

Our Ottawa Letter

Finance Minister will Borrow and Spend Millions
(By The Guide Special Correspondent)

Ottawa, Dec. 4.—With the return of Premier Borden to the capital interest has been revived in the political issues of the day and the pressing problems which await action on the part of the government. Mr. Borden got back from the South on Sunday last. He declared that the month spent on the golf links at Hot Springs, Virginia, did him a world of good and that he is in good fettle for the tasks which confront him, including the arrangement for the sessional program. Mr. Borden certainly looks better, but, nevertheless, it must be frankly stated that some of his friends think that he is taking a too optimistic view of his condition. They fear that if he is not careful he will not be able to stand the tremendous wear and tear of a four or five months' session such as we are certain to have. The delay till January must necessarily mean that business will have to start off at a pretty fast clip and there will be no let up until the middle of June at the earliest. The presence of Hon. Geo. E. Foster at the capital for the greater part of the session should, however, take much of the load off the prime minister's shoulders and he will be able to save his energies more than he did last session. The exact date for the opening was this week fixed for Thursday, January 15.

Commission on High Cost of Living

The first problem which confronted Mr. Borden on his return was a loud demand which has arisen for the appointment of a commission to inquire into the cause of the present high cost of living. Hon. T. W. Crothers, minister of labor, whose department has charge of the collection of all statistical data relating to the price of food and other commodities, has, it is stated, for three months past recommended the appointment of a commission. Action was delayed, however, and from the political viewpoint the situation has been made most ticklish by the free food platform enunciated by Sir Wilfrid Laurier in his Hamilton speech. The ministers realize that the naming of a commission now will be interpreted by many people as a defensive move on the part of the government. Quite apart from that there are big interests which are bringing pressure to bear against the proposal to name a royal commission of inquiry. They are afraid that the evidence to be submitted on behalf of the people might indicate that the tariff is one of the most potent of contributory causes to the high cost of living. Of course, such an admission would not suit the interests. Therefore they can be counted upon to continue to buck the proposal. If nothing is done before the House opens it is altogether likely that strong pressure will be brought upon the government to have a parliamentary investigation. This would be more restricted in scope, because people desirous of giving evidence would have to come to the capital. Altogether the government is in somewhat of a quandary about the proposal, while fully realizing that a determination not to take action of any kind might be a serious business for the ministry.

Decreasing Revenues—Increasing Expenditures

A shrinkage of nearly one and a half millions in the customs revenue for the month of November, following as it does a decrease almost as large in October, has resulted in wiping out entirely the betterment in collections which marked the first six months of the fiscal year. For the eight months which closed on November 30 the customs taxes totalled something over seventy-six millions, a slight decrease as compared with the same period last year. The monthly decreases are expected to continue for some time, with the inevitable result that the total collections for the year will fall at least five millions behind the high water record of the previous fiscal year. Coupled with this marked decrease in revenue comes the remarkable announcement that the estimates for the next session are to beat all records and that in order to meet capital expenditure the minister of finance has issued a prospectus in the London market calling for a Canadian loan of twenty millions. It would almost appear that the government is determined to

make an effort to create a fictitious prosperity by the unlimited expenditure of money on public works. This can be done by imposing a tax upon posterity which we should pay out of the large revenues of today. The worst feature of this plan, however, is that the minister of finance will be able to point to his empty treasury as a reason for declining to make any considerable reductions in the duties. Last week The Guide correspondent, as indicated in this letter, was inclined to think that the government would be compelled to revise the tariff downwards. But the deliberate announcement of the minister of finance made through the medium of the government press that he proposes "the greatest expenditure that has been," coupled with the further announcement that he is going to London for another loan of twenty millions, makes a decided change in the political kaleidoscope. It looks as though the money powers are going to have absolute control of the situation and the plain people will look in vain for any real measures of relief.

