

*The Budget—Mr. Boulanger*

prairie provinces and it was necessary from a national standpoint to encourage the movement in every way possible. At that time there was very little business and commercial travel between the east and west.

Let me interject here that this paragraph from the reply of the railways seems hardly based on facts. These low rates to settlers were in force before the war, when hundreds of thousands of newcomers were pouring in every year in numbers which have not been equalled since, and when activity in western Canada was greater than has been the case since that time. These low rates made the development of the west possible and I know that a multitude of people, some of whom became members of this house, took advantage of those rates to move west where they founded prosperous communities and even towns. The answer of the railways continues:

As the settlement of the western provinces progressed, business and commercial travel gradually developed and the homeseekers' travel from eastern Canada steadily decreased. As the legitimate use of the fare gradually diminished, the railways in order to protect their interest against the advantage being taken of the fare by business and commercial travel gradually raised the charge.

I might remark here that the need of reduced homeseekers' fares has not greatly diminished, if we are to believe Mr. Beatty, the president of the Canadian Pacific Railway. When he appeared before the committee on agriculture and colonization last year he stated that there were 35,000,000 acres of good land ready to be taken up within fifteen miles of the railways. The railways' answer continues:

The increase in homeseekers' fares has not been detrimental in so far as settlement of the west is concerned, inasmuch as the exceptionally low harvest help fares authorized each year meet the requirements of the actual land seeker from eastern Canada far better than the homeseekers' excursion fares, which is evidenced by the fact that for a number of years the majority of those in eastern Canada who desired to settle on the land in the west took advantage of these special harvest help fares. This gives them the advantages of working for farmers in the west and earning more than enough to pay their passage fares both ways, and those who decide to settle in the western provinces arrange to move their families at the time of the next harvest excursion, when they have their buildings and home under way and ready to receive them.

The harvesters' excursions may do a little good, but they occur at a season of the year which is not suitable for the establishment of a new home. It is in the spring, not on the approach of fall and winter, when a man wants to do that. But we had the experience last year that harvesters' excursions could be cancelled at a moment's notice in order to try

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out such experiments as the importation of out-of-work British miners. These men took the place of Canadian harvesters from the east who were available in sufficient number during this last summer to perform the work required to be done in the west. We hope that this experiment will not be repeated for, if we are to judge from the complaints which have been made, it was not a success. But they should be thankful for the free ride although they lacked the necessary experience and training to be successful harvesters. We cannot blame them for that, because it takes generations to make a successful farmer—you cannot make a farmer from a miner. At the beginning of the session the leader of the opposition (Mr. Bennett) stated that although 8,000 of these miners came to Canada, only about 1,600 remained after the harvest. I would like to correct those figures by a statement which the Minister of Immigration was good enough to send to me. According to that statement a little more than 2,000 remained in Canada, but we cannot find out how many remained on the farm. I am inclined to think that many of them spent the winter in the Windsor station in Montreal and in the stations at Winnipeg, Regina, Toronto, and the other big cities of Canada. The Department of Immigration and Colonization may say that the experiment did not cost Canada any money because the scheme did not necessitate any special organization on their part, but they certainly received a lot of bad publicity in England. The railways lost money on the experiment. I am not so much concerned with the losses of the Canadian Pacific Railway, but the losses of the Canadian National Railways were the nation's losses. The railways concluded their answer as follows:

Further, we are of the opinion that present conditions in Canada are such as to make it inadvisable to unduly encourage removal of individuals and families from one province to another. All provinces have vacant land and are anxiously endeavouring to not only hold their present population but to secure new settlers. Certain of the provinces have even felt the drain caused by the harvesters' excursions and have made protest against the arrangement.

That is news to me, as we have had no such protest in the east—not in Quebec, at least. The answer continues.

Our records indicate that from fifteen to twenty per cent of the harvesters who go west each year do not return to the east and that the majority of those who do not return actually settle on the land.

After very careful consideration the railways are strongly of the opinion that it would not be in the general interest to make any reduction in the present so-called "homeseekers' fares."