

Our Ottawa Letter

Farm Labor—To Build 300,000 Tons Shipping—Railway Nationalization.
(By The Guide's Special Correspondent)

Ottawa, Jan. 5.—The turn-over a new leaf spirit which marks the beginning of the New Year pervades the capital. Ministers are foregathering after the holidays with their minds set upon the problems of the day which confront them. As members of a Union government with an unmistakable mandate from the people they are deeply impressed with the necessity of action. They know that the expectations of the people are running high and that failure on the part of the new non-party administration to demonstrate its superiority over the party government it has succeeded, will be sharply criticized.

Sir Robert Borden, who has been enjoying a rest down in Virginia and missing the coldest spell of weather that has visited the capital this century, will be back on Wednesday, January 9. The western ministers will be here before then. The only absentees when the cabinet meets after the prime minister's return will be Sir Geo. Foster who is still suffering from the effects of an accident and Hon. C. J. Doherty, minister of justice, who is in California. Then will take place the first real get-together of the Union ministry and, quite naturally, the capital is wondering what the result will be. It is reasonable to assume that announcements as to policies calculated to increase production will not be long delayed as that is the most urgent matter awaiting government action. According to some newspaper predictions increased production and decreased consumption of food is to be one of the fundamental policies of the government. Conscription of labor is mentioned as a probable factor in the plan, the idea being that labor should be placed where it can do most good.

Without waiting for formal government action Hon. C. C. Ballantyne,

minister of marine and fisheries, has announced that the government proposes to embark upon a ship production program that should be of considerable assistance to the Allies. All the government shipyards will be utilized to their fullest extent in turning out vessels of from three to ten thousand tons. It is hoped when the plan is fully under way, to construct ships aggregating 300,000 tonnage every twelve months. In order to overcome the difficulty arising out of the scarcity of steel plates the government proposes to encourage the establishment of a number of rolling mills for the rolling of ship plates and shapes to provide the maximum requirements.

The agitation in favor of nationalization of the railways of the Dominion arising out of the railway board's judgment, authorizing an increase in freight and passenger rates is growing. There is an almost unanimous demand on the part of the press for government action. The western protests against the action of the board are to be heard here on Thursday next and the proceedings before the board will doubtless arouse a great deal of interest. The nationalization of the United States railways at this time adds fuel to the fire and has undoubtedly created a situation which will make it necessary for the government to take under review the whole railway situation of the Dominion.

Canada is to have another Patriotic Fund campaign this year. The Governor-General, as the head of the Dominion Patriotic Fund Association, has made an appeal to the people to be generous and during the months of February and March, local campaigns will be carried on in all the leading centres of population. The wish has been expressed in many quarters that the needs of the relatives of soldiers

should be met by taxation rather than by contributions from the public. This has been urged upon the floor of the house. The Duke of Devonshire in his appeal, however, states that the time has not yet arrived when the care of soldiers' dependents can be entirely assumed by the government. It is quite possible, however, that this will be the last appeal to the public and that at the approaching session, which will commence sometime in March steps will be taken to provide these funds by taxation.

Sir Thomas White in a message addressed by him to the Canadian people this week once more declares that every effort should be made to increase the production of foods and products essential to the activities of the war. "The responsibilities which we must continue to face during the remainder of the war, will be very great," he says, "but they can be met if the people of Canada will economize and save. Owing to international financial conditions our output of munitions, foodstuffs and other supplies upon the sale of which the prosperity of the country depends, can be bought by Great Britain only if Canada can find money for the purpose. The Victory Loan proceeds will keep us financed for this purpose for many months. In the meantime the people should be diligent in saving in order that the immense sums now being disbursed in Canada for our own military expenditure here and by the Imperial government in the purchase of our products, may be conserved as national working capital for future issues made for the same purpose. If the Canadian people will resolutely determine to cut down waste, eliminate luxuries and save their money, the nation will be abundantly able to finance the war, establish needed credits for the mother country and even buy back a large portion of Canadian issues which will mature abroad, and may have to be taken up from Canadian funds."

Trouble With Quebec

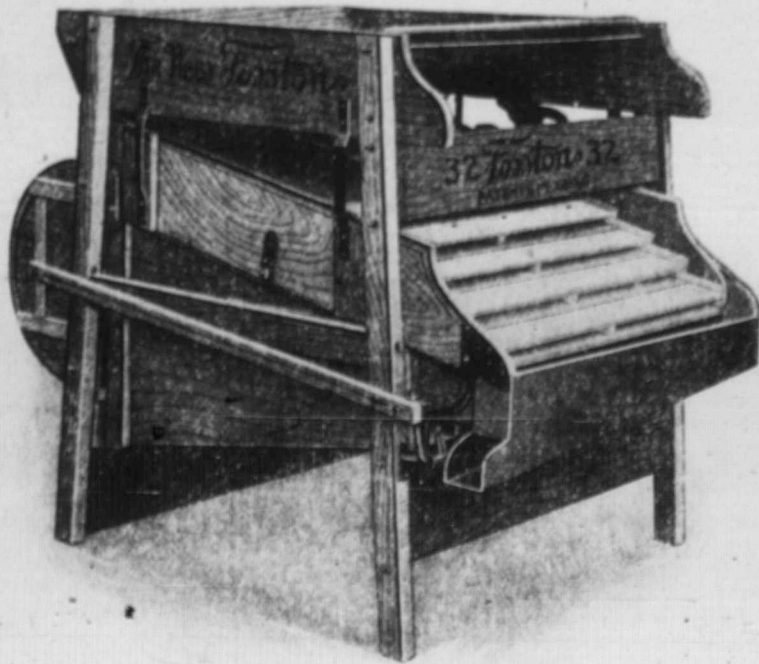
Trouble is brewing between the Dominion and Quebec governments because of the decision at Ottawa to prohibit the

issue of securities of provinces, municipalities and companies without the consent of the Dominion minister of finance. Sir Thomas White in replying to Sir Lomer Gouin, the prime minister of Quebec, who challenges the power of the Federal government to control the provinces in this matter says that before the order-in-council was passed the minister of justice gave a written opinion that it was within the express jurisdiction of the Dominion under the terms of the B. N. A. Act. He defends the action of the Federal government from the standpoint of war finance and national prosperity which is dependent largely at present upon the success of the Dominion financing. Sir Lomer who is quite warm under the collar over the matter in an order-in-council voicing the protest of Quebec which his government has passed declares "the new regulations to be beyond the power of the Federal government. The order-in-council concludes by declaring it to be the intention of the Quebec government "to consider these regulations as illegal, unconstitutional and in nowise binding upon this province."

Should the Quebec administration stick to its determination to fight the new regulations there will probably be a legal battle involving the question of provincial rights as they are affected by the War Measures Act. It is quite possible that if such a legal fight is started it will still be unsettled when peace is declared and the War Measures Act ceases to be operative. Such a fight would of course have a tendency to increase friction between Quebec and Ottawa, which has been somewhat accentuated by recent events.

Large masses of people in the consuming centers are being largely undernourished today due to the exorbitant cost of living, and these conditions, unless some remedy be found, are likely to repeat themselves in even more vicious form at this time next year. The speculator, legitimate or vicious, has taken a large part of the money now being paid by the consumer.

—Herbert Hoover.



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