



Hon. P. E. Blondin, Patriot

HON. P. E. BLONDIN deserves the encomiums of all sides of politics—even the Nationalists. When this Cabinet Minister decided to enlist he virtually walked into the office of a colleague and asked for any military job which he might be best qualified to discharge for the sake of the country in which he was born and to which he ardently belongs. The office of P. M. G. is ordinarily as important as that of the Minister of Militia. In peace times we have known it to bulk much more largely in the public estimation. Politically, Hon. P. E. Blondin is the equal of Sir Edward Kemp, and as a Cabinet Minister he has had just about the same amount of experience. To offer himself as a subordinate is in itself an act of self-sacrifice which can be appreciated only in the light of a fine type and example of patriotism. Hon. P. E. Blondin, enlisting, even as a C. O., to raise a new battalion, is one more hope that Quebec will yet become as eager a part of modern Canada as she is well entitled to become because of her ancient and glorious history in this part of the world. On another page of this issue we print a narrative showing by the aid of our Dominion archives what old French families did for the British connection in this country. The career of Hon. P. E. Blondin, along with the officers of the 22nd, Col. Asselin and many others, will make a yet more significant chapter in the story of what 20th century French-Canadians are doing to help unify the Confederation which was based upon Quebec for a pivotal centre.

The Agrarian Trust

FOR the first time in our history Canadian farmers undertake to fix the price of wheat, which they have lately been trying to do in convention at Regina. This momentous chore has usually been performed by men who never go near a field of wheat and mostly by men who are thousands of miles from where a box car of wheat begins to travel out to seaboard. The farmer has always taken the price offered and as a rule has had his chance to kick violently when it was lower than he wanted—which it nearly always was. Now the consumer has never been profited much by the price manipulations of market experts. On a commercial basis it is more sensible that the man who produces should be able to determine what he is willing to sell it for. But there are certain practical reasons why the farmer has never before been able to do this. In the first place there never was a time when the Canadian farmer at least had a chance to dicker with one big consumer willing to buy every bushel he could spare. When the British Government gets a corner on buying, as it has now, there's very little chance for the people of Canada who normally consume less than twenty per cent. of our yearly production of wheat to do anything but pay the price set by this great competitor in the market. So, whatever the British Government offers or is compelled to pay, the rest of us will pay also in proportion to distance. If it means a still dearer loaf we shall pay it with all the optimism born of recent experience with dear loaves in this country. We understand that there never was a minute when any farmer in Canada could not sell his wheat for spot cash to somebody, whatever the price might be, just as there have been many episodes in other producers' experiences when they couldn't sell anything to anybody at any price. The farmer, especially in Western Canada, has had a long tuition in taking what he could get spot cash. In other parts of Canada he has had a much longer experience in getting the top price for nearly everything he produced. The farmers who in convention fix the price of what they propose to produce are merely using an organization which they have been at some trouble to create in dickering with a great consumer compelled by war necessity to pay a good price or go without. We may have our private opinions about

how \$1.50 wheat feels on the breakfast table. But we shall not record this against the farmer. The only real resentment we feel in this connection is against the chuckling representative of that class who dropped into the office the other day and confessed that he was into a conspiracy to boost the price of every mortal thing we had to buy that he produced, even though the clouds had to be lifted to get the price under.

When Is a War?

THE first thing we know the United States will argue itself into a state of war. Special Congress meets two days after the date of this issue. That Congress will sit upon the war problem as solemnly as the French Academy divides the status of a verb. To our certain knowledge there have been determinabilities quite as deliberate as this inquisition—When is Uncle Sam in a state of war? The nebular hypothesis took centuries to evolve. How Old Is Ann? has never been settled yet. Squaring the circle and discovering the ultimate atom have alike baffled the skill of the most astute investigators. Deciding when a great nation is actually in a state of war without formal polite declarations to that effect on either side, seems to be in a class with the profoundest of these. It seems that kicking a man in the shins is not a justifiable "casus belli." Hitting him a smash in the nose after spitting him in the face—might be. Congress must decide. And so far as we know there is no legislative body under the sun so well versed in the business of supreme indecision.

Thanks, Teddy!

ROOSEVELT has written a long article in the Metropolitan Magazine in praise of Canada's part in the war. He sets forth a somewhat glowing account of what we have done in khaki without showing any great instinctive knowledge of Canada which, so far as we know, he has never even seen. He eulogizes Sir Robert Borden for a speech delivered in New York and points out that what we have done in this country to raise an army would be equal to an army of over 5,000,000 in the United States. Of course the real reason for this praise of us is the Colonel's desire to get a whack at his own country. At the same time we appreciate the compliment and wish that once in a blue moon President Wilson would so much as deign to mention us as though we were some country as near by and as congenial as Alaska.

