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THE GRAIN GROWERS' GUIDE

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Our Ottawa Letter

Parliament is prorogued—Railway Act is missed—The end was a troubled one.

(By The Guide's Special Correspondent)

Ottawa, Sept. 21.—The seventh session of the twelfth parliament soon to pass by effluxion of time came to a troubled close at six o'clock yesterday afternoon. Its closing hours were marked by doubt and indecision. Within a couple of hours of the actual prorogation uncertainty existed as to whether the house would really rise. Indecision marked its final actions in regard to the legislative program, to be disposed of. As a result of this indecision one of the most important pieces of legislation of the session got lost in the shuffle. This was the general Railway Act on which the railway committee of the House of Commons spent six laborious weeks. As a result of its labors the House of Commons passed a Railway Act which, while by no means perfect, was a vast improvement on any of its predecessors. Why this bill was not proceeded with by the Senate railway committee is the big mystery of the closing hours of the session. Apparently, some unseen force was at work. When it became apparent that the measure was not likely to pass the upper house, it was decided to put through a bill already dealt with by the Senate and which provided for the payment of railway employees fortnightly instead of monthly. To this bill was added a number of non-contentious clauses from the left over railway act, dealing more particularly with the demands made upon parliament by the railway employees. The presence in the Senate of a representative of railway employees in the person of Senator Robertson is probably one reason why the session was not allowed to close without their wants being attended to, another reason of course being the near approach of a general election. Other bodies interested in the revision of the Railway Act including the grain growers of the West, were not so fortunate. They will have to be content for the present with the railway law as it stands.

One of the apparent reasons for the failure of the Senate to deal with the Railway Act was the opposition that developed to a clause in the bill affecting the rights of a Mackenzie and Mann owned power company to distribute power on the streets of Toronto. Strong exception was taken to the inclusion in the general Railway Act of a provision directly affecting only one company and one city. It was argued that this matter should have been dealt with in a special bill, if at all. There was no reason, however, why this particular matter could not have been left out of the bill, but it was made the excuse for non-action in the part of the upper chamber which has always been rather favorably inclined to the railways.

Nova Scotia Lists

Serious trouble developed during the last couple of days of the session of the War Time Election Act. In the upper house an amendment was moved by Senator Ross, a government supporter, having for its purpose the creation in Nova Scotia of an electoral list on a Federal basis. This despite

the fact that when the bill was introduced in the lower house Hon. Arthur Meighen, the solicitor general, explained that the principle of the bill was the provincial franchise, plus the addition of the female relatives of soldiers and the subtraction of naturalized citizens of alien enemy birth.

Senator Ross' amendment quite naturally caused a rumpus, and opposition members in both houses threatened to delay prorogation until next week. With the object of arriving at a compromise various conferences were held and opposition members succeeded in procuring a modification of the amendment as originally moved. Yesterday on the eve of prorogation, however, Liberal members from Nova Scotia entered vigorous protests against their province being singled out for special treatment.

The government explanation of its action, as given by the solicitor general, was that it was discovered that down in Nova Scotia the lists which are made by municipal officers are revised by the sheriffs who, in view of the fact that the Liberals have been in power in that province for over 30 years, are all appointees of that party. In the other provinces, it was claimed a judicial review of the lists is provided for and it was thought better to apply the same system to Nova Scotia.

Exempting Farmers' Sons

With the session over the capital promises to be a quiet place for the next week or two. Sir Robert Borden is off on a fishing trip and it has been announced in the government newspapers that nothing will be done in regard to cabinet organization until he returns. The hope is still held out in some quarters that a Union government will be formed. Some significance, however, is attached to the publication this week of the letter addressed by Sir Robert Borden to Mr. Davies, a Liberal of Vancouver, who favors a Union government, rather intimating that a coalition administration might not be attempted until after the election. This is believed by many people to mean that the election will be fought almost entirely on party lines, although reorganization of the government is almost certain.

J. H. Rainville, the Deputy Speaker of the Commons was responsible for the development of an interesting situation in the house this week. Some days ago, Mr. Rainville undertook to address to his constituents in Quebec province a letter in which he made the definite promise that farmers and the sons of farmers would be exempt from military service when the call to arms under the military service act is issued shortly. Mr. Rainville in his letter was slightly boastful of his success in persuading the government to exempt farmers and stated that farmers of his constituency could send their sons without fear before the exemption tribunals. Ernest Lapointe, Liberal member for Manawaska, read this interesting document in the house and asked the prime minister if it was true that the government

had decided to exempt agriculturists from military service.

