

# The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, March 11th, 1914

## THE C.N.R. DEAL

In the House of Commons last week the Finance Minister stated that there was no application before the Government for further assistance to the Canadian Northern Railway. Possibly he means a formal and written application. Sir William Mackenzie in an interview, at Ottawa, last week, said he was negotiating with the Government for assistance for the C.N.R. Dispatches from Ottawa state that Sir William Mackenzie, Sir Donald Mann and Z. A. Lash have been around the Parliament Buildings conferring with Cabinet Ministers and with private members. William Moore, secretary of the C.N.R., is also among the members a great deal of the time. These gentlemen are evidently endeavoring to win support for the C.N.R. deal. Last week we published Sir William Mackenzie's statement, which we do not consider was a very strong one, nor did it afford any reasonable excuse for pouring any more money into the bottomless maw of the C.N.R. The people of Canada, and particularly of Western Canada, are watching Ottawa very closely these days to see whether it is Mackenzie and Mann or Premier Borden who is governing Canada and controlling the public treasury. Sir William's statement gives no information whatever on his system of financing the C.N.R. The public does not even know who owns the road, whether it is the private property of Mackenzie and Mann or whether it is owned by a company with a large number of shareholders. The general belief is that the road is financed in a way that will make the promoters wealthy, but make the road poor. Every Westerner knows that the C.N.R. system in the Prairie Provinces has been far from a modern railway for many years. It is certainly up to the Government to see that the public have full details of the C.N.R.'s finances before any more money is handed out. As far as can be learned it looks as tho these donations to the C.N.R. are being used to enrich three or four men, who are using the money thus acquired to keep the people of Canada loaded down with all kinds of special privileges and unjust burdens. It has also been declared very frequently that Mackenzie and Mann or the C.N.R. have donated largely to the campaign funds of both political parties in the past. This is something that the public should know about. Both political parties are in the position to give us a definite statement as to whether any money from Mackenzie and Mann or the C.N.R. has been donated to their campaign funds in the past. The general public firmly believe that such has been the case. What have Mackenzie and Mann and the politicians to say about it? The people are watching the Liberal party as well as the Government. The Liberal party did not come out of the C.N.R. deal of last year very creditably, and it would be well for them to make their position very clear this time.

## EXTRAVAGANCE ON THE N.T.R.

It is somewhat surprising to observe how little stir has been caused in the country by the publication of the report of the commission appointed by the Dominion Government to investigate the charges of extravagance and graft in connection with the construction of the National Transcontinental Railway. The report, which was made after a very thorough investigation by F. P. Gutelius, manager of the Intercolonial Railway, and G. Lynch Staunton, K.C., states, "that without including the money which was unnecessarily expended in building the railway east of the St. Lawrence River, \$40,000,000, at least, was needlessly expended in

the building of this road." This is a very serious finding, and the fact that it has made so little impression upon the public is not complimentary to our national sense of honesty. We have become so used to graft and scandals, apparently, that we no longer take much notice of the exposures that are made from time to time. The unconcern of the public is also, perhaps, partly due to the over-statement and exaggeration of the case by the press of the party opposed to that under whose administration the extravagance occurred. A Winnipeg paper, for instance, has a big three column head, "Forty Millions in Loot for Politicians Out of Fund for Building N.T." but, on reading the report, we find that a considerable portion of the \$40,000,000 was spent in building a line with smaller grades, better curves, and more substantial bridges than the commission considered necessary. The shops at Transcona cost four and a half million dollars, and since, in the opinion of the commission, these were not authorized by law, they class that four and a half million as being improperly spent, and include it in the \$40,000,000. It is obviously unfair to claim that money actually spent in the construction of machine shops, roundhouses and other necessary equipment is "loot for politicians," and we, therefore, call attention to this extravagance by way of over-statement in the interests of fair play. There really was no need to overstate the case at all, if the facts were as reported by the commission. It is stated, for instance, "That until the appointment of Major R. F. Leonard, in the autumn of 1911, no member of the Transcontinental Railway Commission had any experience or knowledge of railway building or operation." The result was that, in the opinion of Mr. Gutelius, who is a competent railway engineer, and Mr. Staunton, an able lawyer, the N.T.R. Commission frequently had things done in the most expensive way, paid for work that wasn't done, built unnecessary stations, and let contracts under such conditions that the men who actually did the work were unable to tender, and had to become subcontractors. It is estimated by the investigators that contractors received \$8,800,000 in profits on work which they let to subcontractors, one firm sub-letting work on which they made \$740,000 without doing anything at all themselves. The published summary of the report is, unfortunately, tainted with political bias, and was evidently written more with the object of condemning the late Liberal Government than to bring the facts impartially before the public. The investigation was very necessary, but it is unfortunate that Mr. Gutelius, who, as manager of the Intercolonial Railway, should have been kept free from party politics, should have been chosen as one of the investigators.

