

*Budget Debate—Statements by J. A. Maharg and R. C. Henders—Pension Board Criticized*

Ottawa, May 10.—Parliament is making a hard drive in the hope of reaching prorogation not later than Saturday, May 18. An intimation by Sir Robert Borden that the members might have to come back to Ottawa in August, if the government is not allowed to dispose of all absolutely necessary legislation before that date, will tend to expedite the passage of the remaining business through the House. There is no disposition on the part of the government to charge the opposition with anything in the nature of obstruction. It is frankly conceded that legislation was never put through parliament more expeditiously than at the present session. Nevertheless, the necessity for an early prorogation in order that Sir Robert Borden and some of his colleagues may attend the Imperial conference is great, and members on both sides of the House are disposed to recognize the urgency of the situation.

This week the budget debate completed its course and the resolutions making provision for the new forms of taxation were reported, with a few unimportant amendments. At the time of writing the bills based upon the resolutions are still to be disposed of. They will probably occupy the attention of the House for a day.

Big business still undisposed of includes the legislation to provide for the financing of maturing C.N.R. obligations and the Civil Service Act, which will introduce the merit system into all branches of the service, including the outside service. The Civil Service bill is under discussion at the moment of writing and its provisions are being generally approved by the members of the House, although there is some criticism as to its details and a general complaint that the pay, more particularly in the outside service, is too low.

Hon. A. K. MacLean, this afternoon, as a preliminary to the discussion of the Railway legislation on Monday, produced a mass of facts and figures relating to the C.N.R. They do not contain anything that is particularly new, but emphasized the weight of the financial burden that will have to be carried in connection with the continued operation of Canadian railways during war time.

On Tuesday next, Ottawa will be invaded by a monster delegation representing the farmers of Eastern Canada, who will once more make objection to the calling out for military service of men engaged in actual farming operations. The deputation is coming despite the clear cut declaration of Sir Robert Borden on Friday last that the need for men is more pressing than the need for food.

J. A. Maharg, Grain Growers' representative, from Maple Creek, in a notable contribution to the budget debate, said he was disappointed at not finding any provision for giving assistance or encouragement in any way to agricultural production. "We had thought," he said, "the minister would have seen his way clear to give us at least a little encouragement along that line, but the budget proposals will have the very opposite effect." Mr. Maharg instanced the tax on automobiles, saying that the lower priced car is greatly used in Western Canada as a necessity on the farm, more particularly in the case of farmers who have to travel long distances to market. He had no objection to the tax on the higher priced cars which should probably be considered as luxuries. But the lower priced car running from \$600 to \$800, he described as "almost a necessity on the farm."

"For the benefit of those who are championing the cause of the Eastern manufacturers" he said, "I may say that we are not quarrelling with them at the present time. We have not asked for tariff reductions, as such, since we came here. Any of us who

have spoken on that subject, have spoken of it as a war measure, a temporary means for the increase of production. If, after the war is over, the government considers that a reduction of the tariff is not warranted, well and good; but our argument is that nothing should be left undone, that can be done at the present time, to encourage production in all lines."

Further on Mr. Maharg said, "It has been said that there was an agreement between the two parties, before the Union government was formed, that the tariff would be left in abeyance during the duration of the war. It is hard for me to believe that any group of men would enter into an arrangement whereby the fiscal policy of the country would be left in abeyance for an indefinite period of time. Personally, I cannot conceive of such a thing. Such an arrangement may have been entered into, but I am very doubtful of it. To go further: Some of the Eastern papers, I think certainly some of the Toronto papers, have said that the Western members were pledged to support the government through thick and thin. Well, I cannot speak for all the Western members, but I think I can speak for some of them certainly, and I can speak for myself, and, so far as I am concerned personally, there is no arrangement, no agreement, no understanding, either written, spoken, or implied, of that nature. And I know of a number of other Western members who are exactly in the same position. They may speak for themselves a little later on. Nevertheless, we are prepared to give this government every assistance, and just as loyal assistance as though we were pledged. But there are differences of opinion as to what should be done. I may think that it would be essential to deal with the tariff to assist in winning the war. A number of us are of that opinion but we have been told recently that it is not a question of food production, but a question of men. Well, time will tell. We had the figures and it looked as though that was the situation. Every person seemed to be of that opinion. But it is difficult to understand why conditions should change so rapidly. We suppose that those in charge of our affairs, nationally and internationally, have a fair perspective of what may be expected at least a few months ahead, and it is only a few short months since we were told that production was paramount. Now, production is being left in the background, and the cry is for men. As I said, time will tell.

"We from Western Canada will give this Union Government every opportunity to make good, if you will pardon me for that term. We will give them every opportunity and assistance, but we are not prepared to take their say-so for everything for an indefinite length of time. We will use our own common horse-sense acquired during the years we have followed rural occupations, and there may come a time when we will ask the members of the Government at least for a little more information than we have so far asked for. It will not be more than a year, probably six or eight months, until there will be another session of parliament. In the meantime, we will keep our ears close to the ground, and will use what little intelligence we have, and when we come back here, we may have something to say. That is the western viewpoint," stated a little clearer than it has yet been stated this session."

"As I said, the western people were prepared to give this government every assistance. We buried our economic views entirely last December. We have not changed our views at all—not at all. Our economic views have not been change at least in one direction. In fact war conditions have manifested them, and we are more convinced now that the views held by Western Canada for the

last few years, have been economically sound. They are being gradually adopted by this parliament, one after another; and if this keeps on it will only be a matter of a few years until parliament will have swallowed holubois that platform propounded in 1910."