OATS GOING SOUTH

Minneapolis, Minn., Dec. 10.—Minneapolis chamber of commerce firms yesterday bought half a million bushels of Canadian oats that will come to Minneapolis and pay the 6 cents per bushel import duty under the new tariff law, thereby recording the largest business of the kind since the first Canadian oats began to trickle across the boundary after the Underwood bill went into effect. A movement that the Great Northern, Soo and Northern Pacific roads have handled, wherein a car or two of Canadian oats have appeared on nearly every incoming grain train from the boundary line, has brought about 1,000,000 bushels into Minneapolis so far, but trains arriving over the Soo and Great Northern in the last few days have had 10 to 20 cars of Canadian oats. That the total importation by Minneapolis will have reached 2,000,000 bushels before the year ends was the prediction heard on "change today.

Difference in Measure

Thirty-four pounds is the legal bushel in Western Canada and thirty-two pounds is the legal weight in Minnesota, and therein the Western Canadian producer of oats finds an offset in part for the 6 cents a bushel duty that he has to stand. The Van Dusen Harrington Co., McLaughlin & Co., T. M. McCord & Co., and other firms have been identified with the southward movement.

What the increasing movement will do to the Minnesota oats producer, was a question on "change today. The recent bringing in of a car of Western Canadian wheat, which sold at Minneapolis prices after paying 10 cents a bushel import duty and freight from a Manitoba point, was interesting, grain trade men said, not so much for its own importance as in the showing of what might happen if the Canadian government takes off the countervailing duty in January, as some of the trade expect. But the Canadian government may not do that, and no great inrush of Canadian wheat is expected while the 10 cent import duty remains in effect.

The oats sold at 40 cents, or practically the same price as the Minneapolis figure for the corresponding quality, are coming in with payment of freight and duty as a part of the calculation.

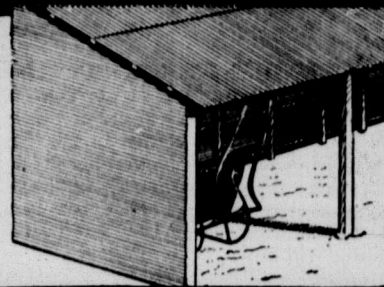
REFERENDUM ON "BANISH THE BAR"

A bill to provide for the taking of a referendum of the Province on the question of banishing the bar, has been introduced into the Saskatchewan Legislature. According to the bill, as introduced, the vote will be taken at the time of the next municipal elections, in December, 1914, and a clear majority will decide the issue, provided 50,000 votes are cast. If the referendum is carried, it will mean that every bar room in the province will be closed, and the whole of the liquor business will have to be carried on by the wholesale dealers. The vote will be taken on the parliamentary lists, which comprise approximately 175,000 names.

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Short Course in Agriculture

A Short Course in Agriculture will be held at the College of Agriculture, Saskatoon, January 22 to 30. There will be lectures on Field Crops and Soil Management; Breeding and Management of Live Stock; Farm Machinery, Buildings, Water Supply and Sanitation; Veterinary Science; Trees, Shrubs, Flowers and Shelter Belts; Poultry, Weeds, Birds and Insects in Relation to Agriculture, etc., etc. The World's Champion Steer, winner at the International Live Stock Exposition at Chicago, will be at the College for demonstration purposes. For fuller information write to—

S. E. GREENWAY, Director of Extension Work, Saskatoon

P.S.—Annual Provincial Seed Fair, January 19 to 24.

Annual Convention of Agricultural Societies, January 27 to 30.

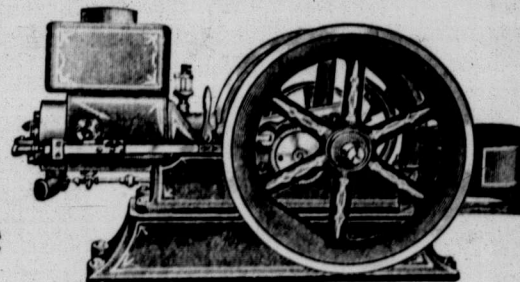
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