

Our Ottawa Letter

Details of C.N.R. Guarantee Severely Criticized—Big Majority for Proposals on First Division

(By The Guide Special Correspondent)

Ottawa, May 22.—Three out of four days on which the house sat this week were taken up with the further consideration of the government's proposal to give a guarantee to Mackenzie and Mann to an amount of forty-five millions. Thursday being a parliamentary holiday the discussion did not proceed. The resolutions are now in committee where they are likely to remain for a few days. After that the bill must be introduced and put thru all its stages including committee again. There is no doubt that if the opposition were really determined to hold up the measure they could keep the discussion going for a long time; unless the closure were applied. At the moment of writing there is considerable mystery as to what the Liberals really propose to do, with the result that predictions as to the date of prorogation of the session vary from June 3 to June 15, and even later. If the date of the Ontario elections were announced for the end of June, as is expected, it would not be surprising if the opposition were to keep the house sitting until well into the month in order to keep in Ottawa the big group of Ontario Conservatives, who are anxious to take part in the provincial fight.

During the discussion tonight on Hon. C. J. Doherty's bill in regard to naturalization and which, in conjunction with a measure to be passed in the British house will bring about uniform naturalization within the empire, objection was taken by W. M. Martin, of Regina, to the provision that an immigrant must spend five years in Canada before he can take out naturalization papers, instead of three as at the present time. He also objected to the new provision that in order to become a citizen of Canada one must be able to speak either French or English. He said he knew many good citizens in the West who are not familiar with either language.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier remarked that the operation of the naturalization law would conflict with the Dominion Lands Act, which would have to be amended. E. M. Macdonald thought we should retain our own system of naturalization as well as this inter-imperial plan, which would leave newcomers the choice between purely Canadian or British naturalization. Mr. Doherty did not seem to think that this was desirable, but agreed that there would have to be some amendments to the Dominion Lands Act.

First Vote on C.N.R.

The first division on the C.N.R. resolution proposals came on Tuesday night when the House voted on the motion that consideration of the same should be taken up in committee. The vote stood 111 to 64, a government majority of 47 against the amendment of E. M. Macdonald, of Pictou, to give the government's proposal a six months' hoist, or, in other words, to kill the measure for this session. This is the biggest majority ever achieved by the Borden government. It was anticipated that there would be a number of desertions from both parties on the vote. It was known of course that R. B. Bennett, of Calgary, and W. F. Nickle, of Kingston, in order to be consistent with the speeches they had made, would vote for the amendment, and the expectation was that three or four of the western Liberals might deem it expedient to throw in their lot on this vote with the government. When the division was taken, however, it was found that Mr. Charlton, of Norfolk, Ontario, the only Liberal from that province who succeeded in taking a Conservative seat at the last general election, was the only bolter from the party ranks. Mr. Charlton, in a brief speech previous to the vote, referred in warm terms of praise to the services rendered the country by Mackenzie and Mann by the carrying out of their railway project and expressed the conviction that the guarantee would be a good thing for the Dominion and would place our credit abroad upon a very firm basis.

Several of the Western opposition members whose constituencies have felt the benefit of the development resulting from the enterprise of Mackenzie and Mann, justified their opposition in part

on the failure of the agreement to definitely provide that a portion of the money shall be spent on the construction of branch lines in the West, and partly on the claim that the agreement constitutes an invasion of provincial rights. The attitude of this group of members was summarized by Dr. Neely, of Humboldt, who closed the debate on Tuesday evening. He said, "I lay at the door of the government to assist, as they are convinced of the necessity for this aid. They have as they tell us information that leads them to believe that this amount of money is necessary to complete this system, but they have not given to this house full and complete information to enable it to unanimously pass a measure for the assistance of the railway. I lay it at the door of the government that having decided to give aid to the C.N.R. they have attached such conditions that I find it impossible to give my support to the resolutions that are before the house. I protest against this arrangement because it interferes with the rights of the western provinces. I protest against it, lastly, because I object to a partnership in which Canada must play the humiliating part of being at the back of the great undertaking which has already declared itself to be bankrupt and in which Canada has no control as to the policy of the company or the expenditure of the money which we are voting."

On Wednesday consideration of the resolutions was taken up in committee. Several hours were spent in discussing the first resolution which, in a general way, sets forth the desirability of the government guaranteeing the bonds of the C.N.R. to the extent of \$45,000,000. Altho the house sat until late in the evening this preliminary resolution was not disposed of. The day following being a holiday and the attendance during the remainder of the week promising to be light, it was agreed to adjourn the discussion until Tuesday next, other business being taken up in the meantime.

A feature of the discussion in committee was undoubtedly the argument put up by Hon. Dr. Pugsley, who made his first appearance in the house for several weeks. One of his chief contentions was that the government should have secured as security some of the assets of Mackenzie and Mann, apart from their C.N.R. enterprises, such for instance, as the model city back of the mountain at Montreal, out of which it is said Mackenzie and Mann and associates have made millions out of land speculation. Dr. Pugsley expressed his conviction that the \$100,000,000 of common stock is not worth more than five or ten million dollars at the present time and that it should be reduced to that amount. He declared that when the government instructed its auditors to look into the affairs of Mackenzie and Mann they had been told not to bother about the assets of these men outside of the C.N.R. enterprise. This assertion was denied by Premier Borden, who said that Dr. Pugsley had no warrant for making such an assertion.

A portion of the day was taken up with a long duel between Hon. W. F. White, Minister of Finance, and several of the opposition members, who had asserted that Mr. White misled the house last session when he stated that the government had received one-tenth of the common stock of the C.N.R. as security for the \$15,000,000 loan. E. M. Macdonald repeated the statement after Mr. White had denied it, and was almost invited outside to the corridors to settle the dispute. The incident was smoothed over later, on Hon. Geo. E. Foster causing the return of good nature by expressing the view that "They were both afraid." Mr. White, however, did admit that in one sense he was wrong in his statement to the house. He had said that the authorized capital stock of the C.N.R. was seventy instead of seventy-seven million, which made the amount of stock received one-eleventh instead of one-tenth. There had been no intention to deceive the house and he had acted in good faith thruout, he maintained.

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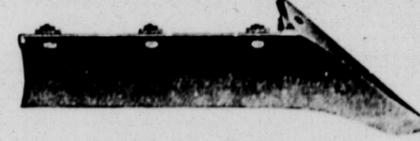
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