Another vigorous contribution from the Grain Growers' representatives of Western Canada, was that of R. C. Henders, of Macdonald, Man., delivered on Tuesday night. Mr. Henders in expressing his delight with the budget speech declared that it goes a long way in the direction of the teaching set forth by the farming interests in Western Canada. Apparently the Conservative government which preceded the Union government had their ear pretty close to the ground in regard to some of the planks in the farmers' platform, because they had incorporated two important planks of that platform in the policy of the government. With regard to the attitude of the Opposition, Mr. Henders expressed the belief that the people of Canada are behind the government and are saying to it: "Go ahead and win the war; if it takes men to win the war, we will give you men; if it needs money we will give you money, but go ahead and win." The predominating sentiment in Canada, Mr. Henders went on to say, is that there is a struggle going on that will mean much in the future history of the world, and that we must see to it, that the principles for which we contend will triumph in that struggle.

Referring to the tariff, Mr. Henders said that the question of the fiscal policy had been discussed on the platforms of the West, and that the attitude taken by himself, as well as other representatives of the great agricultural organizations, was that if the government introduced in connection with the winning of the war, the other planks of the farmers' platform, they would, through them, in a large measure, secure for war purposes the very results that they hoped to secure from the tariff. "I would like," he said, "to see some change in the tariff, even although that change were small. If the present government could see its way clear to removing the seven and a-half per cent. duty introduced as a war revenue measure, and allow the money which would accrue from this reduction to go for the purpose of increased production, it would at least be a step in the right direction, and the country at large would benefit thereby. Failing that, so long as the government carry out their promise, in regard to introducing a fiscal policy, that would tax incomes, and undue profits, made under the tariff system, we would have no serious objection, as by that means the same object would be attained and the money would reach the coffers of the government for war purposes. I did not intend to weary the House with a speech, but I only wanted to put myself and the people of the West straight in regard to our attitude in connection with this win-the-war-government."

Dr. Michael Clark, in a characteristic speech, criticized Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux and other members of the Opposition with being actuated by too much partyism for such times as these. It was the duty of everyone, he said, to get in behind the boys in the trenches and forget these things. The member for Red Deer told the government that to preach economy is good, but it is in the power of the government to enforce economy. "If you only take plenty of taxes from the rich," he said, "they will have to be economical, and, because of its newness and its otherwise generally admirable character, it will be a blessed experience to them. How are we economizing on war accounts? I do not know why the government went in for these petty dockages of a few civil servants who went to the front. Get the money by direct taxation, and give the men who have gone to the front the fairest show in the world—that is the view of every right-thinking man in this country. I believe the government have actually done something in making separation allowances better, but not one man in ten thousand in Canada will approve of these petty dockages. Dr. Clark also expressed the opinion that the government had not economized enough."

mized as much on contracts as they might have, although Mr. Carvell had been admirably busy along those lines.

Criticism of the Pensions Board, and incidentally of the government, for the apparent abuse by the Board of its pension-granting powers, has been a matter of discussion this week, in parliament, in the corridors of the House and before the Pensions Committee which has under review thereport of the Pensions Board, and which will, before the close of the Session, make a report to Parliament. Curiously enough, one of the pensions under criticism is that of Col. Labatt, chairman of the pension board itself; while the other is the pension recently granted to Col. George H. Bradburry, formerly member for the house of commons for Selkirk, Man., but now a senator.

Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux, in the course of his speech on the budget, asserted the necessity for economy, "I shall not," he said, "reiterate the many grievances of the opposition on account of the fearful expenditure of the government. I will mention two concrete cases. Is it fair or right that Col. Labatt, one of the members of the board of pension commissioners, should receive a salary of, I think, \$6,000 a year, plus a full pension which has been granted to him? Is it fair or just that Col. Bradbury, a former member of this House, who never went to the front, mind you, but went to England, who received the appointment as senator from the late government, should, before being appointed, have exacted from the pensions board a pension for the rest of his life?"

"I may say that if my honorable friend (Hon. A. K. MacLean), has the same honesty of purpose which he had during the many years I had the honor of being his friend, he will see that these two pensions are wiped off the books of Canada."

The two pensions came under review at a meeting of the pensions committee on Tuesday. The opinion was expressed by more than one member that Col. Labatt should do one thing or the other—take his salary and let go the pension, or else take the pension and retire from his position. Several members maintained that if his disability is such as to entitle him to a full pension, he is not in proper shape to discharge his duties. Reports of the medical boards which examined the two colonels were produced. The report on Colonel Labatt stated that he was a victim of heart trouble resulting from his participation in the war. In regard to Col. Bradbury's case, it was shown that his disability was fixed at 50 per cent., which entitles him to a pension of \$750 per annum. It was stated that a private medical board in Montreal had reported that his disability should be placed at 80 per cent.

Some additional information in regard to these pensions has been furnished by replies to questions asked in the House. Mr. Proulx was informed that Col. Labatt's pension amounts to \$1,890 per annum, plus allowances amounting to \$240 per annum for his two children. The further information was given that Col. Labatt is connected by marriage with Major-General Mewburn, Minister of Militia, and Hon. J. Reid, Minister of Public Works. As for Col. Bradbury, the House was told that he had served for two weeks in France, and that his pension was for disability incurred during his term of service.

The government answers to the questions emphasize the point that pensions are not granted by the government but by the board of pension commissioners.

An additional interest has been left to the matter by the publication of a letter from H. H. Stevens, M.P. for Vancouver Centre, to Hon. N. W. Rowell, chairman of the special committee, protesting against the Labatt and Bradbury pensions. Mr. Stevens declares his belief that Col. Labatt is either in receipt of his pension by virtue of misrepresentations, or undue favor, through powerful influence, as it is clear that he is not suffering from total disability at all. "I warn you," he said, "as a prominent member of the cabinet, that it will result in destroying your influence as a government, because

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