to make the commission directly responsible to the legislature."

Hon. Mr. Rogers

Hon. Robert Rogers replied on behalf of the government as follows: "I desire



Farm Home of J. L. Parkinson, Roland, Manitoba

to pass a bill of this kind, which, in my judgment, means that the people will have to make up large deficits. I, at the risk, perhaps, of being told that I am a nice kind of a farmer, submit that I do not want any legislation that is not fair to every person. The attorney-general told us that it was not the policy of the government to be unfair in the matter. That is all right. I presume it is not the policy of the government to be unfair in the matter but it all gets back to this—that if you want to be fair you have got to make a monopoly of it. No other way is fair, I just want to say, in closing, that, having taken the position I did, I submit the figures submitted to the agricultural committee this afternoon have not convinced me that this bill will provide a sound financial proposition."

Mr. Steele moved an amendment to the third reading to the effect that as no figures had been submitted showing that the system of elevators would pay, the bill be not read a third time now but that it be read six months hence.

Norris Protests

T. C. Norris, leader of the opposition, stated that the opposition had not objected to the bill going to the committee as they had expected that the bill would there be amended. It was true that there had been amendments. They were, how-

ever, not satisfactory or sufficient. The amendment which provided that 60 per cent. of the farmers contributory to a proposed government elevator should only pledge themselves to support such elevator in the case of the building of the elevator, remained still unworkable. It was just as unworkable in the one case as in the other.

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Cannot Accept Principle

"Now, then, it is true my honorable friend, the leader of the opposition, has, upon a former occasion, as on the present, moved an amendment that we should have this matter dealt with by the legislature, instead of by a measure

of government control. Now, sir, this is a principle which we cannot and will not accept because, Mr. Speaker, it would not carry with it a guarantee, or it would not by any form that has been presented to this House, make clear that the bill under such conditions as that would be workable in any shape or form, and I want to say that we have not been asked by any number of people for such a bill as that suggested in the amendment to the amendment as proposed by the leader of the opposition. We are fulfilling our conditions and our understanding in respect to the plan adopted and suggested when we undertook to carry this measure into effect, and in order that I may be able to make clear to this House and to the people of this country that we are doing this in accordance with the wishes of the grain growers of Manitoba, I am going to read to you a portion of a letter addressed by representatives of the grain growers of this province to the minister of trade and commerce at Ottawa, and dated as late as January 31 last, and I wish the honorable members of this House to take note of the reference in this letter in respect to the plan they suggest as being the only sound and workable plan under which it could be carried out to the satisfaction of the people of this province.

The Letter

"The letter is addressed to Sir Richard Cartwright, minister of trade and commerce, and is as follows:

"In further reference to our interview on January 28 respecting certain proposed amendments to the Manitoba Grain Act, and the acquiring and operating of the privately-owned terminal elevators at Fort William and Port Arthur by the government of Canada as a public utility, we beg to submit the following memorandum:

"That the terminal elevators at Fort William and Port Arthur be owned and operated by the Dominion government through a commission, thereby increasing their usefulness to the farming community of the western provinces, and that our executive bring pressure to bear upon the Dominion government to this effect as soon as possible."

"A little later on they deal with the question in the following language:

"At the same time they recognize what is generally conceded in Canada, and more fully, perhaps, in the United States, that corporations cannot efficiently be controlled by legislation; that in the matter of grain storage elevators where the operation is in control of dealers in grain, no legislation or system of supervision will be effective in preventing abuses that are detrimental to the farming and milling interests. The only effective remedy they can suggest is for the provincial governments to own and operate the elevators in their respective provinces, and for the Dominion government to acquire and operate the terminal elevators at Fort William and Port Arthur.

"The provincial governments of the prairie provinces have yielded to public opinion, conceded the principle, and are moving in the direction of providing necessary public storage at interior points.

"Unless the Dominion government will accede to our request as above expressed, what is being done in the west will fall far short of accomplishing the purpose for which it was intended.

"In view of these important considerations, and that those terminal elevators are the only vulnerable point on this most important trade route for grain from prairies to seaboard, the exceptional nature of the situation fully justifies the government entering into the under-

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