Sir Robert Borden in his reply was inclined to evade the question. No doubt he desired to let the deputy speaker down easy. The prime minister contented himself with explaining that the Military Service Board had not as yet completed the framing of its regulations, and that nothing definite could be stated until they have been submitted to the Governor-in-Council for approval. The Military Service Board has itself intimated, however, that there will be no class exempted. Doubtless farmers and the sons of farmers liable for military service under the first call will be leniently dealt with. It is pointed out in this connection, however, that it would not be fair to exempt any particular class. While the disposition will be to exempt men engaged in productive occupations, discontent would be created, it is said, if exemption were allowed in the case of a farmer having five or six sons, one or two of whom could be spared.

Election in December

The adoption by the house of the War Time Elections Act providing for a Dominion franchise based upon the provincial lists, with additions and subtractions, makes it practically certain that the general election which must intervene between now and the next meeting of parliament cannot take place until late in November or early in the month of December. There is a possibility that in the event of making of the lists occupying a longer period than is anticipated, the elections may be held at a still later date. Owing to the necessity of having the result of the soldiers' vote brought from the other side and counted, a full month is liable to elapse after election day to definitely decide the result in many constituencies. The signs therefore point to the next session of parliament beginning late in the coming winter and running into the summer months.

SCREENINGS TO STAY IN CANADA

Ottawa, Sept. 18.—An order-in-council has been passed prohibiting the exportation of "screenings" except under license. This action of the government is the result of recent investigation of the feed situation in Canada by the minister of agriculture.

Heretofore, and even now, the best demand has existed for them in the United States.

The minister of agriculture has called a conference in Winnipeg for September 25. Invitations to attend have been sent to representatives of the various grain growers associations, elevator companies, livestock associations, the secretary of the grain exchange, and the chairman of the board of grain supervisors, and the provincial departments of agriculture. An officer of the federal department of agriculture will also be present. A thorough discussion of the whole subject will take place and such conference cannot fail to be of immense practical benefit at this time.

In order to save for the Indians of Canada their large timber holdings against loss by forest fires, the Indian Department at Ottawa is obliging licensees to pile and burn their "slash" after taking the logs out of the woods. The precaution will save numerous bad fires.

QUEBEC BRIDGE SPAN PLACED

The central span of the Quebec bridge was placed in position last week without a mishap. After being floated down on pontoons to the bridge site, hoisting operations began on Monday. The end of the first day's operations saw it 28 feet in the air with 122 feet yet to travel. On Tuesday it was hoisted 44 feet, some delay being occasioned by the breaking of a bracket connected with the hoisting apparatus. On this day the unlucky thirteenth link, which was the one to break last year, was successfully negotiated. The span was finally bolted into position at 4.30 p.m. on Thursday, and communication over the St. Lawrence between the north and south shores established. The pinning up of the central span to the hangers that are to permanently support it marks the successful accomplishment of an engineering feat without equal in the annals of cantilever bridge building, and gives to Canada the credit of creating a structure the largest of its class in the world.

A history of the bridge and some details of its immense proportions follow:

First idea of the Quebec bridge over the St. Lawrence originated in Quebec in 1853. Estimated cost, \$3,000,000.

A charter obtained to construct the bridge in 1882, by M. W. Baby, of Quebec.

Company re-organized in 1906 by S. N. Parent, ex-premier of Quebec, and work begun.

Bridge collapsed Aug. 29, 1907, with a loss of 70 lives. Monetary loss, \$8,000,000.

Dominion government decided to re-construct bridge, a contract being let to the St. Lawrence Bridge Company, April 4, 1911.

Centre span fell into the river September 11, 1916; 14 men losing their lives. Financial loss, \$500,000.

The dimensions of the bridge are: Length from shore to shore, 3,239 feet; width between anchor buttresses, 1,800 feet; length of central span, 640 feet; height of central span above water, 150 feet; number of railroad tracks carried, two; street car tracks, two; and roads, two. The bridge has a central span 90 feet longer than the Forth bridge, hitherto the holder of the world's record.

The steel used in the bridge weighs 180,000,000 pounds and cost \$11,000,000. The masonry pier work cost \$1,500,000.

The trip between Halifax and Winnipeg will be cut down by half a day when the bridge is completed.

Before the government commission investigating the O'Connor report in reference to the prices of bacon and ham, General-Manager Fox of the Davies Company stated that the paid up capital of the firm was now \$2,500,000, Sir Joseph Flavell holding 51 per cent. of the stock. The figures of the company on surplus without deductions since 1913 were given as follows: 1913, \$340,905; 1914, \$377,350; 1915, \$607,428; 1916, \$1,757,180; 1917, \$1,379,904. The evidence also showed that the company holds large blocks of stock in the Harris Abattoir, a competing firm.

The Trades and Labor Congress of the Dominion in session at Ottawa stated that labor was opposed to conscription, but refrained from taking any action regarding the military service act.

Hon. W. J. Connolly, agent-general for Western Australia, has been in Western Canada studying immigration and grain handling problems.