Americanizing O'Higgins

SOMEWHERE in the pastoral environs of New York there is a keen-faced, businesslike writing-man who makes plays and novels and serial articles to order; one of the best known literary producers in the United States. He was born and educated in Canada. Harvey O'Higgins was the intellectual product of the University of Toronto. But he has spent as much of his life in and around New York as he ever did in the land of his birth, and when he speaks about the art of his own business he speaks as an unmitigated American. His latest pronouncement on this theme is an article in the New York Tribune, in which he bewails the adverse fate of the American playwrights—of whom he is one—compelled to have their plays cut, "gagged" and adapted by the stage manager and his gang. As an honest workman O'Higgins resents this species of super-production. He wants to be interpreted as himself, a true American play-writer. Harvey, in fact, is out-and-out plain-label American, no bones about it, using the United States "we" as though he were born to it, and, rising to a point of indignation in so doing. So Canada has clean lost O'Higgins, except for purposes of digging around the family tree. We have lost a large number of

these well-known literature-producers to Uncle Sam. Some of them still cling to this country. One or two of them live here a good part of their time, while they sell most of their wares to New York. We don't blame them. A thousand times we may wish such men as O'Higgins and Stringer and MacFarlane, and Bliss Carman were back in this country helping to shove along our national wagon. But if we can't pay the price for their productions we can still continue to furnish them raw material of copy without any embargo, and hope they are working out their souls' salvation in the United States better than they ever could have done in Canada.

Earl Grey's Pipe Dream

MR. M. S. WADE, a writer in British Columbia, sends us his candid opinions about the Imperial farm scheme, for purchasing 200,000,000 acres of land in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia; Great Britain to pay Canada \$1 an acre for the land; the money, \$200,000,000 to be spent by Canada in developing the land to an ultimate value of \$100 an acre; the enormous profit of \$20,000,000,000, minus \$200,000,000 to be used in paying off Great Britain's war debt. Mr. Wade, being a practical British Columbian, very pertinently remarks:

There is not much, if any, clearing required in the lands in Alberta and Saskatchewan that would be likely to be selected for this enterprise. Presumably it would be ready for the breaking plow, an operation that would cost more than \$1 per acre in itself, to say nothing of harrowing, and rolling and seeding. Even should it be possible by the use of motor operated gang ploughs to get the job done by contract for a less sum than \$1 per acre, there would still remain those other necessary operations. To this must be added the cost of fencing, the erection of barns, stables and dwelling houses. In British Columbia, where most of the land requires more or less clearing, the cost of making improvements is very materially increased. Timber lands cost from \$50 to \$200 an acre for clearing and stumping, at least \$1 per acre for levelling and from \$3 to \$5 for ploughing and harrowing. Even sage bush lands cost from \$2 to \$5 for clearing in addition to ploughing, etc.

It is self-evident that such a scheme would never work out successfully. It would cost too much to develop such an enormous acreage as this British Empire Resources Committee contemplate. There is not a straight colonization scheme. It is an investment of so much money with the one object of reaping a profit of \$100 for each \$1 laid out. In itself that is quite a contract. If, however, the scheme were one of colonization pure and simple, a scheme to place a large number of settlers upon the land and give them a sufficient start to ensure success with ordinary industry and thrift, it would be much more easily handled. To begin with there would have to be a very marked revision in the estimates of first cost. Each settler, as a debtor to the Committee, or the Dominion, would receive in stock, buildings, provisions and implements, the equivalent of a stipulated cash loan. The amount of that loan would vary according to the acreage the individual settler decided to operate. He would undertake to repay the loan and to pay a stipulated price per acre for the land. He would, therefore, not encumber himself with more land than he could manage to handle, and the land speculator would be left out in the cold.

To be less practical and quite as much to the point may we remark, that if it were possible by spending \$1 an acre on land to make it worth \$100 an acre within any reasonable number of years, it would be a species of land speculation never before discovered in this country; that people must be found in large numbers to buy these developed lands at \$100 an acre—but who? that land costing anybody \$100 an acre must be miraculously operated and transportationized if it can be made to pay even its cost in one man's lifetime. May we also agree with Mr. Wade when he says:

The probabilities are that these well-meaning gentlemen, carried away by sentiment, inadequate information and the grandeur of a stupendous scheme, have not troubled to go into working details with practical men. Unless this is done, and ample capital be provided to carry out generously every essential, this or any other Utopian project is doomed to inevitable failure.