

The People, The Patriots, and The Politicians

All the Politicians are Not in Parliament; Nor all the Patriots on the Land

OTTAWA has been finding out things about the west. For this purpose Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his party went to the west. They said so openly. They have found out—openly. The west never squeaks under a quilt. It has used the megaphone upon Sir Wilfrid.

It's always a good thing to find out what the people want—even if you don't precisely do it. People are not always supposed to know exactly what they want. Besides the thing they want may not be the thing they need. Sir Wilfrid gave the west one or two things a few years ago. Ever since that time a certain Toronto newspaper has been abusing the Premier. The Toronto News for instance, has always imagined that the west was losing sleep over the school question. Sir Wilfrid knows better.

The west is no place for theories of government. Mr. Borden tried the Halifax platform on the west two years ago. It was no use. One thing above all others, the people west of Kenora never comes first on all programmes. It has few lonelies camped up at Edmonton about forty years ago.

That one supreme want is RAILROADS.

To put it more succinctly—they want more railroads. Sir Wilfrid and his party went out there as the projectors of the Grand Trunk Pacific. They imagined that the idea of the G. T. P. would appeal to the west; splendid, transcontinental-imperial idea of magnificent dimensions.

"Yes, thanks, Sir Wilfrid, awfully! The G. T. P. is all right as far as it goes; and the C. N. R. as far as it goes; but we want more of them. That's all."

Even Manitoba has no objections to—in fact, rather hankers after—the road to Hudson's Bay. Winnipeg has had a chimera about becoming a sea-port—via the Red, Lake Winnipeg, the Nelson River and the Bay; perhaps the dream of some scribe. But Winnipeg wants an outlet to the Bay.

What was whispered in Manitoba became a roar in upper Saskatchewan; and at Prince Albert the roar was loudest. Photos in last week's issue showed how Prince Albert cried aloud for the road to Hudson's Bay.

Did Saskatchewan want connection with the Bay in order to float the Canadian navy? Not quite. Sir Wilfrid tried the navy on the west. In most places he failed to float it.

"Fact is," said one shrewd western M. P., "the nearest we ever get to the Canadian navy question in this part of the country is a prairie schooner."

There was more truth than wit in the remark. Box cars are more to the west than Bristols; elevators are better than funnels. The hopper is growing. The spout must get bigger. There must be more spouts. Fort William and Port Arthur will do very well for one. But there's a point somewhere northwest of Winnipeg—and not very far at that—where it's more money in the farmer's pocket to send a bushel of wheat out by Churchill than by Fort William.

By NEW-TIME WESTERNER

country where people are coming in from a large number of foreign countries. Concerning which the west was rather apathetic; inclined to let the future take care of itself so long as the present is not impeded.

A much more practical issue in the Prairie Provinces was cheaper farm implements. This is just another phase of more railways. The east and west idea, with transcontinental knitting the Atlantic and the Pacific, and England with Canada, is a very good theory. But it practice to the westerner it means the long haul following the parallels of latitude. Not only the long haul for wheat out; but the just as long haul for manufactured goods in.

Which is a great benefit to the east.

But why should the west pay for the expansion of the east? What does the west owe the east anyway? Is not the shoe on the other foot? says the westerner, when the whole country hangs financially on the fate of the prairie wheat crop.

Simmered down this means that the western farmer does not ardently believe in a protective tariff. He would as lief buy a Yankee self-binder or a gang-plough as a Canadian-made. But there's that tariff wall along parallel 49; and the east-and-west railroad running the same direction; the box-car loaded with Canadian machinery made under a protective tariff and weighted with a high freight rate over the long haul.

Which is a direct form of taxation on the western producer; and a bonus to the eastern manufacturer. It may be Imperial; but is it business? The west would like to know.

The question is, markets. What about the British preference? Happens that the mean average centre of the west is about five thousand miles from London; and geography is more practical than history.

This is not to say that the west is anti-Imperial. Sir Wilfrid will not go back to Ottawa proclaiming that Western Canada desires absolute commercial union with the United States or hankers to annex the United States.

That again is another phase of a problem that crops out of the railroad situation; the Americanising of the west—however much that may be a fact—whether from the influx of American settlers or the desirability of American-made goods.