## BORDEN FOR CLEANER POLITICS

Premier Borden is to be congratulated on his action in agreeing to a proposal made by A. K. Maclean, the Liberal member for Halifax, that a committee of the House of Commons should be appointed to investigate corrupt practices and provide for greater purity in elections by making necessary amendments to the Controverted Elections Act. There is no question that very great improvements are necessary in the act, and if Mr. Borden secures the passage of a law which will make possible the exposure and punishment of those responsible for the election frauds and corruption which are such a disgrace to the Canadian people, he will perform a public service of incalculable

value. Everyone knows that the present law is totally inadequate to deal with the election crooks. There are so many ways of delaying or preventing the hearing of a petition against the election of a member that the trial is practically never carried to a conclusion. Many cases are thrown out on the most trivial technicalities, while others are delayed or postponed so frequently that Parliament is dissolved and they die a natural death before they are heard. In other cases, such as the Macdonald case in Manitoba recently, an admission of a technical breach of the law is put in, and the member consents to the election being declared void, and so prevents any evidence being given and the wrongdoing exposed. It is a difficult matter to say which of the two political parties has been guilty of the more corruption and bribery in Canada. Almost every election brings charges and counter charges of the use of liquor, the payment of money, and the promise of jobs to influence the voters. Occasionally these charges are false, but usually the one side does not learn of half the corruption practiced by its opponents. What is needed is a means of securing an investigation into electoral corruption which will expose not only the tools, but the men higher up who are really responsible on both sides of politics. One thing urgently necessary to prevent corruption in politics is publicity of campaign funds. The money that is used for the purpose of bribing the voters is usually filched from the public treasury in the first place. It reaches the party campaign fund by way of a government contractor who is paid an extravagant price for his work, on condition that he hands back a portion of his profit; it comes thru railway promoters who have received land grants, bond guarantees, loans, and bonuses; it comes from manufacturers who have received tariff favors that enable them to impose high prices upon the public, and it comes from hotel-keepers who depend upon the good will of the government to retain their licenses and to escape prosecution for breaches of the law. If the politicians had to find the money with which they bribe and corrupt the voters and to pay impersonators out of their own pockets, instead of out of the pockets of the people as a whole, there would be very much cleaner elections, and it is certain that most of the big contributions to the campaign funds of both parties would not be forthcoming if they had to be made publicly. Premier Borden, as a man of high personal honor and integrity, must have an intense dislike for the election methods which are used both for and against him, and we trust that he will not allow himself to be deterred by any of his colleagues who do not share his high ideals, but will lose no time in getting the committee to work and in framing a new election law.

## DEFINITE INFORMATION NEEDED

All signs point to a general election in the Province of Manitoba in the course of the next few months. It promises to be one of the most interesting and hotly contested elections held in the Province for many years. The most important issue to our mind, from the standpoint of the people, that will come before the electors is Direct Legislation, or the Initiative and Referendum. It is, therefore, of vital importance that every elector should know what he is to expect from either of the two political parties after the election. Premier Roblin and his Government have declared themselves unalterably opposed to Direct Legislation, and have stated that they