

# Our Ottawa Letter

Conscription Enforced—Closure Invoked on C.N.R. Bill—Union Government Delayed  
(By The Guide's Special Correspondent)

This has been another important and interesting week in parliament. Royal assent has been given to the manhood conscription bill and it is now the law of the land. The bill to provide for the purchase by the government of 600,000 shares of the C.N.R. not already in the possession of the Dominion has been put through the house under the application of the closure rule. Closure has been used for the first time since it was devised in the session of 1912 to insure the passage of the naval service bill, subsequently slaughtered by the senate. The military voters' bill has also been given third reading in the house.

Coincident with final action in regard to these important measures, what may or may not be a final stage of the protracted negotiations looking to the formation of a union government, has been reached. The development, which promises to leave matters "as they were" at least until the session is over came on Tuesday, when the Conservatives held a caucus to consider the situation. At this caucus, according to an official statement, subsequently issued, Sir Robert Borden told his followers that the spokesman of the western Liberals and representatives of the agricultural interests, Hon. A. I. Sifton, had informed him that they were willing to enter a union government under other leadership than his own. They had suggested four possible leaders, one of whom was Sir George Foster, minister of trade and commerce. Sir Robert thereupon offered to retire in favor of Sir George, but the latter had no desire to replace his chief. Sir George expressed the opinion that Sir

Robert and none other should be at the head of any government which might be formed. The caucus thereupon gave its unanimous support to the prime minister and passed a resolution endorsing the leadership of Sir Robert Borden and expressing its approval in advance of any further efforts he might make to form a union government.

That is the official version of the doings at the caucus. Unofficial reports state, however, that some decided opinions were expressed by a number of Conservative members who were opposed to union government and that Sir Robert Borden made a reply which satisfied these members that there will be no further serious negotiations for a coalition government. If such is eventually formed it will be due to some fresh impetus originating in the country. While there are many at the capital who believe that Sir Robert will continue in his efforts, it is well within the mark to say that at the present moment the Doubting Thomases are largely in the majority.

There is every indication that the government proposes to proceed with the enforcement of the conscription legislation. Sir Wilfrid Laurier has been asked to nominate 12 of the 24 members of the board of selection to be appointed by a joint resolution of the two houses. This board will nominate one member on each tribunal. The other to be named by the county court judges. While again expressing his disapproval of the bill, the Liberal leader acceded to the request to nominate half the board saying that as the act had become law, it was the duty of all citizens to see that it is enforced

as harmoniously as possible. The justice department is busily engaged in the work of selecting the local tribunals. It is expected that they will number about 1,200 for the whole of the Dominion. When they are all appointed the first call for men will be issued. It is believed that the process of selection will be a long one and it will be some months before reinforcements are actually provided under the bill.

## C.N.R. Bill to Senate

The application of the closure rule on the C.N.R. bill was not unwelcomed by the opposition although the clamp was put on a little sooner than they expected. As a matter of fact the rule was applied a little earlier than was generally expected by the house. Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux probably correctly expressed the Liberal view when he said that the opposition welcomed the closure because it would draw the attention of the public to the matter. In this connection he quoted the statement of Parnell made when closure was introduced in the Imperial parliament to prevent continuous obstruction by Irish Nationalists. Parnell on that occasion declared that closure was welcomed by the Nationalists because it would make the world at large aware of the grievances of Ireland.

On this occasion the opposition invited closure because the main purpose of their opposition to the details of the bill rather than to its principles has been to endeavor to demonstrate that the government plans to pay Mackenzie and Mann and the pledges of Canadian Northern stock a lot more than the stock is worth and they figured out that the more public attention that could be attracted the better politically for them. Incidentally there came from the opposition benches some straight declarations against the principle of public ownership, although the majority supported that doctrine. For instance, J. A. Robb of Huntington stated that his firm conviction was that public ownership and operation of railways is a

delusion and a snare. He said that it would be better for the railways to be allowed a sufficient increase in freight rates so as to enable them to pay their way. Then the people would pay their taxes in that way and not as the result of taxation by parliament.