Certainly, however, there is a vast change from the day when the Englishman was the average settler; in the days of the big cattle ranges. The languages have changed. Not so long ago French, Cree and English were the tongues of the prairie. There are forty languages now. But there is one form of speech that they all come to learn very soon in the process of nation-building on the prairie: that is the language of success, whose alphabet is the dollar.

The Galician learned this language long ago. The nations of the world whom Canada calls are learning it just as quickly. It has a universal meaning. The peoples whom Sir Wilfrid Laurier's government are settling on the prairie have brought with them a huge intermixture of impulses—racial and otherwise. They desired a land; freedom; the franchise; homes; above all, land that would yield them large returns; the prize of effort in a new country, which all may contain a vast sentimental idea but works down ultimately to the reward of labour and a return for investment.

What wonder then that the Premier of Canada should find that the west is the most practical part of Canada? He has discovered that there is no theory of government that goes far with the west. It's business they want.

THE LAND

By W. A. FRASER

I AM the land;

The great new land,
That people who are athirst and lean
Gaze out upon with parched desire.
Deep rivers run for countless leagues
Through forests where the red deer roam.
Birds nest within the branches of the trees,
And myriad young arise to pay the toll.
The rivers hold a living wealth
That rapid nor the bar turn back;
From Delta to the fount they upward press;
Their spawn replenish the tithe
Exacted of the higher life.

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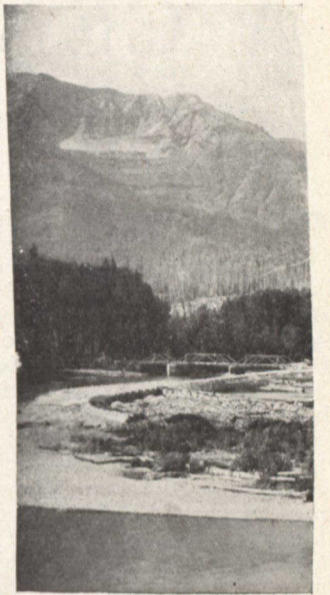
BROAD plains thrust upward to the sun,
The parent body of the grain;
And hold safe nurtured in their breasts
The fattened roots of lowlier food.
Fruits glint, blood-red and green and gold,
All sweet and goodly in the sun.
With lesser splendour ripe the nuts
High-held in stately homes.

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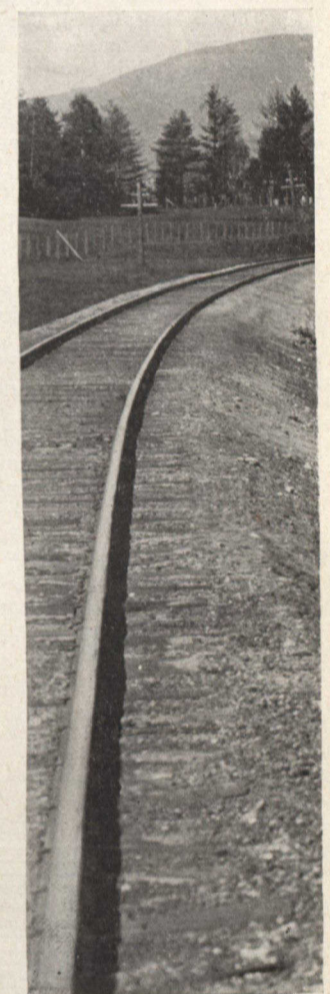
*I am the land—
God's heritage to man;
And nourish him with wine of strength.*

I HOLD him to my breast and keep him clean
From all that blacks the soul.
My hills send down their wealth of loam
A lavish gift to toil.
My mountains store the rivers' need;
I cradle in my lap the rain.
Herds wander in my vast domain,
And fatten off my store,
I am the mother, and the land.
The sun smiles upon me and the stars;
Rain slakes my thirst, and o'er me play the winds.

*I am the land—
The mother of all that is.*



"The mountains' store the rivers' need." Even a politician might become poetic gazing on the Rockies.



A Transcontinental Railway is supposed to be built by the patriots for the people.



The old prairie trail inclines the traveller to think highly of the country's past