

Conference Report Presented to the Premier

Ottawa, Nov. 24.—The request made to the government today by the joint deputation of Grain Growers and Manufacturers for the appointment of a commission to investigate the question of generally improving conditions of production in the Dominion was received by the prime minister with considerable reserve and no definite promise was given as to its being granted. In fact, judging by the premier's answer it is not considered likely that such a commission will be granted upon the terms desired, namely that it shall proceed at once to its work and be ready to report to the government by the opening of the coming session. "It is a big task to expect to be completed in such a short time," said Sir Robert Borden, "I cannot give you a definite answer at present, but the question will receive our earnest consideration."

The questions which it had been suggested the commission should consider include production, transportation, distribution, education, finance and tariff.

The appointment of such a commission was unanimously advocated by the representatives of the manufacturers, the E. G. Henderson, the president naively remarked at the conclusion that they did not expect the government to appoint the commission under such limited conditions of time. The purpose of the movement they declared was to place the industry of agriculture upon such a basis that it would be in the best possible position to provide foodstuffs for the Motherland in her war. With such a patriotic purpose in view, they declared they were anxious that all questions relating to increased production should be investigated.

They were even willing that the tariff should be revised if the commission advised.

Distrust of Commissions

Distrust of government commissions in general was voiced by W. C. Good, master of the Dominion Grange, who was not present at the Winnipeg conference. Mr. Good declared that the average commission was a handy method of shelving important questions which demanded immediate attention. After months of delay and needless waiting a blue book was printed which found its way to the ash pile as a rule. It was too often used by the government to shift responsibility and delay action. If a commission were appointed it should be given a time limit to report. In addition, the Dominion Grange would not stand behind the idea unless it was permitted to have its own representation upon the commission.

This opinion was also voiced by R. C. Henders, president of the Manitoba Grain Growers' association, who declared that the Grain Growers would willingly provide all the information possible for the commission if it were composed of broad-minded, non-partisan members and if its work was expedited as much as possible so that its report might be available at the earliest date.

J. A. Maharg, of Moose Jaw, also urged the necessity of speedy action.

Attitude of Government

The no definite answer was given to the deputation the attitude of the government on various important points was made fairly clear by the prime minister during the conference.

The government, he declared, had done much to encourage production by its grants for educational purposes to the provinces. It intended to keep up the good work of instruction. The question of transportation was a big one, and it must be borne in mind that the railroads constructed at heavy cost should be allowed at least the interest on their money.

With one feature of the transportation problem, namely, highways, the government had undertaken to deal, but their efforts had been defeated. They still, however, intended to bring in legislation along this line. The question of distribution was a difficult one. It might be true that there was an abundance of hogs in Alberta and no feed, while there was an abundance

of feed in Ontario and a scarcity of hogs. It was a difficult matter to bring them together across the continent.

On the question of finance Sir Robert was reticent in the absence of the minister of finance. When pressed by Roderick McKenzie, secretary of the Manitoba Grain Growers, for an expression of opinion on farm credits, the premier declined to make a definite statement.

Bank to Loan to Farmers

Mr. McKenzie advocated the formation of a bank similar to that of West Australia, and suggested that postal savings and other deposits of the public should be deposited therein and loaned to the farmers at 4 per cent.

Premier Borden stated that the provinces would be more fitted to form such banks.

"If the provinces did so," said Mr. McKenzie, "would the federal government consider placing such deposits in them?"

"I cannot answer that in the absence of the minister of finance," said Premier Borden.

Premier's Attitude

In replying to the deputation, Sir Robert Borden expressed some doubts as to whether the commission suggested by the delegation could do the work laid down for it in the time mentioned. Nevertheless, he said, the government would give the representations made immediate and earnest consideration. The interview lasted from noon until 2 o'clock, several speeches being made by representatives of the joint committee before the premier made his reply.

The farmers were represented by R. C. Henders, president of the Manitoba Grain Growers; Roderick McKenzie, secretary of the Manitoba Grain Growers; J. A. Maharg, president of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers; W. C. Good, from the Ontario Grange.

The manufacturers were represented by Col. Thomas Cantlie, New Glasgow; J. H. Sherrard, Montreal; T. Cumming, Truro; and G. M. Murray, secretary, Toronto.

There was a large representation of the cabinet present, including Sir Robt. Borden, Sir George Foster, Mr. Burrell, Mr. Casgrain, Mr. Loughead, Mr. Kemp, Mr. Doherty, and Dr. Reid.

Agriculture Foundation of Wealth

E. G. Henderson was the first speaker, and referred to the meeting of the manufacturers and the farmers in Winnipeg. He said that while they differed on some points, they were agreed on others. The agricultural resources of Canada were the foundation of the wealth of the Dominion, and if agriculture was to be successful there should be the greatest efficiency in production, and the greatest profits should go to the producer.

But the methods of distribution were not what they might be. There was an overplus of apples in Ontario and an overplus of hogs in the West. The trouble was to place the overplus where there was a scarcity of that product.

Then there was the question of transportation — from the farm to the railway station, and that brought up the question of good roads. In Europe transportation by road cost seven cents per ton per mile, while in Canada it was 25 cents.

Another question was the placing of unskilled men on the farm and rendering them efficient.

Finance was another consideration. The farmer had to pay a higher rate for money than anybody else. He should be able to get money as cheaply as other men if he had the security. If anything could be done, said Mr. Henderson, to increase the production of the soil in the interests of Canada and the Empire, it should be done. The delegation, he pointed out, desired to see a permanent commission appointed to deal with the question he had brought forward.

Unanimous Memorial

Mr. Maharg informed the government that the memorial which the

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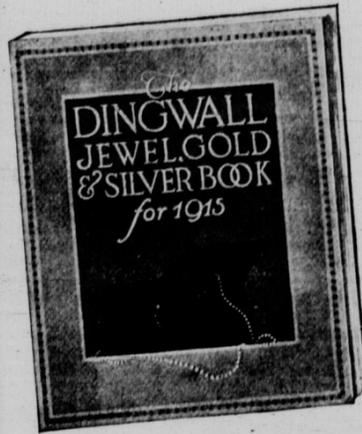
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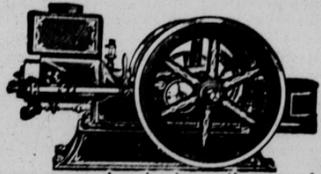
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