The bill was closed both in committee and on the third reading, which was finally adopted on Wednesday morning at two o'clock when the "guillotine" fell by a government majority of 16. Four western Liberal members, Dr. Michael Clark, J. G. Turritt, A. Champagne and Levi Thompson, gave general support to the measure, although Mr. Thompson supported the final Liberal amendment, providing that the award of the board of arbitrators which will fix the value of C.N.R. stock be approved by parliament.

R. B. Bennett, Conservative member for Calgary, made a vigorous attack on the bill on third reading, but refrained from voting. An exceedingly interesting situation is expected to develop in the senate when the bill is considered next week. The opinion is expressed in some quarters that it will be radically amended and possibly defeated.

## THE COAL SITUATION

It is altogether likely that both Canada and the United States will be put on rations in regard to coal supplies. Such was the announcement made in the commons recently by Hon. Geo. E. Foster.

The use of coal might have to be in some measure restricted to the indispensable industries while the railways would be asked to so co-ordinate their services as to use a minimum amount of coal. An appeal would also be made to the general public to exercise economy. Sir George said that Canada's production of bituminous coal last year was 13,000,000 tons, while our importations were about the same. Canada also imported 4,500,000 tons of anthracite coal. Anthracite stocks are low and this year one million additional tons would be required.

Bituminous coal prices were fixed by President Wilson on August 21 for every mine in the United States. The next step in coal control, a White House announcement said, will be to fix prices to be charged by middlemen and retailers. Prices were set on cost of production estimates furnished by the federal trade commission after months of exhaustive investigation. The country is divided into 29 districts, and every producer in a district will market his output at the same price. On August 23 President Wilson named Dr. H. A. Garfield, president of Williams' college, fuel administrator, fixed anthracite prices for producers and jobbers and set a limit on profits to be made by bituminous wholesalers. The last and final step will be to make regulations for coal distribution and to fix anthracite and bituminous retail prices. This will be done when a distribution program is perfected and when the federal trade commission has completed a plan under which retail profits may be fixed. The jobbers' profit on bituminous is limited to 15 cents per ton of 2,000 pounds, wherever delivered.

The prices set by President Wilson, it would appear, will have little effect upon the rates in Winnipeg and the west.

When it was pointed out that it was hardly credible that anthracite coal, purchased by the dealers at the pit head for from \$4 to \$5 a ton, should retail here for \$12, one of the leading coal merchants of Winnipeg said: "It is easy to understand. We have to pay \$1.75 to get it to Buffalo, 50c from Buffalo to Fort William, with 20c extra for dock handling, and then another \$2.50 for the haul from Fort William to Winnipeg. Then there is the local handling expenses, which, estimated at the lowest, amount to \$1.50. You will see this brings the total up to approximately \$12, the price the Winnipeg consumer is paying today."

Congressional leaders at Washington have been informed that it will be necessary for them to authorize at this and the winter session an additional \$5,000,000,000 for war expenditures, including further loans to the Allies to June 30, 1918. Five billion in bonds already have been authorized, and a \$2,000,000,000 war tax bill is pending now in the senate.

## AN "S.O.S." CALL FROM FRANCE!

Thousands of wounded and old French peasants are trekking their way back to their former homes in the recaptured portions of France only to find them laid waste in the wake of the ruthless Hun. They are penniless, dejected and destitute. They are calling to their Central Western Canada Allies and to YOU for immediate help. Will their voices be unheard?



## French Wounded Emergency Fund

(Under the Authority of the French Government)  
President, H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught



This fund was founded to render emergency relief to destitute and suffering dependents of French soldiers—to succour the wounded and to rehabilitate families in the recaptured and devastated portions of France.

**Your Money is Needed Urgently to Alleviate the Distress  
and the Suffering in the Districts Being Retaken  
in the Allies Advance**

**THE FIRST APPEAL CLOSSES SEPTEMBER 17th**

**Give! Give Generously! Give Today!**

Where is there a person in Central Western Canada who would not give willingly to provide provisions, kitchen utensils, tents, etc., etc.? Contributions can be made to any bank. In towns where there is more than one bank, a banking committee will be formed in the interests of the French Wounded Emergency Fund, who will forward all contributions to

H. B. SHAW (General Manager, Union Bank of Canada), Organizer, Winnipeg

**LET EVERYBODY GIVE SOMETHING NOW**