

Our Ottawa Letter

The C.N.R. Deal—Bennett and Nickle make Strong Speeches

(By The Guide Special Correspondent)

Ottawa, May 15.—The parliamentary week just closed has been one of the most interesting and doubtless the most sensational of the session. The sensation has been provided by R. B. Bennett, of Calgary, and W. F. Nickle, of Kingston, the two Conservative members who have jumped over the traces rather than support the proposals of the government in regard to further aid for the Canadian Northern Railway. Messrs Bennett and Nickle have done more than jump the traces. They have taken the bit into their teeth and have dashed away far ahead of their party. Nickle would have the government take over both the C.N.R. and the N.T.R. and operate them as government railways. Bennett would have the most complete kind of an investigation and would eliminate Mackenzie and Mann from the system. Of them he said: "I appeal to every man in this house to read the history of the operations of Mackenzie and Mann. He will find nothing but a long trail of parliamentary corruption, of lobbying, of degradation of parliamentary institutions, of lowering of the morale of public life, of degrading those standards by which public life should be truly and properly measured. Both parties have been to blame. Look at the aid given to this company. Just before an election you will find it given. One party proposes and the other acquiesces, content to ask a few questions only in order to have a large enough contribution to the party fund."

The criticisms of the Liberal members of the house, while severe, were not so bitter as that by the two rebellious Conservatives. Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his colleagues who spoke, all seemed to agree that it would not be a wise thing to let the Canadian Northern go into liquidation at the present time. Nevertheless E. M. Macdonald, of Picton, this evening voiced the disapproval of the opposition, insofar as the present arrangement is concerned, by moving the six months' hoist. This is the only amendment which it is possible for an opposition to move at the resolution stage. The vote will not take place until next week.

Co-operative Bill Too Late

Hon. Arthur Meighen this week introduced his long anticipated bill respecting co-operative societies. The probabilities are, however, that the introduction of this measure has been so long delayed that it cannot possibly be disposed of at this session. The government is desperately anxious to wind up business by the first of June and there is still much work to be done. It is understood that there is a considerable group of members, including both Liberals and Conservatives, who are opposed to the legislation. This would mean a debate, so the bill is not likely to receive much consideration this session.

A great mass of legislation has been either advanced a stage or finally disposed of this week, including Hon. W. J. Roche's bill to amend the Dominion Lands Act, which will give considerable relief to homesteaders in the West. As a result of representations made by W. Buchanan, W. E. Knowles and other Liberal members, Hon. Dr. Roché agreed to give another concession to pre-emption entrants whereby they are relieved from the payment of all interest except on payments which are in arrears.

Borden On C.N.R.

In the course of his speech in explanation of the C.N.R. aid resolutions, Mr. Borden said that the situation presented to the government was not without its difficulties because the credit of the Dominion and of the several provinces had been pledged in very large amounts by the guarantee of securities. It had also to be taken into account that the sum of nearly \$180,000,000 was outstanding in unguaranteed securities; that that money had been invested in this enterprise by people who may have been influenced by the fact that the road was recognized as a great trans-

continental line in Canada, and, as such, had received very substantial assistance from the federal and provincial governments.

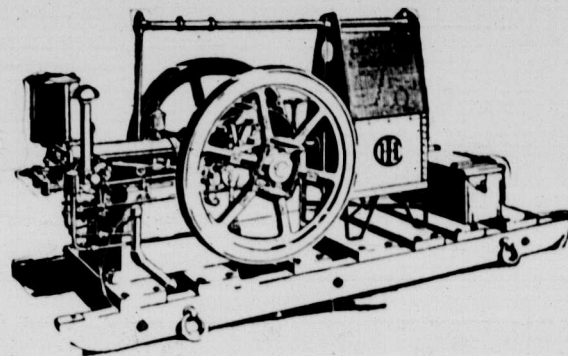
It was suggested, he went on to say, that the road should be allowed to go into liquidation and that its finances should be organized with the view of cutting down the amount of unguaranteed securities, but he was free to admit that this proposal never commended itself to his judgment. While it might be possible to save from thirty to fifty million dollars by that method the result in the end would be the loss of ten-fold that sum to this country in view of its progress and development. It was apparent that the road could not remain uncompleted. It constituted a part of a great projected transcontinental system and its traffic over the lines in operation had developed wonderfully in the last half dozen years, especially in the western provinces. To leave the road uncompleted, Mr. Borden said, would retard the progress of the country for at least a generation; and so far as he could discern if the C.N.R. went into liquidation it could not be brought to completion unless the country should come to its assistance by some such measure as that proposed. "Therefore," he said, "it seems to us that under proper stipulations and safeguards it was not only desirable, but necessary, for the country at this time to give such assistance as would insure the completion of the road at an early date."

Mr. Borden produced affidavits stating that Mackenzie and Mann had not diverted any of the money granted to the road from the purposes for which it was intended and also to show that no money was made by the two knights out of the operation of the Northern Construction Company. The first mentioned affidavit was given by A. J. Mitchell, controller of Mackenzie and Mann Company Limited, and the second by A. R. Mann, A. Mackenzie and C. Cummings, the chief officers of the construction company.

Sir Wilfrid's Criticism

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who followed, was apparently feeling his way with the object of hearing what R. B. Bennett and W. F. Nickle, the "Bul Moose" party, would have to say before committing himself definitely as to what the policy of the opposition would be. He, however, stated a number of objections to the agreement as viewed by the Liberal party. The first objection, he said, is that altho it purports to be a unification of the Canadian Northern system, it is no such unification—that the 28 companies are still in existence and will continue as they are today. The next objection was that the guarantees secured by the government are absolutely illusory while the mortgage is absolutely insufficient. "I said a moment ago," he continued "and I repeat, that this enterprise must go on. It has been conceived for the benefit of the Canadian people. We require this railway. My right hon. friend (Mr. Borden) said he would not let it go into liquidation. It must not go into liquidation, but we should have control of it. Since we must go into partnership with the Canadian Northern, let us see that we are the master, not the servants. Let the agreement be modified; let the resolutions be modified. As they stand at the present time they are not conceived for the benefit of the Canadian people; they are conceived altogether for the benefit of the firm of Mackenzie and Mann and of the Canadian Northern Railway Company. We have no objection to helping them. We have helped them in the past. I, for my part, have been an admirer of their energy and enterprise. I have not much in common with them; I cannot claim them as friends; but I admire energy, enterprise and pluck wherever it is found. At the same time, there is this consideration to be borne in mind by the Prime Minister, that there are interests which are transcendent and the primary of these transcendent interests is that

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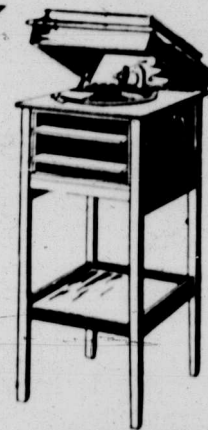
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