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ST. JOHN, N. B., FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1914.

THE N. T. R. CRIME.

The report of the commission of enquiry, appointed to probe the construction of the N. T. R. was produced in the House of Commons yesterday afternoon, and is published elsewhere in this issue. When the report was laid on the table there was no debate, but that will come in a few days. Then the public may expect to be let in on the details of one of the most disgraceful scandals that Canada has known for years.

While the report is very lengthy and the revelations it contains are confined chiefly to evidence that money was wasted through incompetence and graft, the charge is not aggressively brought out, on the contrary the document is much in the nature of a judicial finding, such as it is intended to be. There is, however, no necessity for color, as the bare details of the shameful business in themselves are sufficiently incriminating to cause the once great Liberal party to stand condemned and discredited before the country.

Judging from the report, the whole matter of the construction of the Transcontinental Railway was carried on in the most delightfully haphazard fashion. Until the appointment of Major Leonard, the commission in charge of this important work did not number among its members one man who had technical knowledge of railway construction or operation. This being the case, it is not difficult to see how they might easily fall prey to the spoliators and the grafters, even if their intentions were of the best, and it is not on record that they were in the least troubled by scruples of conscience.

It will be remembered that Hon. W. S. Fielding, when minister of finance in the Laurier administration estimated the cost of the Grand Trunk Pacific construction at \$61,415,000. This estimate was in reply to questions in the House of Commons. In spite of this the commission has found that without allowance for interest and other charges, the actual cost of the construction of the road was \$161,300,000. As the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Company will not take the road over or pay interest on the cost of construction until the year 1922, it can be estimated how much more expensive than the figures quoted the actual cost to the Canada will be. Allowing for the interest up to the year when the Grand Trunk Pacific will assume it, the cost to the country figures out, according to the report, at \$234,661,521. Either by this estimate or by the figures as compiled irrespective of interest, one is at once impressed with the idea that Hon. Mr. Fielding spoke without knowledge, or else he was most woefully misled by those who should have known. Coming to concrete examples of graft and take-off, the most glaring is that of the firm of M. P. & J. T. Davies, of Ottawa. This firm was awarded contracts on sections 15 and 17, North of Lake Nipigon, and under the terms of their contract, speed of construction was regarded as so important and necessary that the transcontinental commission, on which we have seen there were no experts, allowed very high prices for the work. As a means of earning the higher price the work was supposed to have been completed with all possible speed. When the contracts were awarded the sections on which the Davis firm was to work were inaccessible, except by the very expensive expedient of tote roads, but they neglected all provisions of their contract, entirely without penalty being exacted, and delayed the work until contracts on either side of their sections had progressed to a point which made it much easier and much cheaper for them to proceed. Even then they did nothing, as far as effective construction was concerned, and finally, after the disgrace of the affair had become flagrant they were induced to assign the contract to the firm of O'Brien, O'Gorman and McDougall, of Montreal. They, however, retained a ten per cent. take-off as the price of their assignment and thus, while the work was done by the Montreal concern, these enterprising Ottawa gentlemen, evidently with friends at court, reaped off \$740,000, and they did not "turn a spade" to earn it. There are other instances of a similar character, where the sum involved is but slightly smaller.

Then on the matter of classification, it is estimated that hundreds of thousands of dollars were taken from the public chest on this account. Much of this was in the Province of New Brunswick, between Edmundston and Moncton. Contractors were paid at "rock" prices for work that really entailed only the removal of earth. This could not have been done without the connivance of officials who thus violated their pledges of faithful service and robbed their country by the wholesale. Yet, during the entire time that this shameful crime was being perpetrated there is no evidence that

any member of the Laurier government, chosen representatives of the "Party of Purity" raised a voice in protest. The looting of the public chest was allowed to go on unmolested. As will be seen, the report deals in some detail, with the work on the Chipman grade and the Little Salmon River viaduct. In each case there was a criminal waste of money, but no prosecutions followed. Careful perusal of the really remarkable document laid before the House of Commons yesterday will show that the whole transaction was a most reprehensible one, that the Laurier government assumed a great responsibility, not only through the acceptance of plans that provided for a road much more expensive than the necessities of the case called for, but permitting their friends to benefit to a vast extent while the people of Canada could do nothing but pay the bills and look on. They are still paying them, and will continue to do so for many years to come. Long after the perpetrators of the National Transcontinental crime have passed to their reward Canada will have a legacy from them in the form of an enormous debt, incurred through incompetence, laxity or worse. Truly the Canadian people were wise when they decided to entrust the reins of government to an administration that above all its other qualities is simply and markedly honest.

TAX REFORM SYSTEMS

The reforms that are taking place in regard to taxation systems have been many and the end is not yet. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is one of the first two cities in the United States to cut the tax rate on buildings to a point radically lower than the tax on land.

The movement for this reform, says the Toronto World, was markedly stimulated by the report issued by the Board of Trade Department of the British government on the cost of living in the United States since it showed that workmen in Pittsburgh paid higher rents than in competing cities. These rents were higher by nineteen per cent. than in Philadelphia; by forty-seven per cent. over Cleveland; and by seventy-five per cent. over Baltimore. Further enquiry showed that Pittsburgh manufacturers were paying from sixty cents to \$1 per square foot per year for floor space, while space in competing interior Pennsylvania cities could be had for from twenty to thirty cents. These figures are given by Mr. Allen T. Burns, secretary of the Pittsburgh Civic Commission. Further in his economic survey of the city for 1912, Professor J. T. Holdsworth figured that the average value of land per acre in Pittsburgh was \$19,000, a trifle less than in New York, but higher than in any of the other ten largest cities of the United States.

These were the data which caused the Civic Commission, the Real Estate Dealers' Association and the Pittsburgh Board of Trade to join in a tax campaign, which, as they held, would secure three results: Better houses for working men at lower rents; relief of manufacturers and other enterprises from prohibitive prices for land needed for building and expansion; lower taxes as an inducement for developing the city and its industries. For a generation Pittsburgh had suffered from a tax system which put a premium on holding land for speculative purposes. The holdings of old estates were classed as agricultural land and paid only one-half the rate charged against office buildings and working men's homes. In 1911 the legislature wiped out the old inequalities and in 1913 it went further and gave the advantage to the man who improves his real estate. This latter act fixes the tax rate on all buildings at one-half the rate on land. The change will, however, be made gradually over a term of twelve years.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

Nova Scotia has spoken with no uncertain voice. The result in the by-election in Victoria County, yesterday, may well send a shiver down the political spine of Premier Murray and the whole federal organization in the sister province. It is said of certain tropical fruits that when they commence to rot the process of decay is first manifested by a small, unimportant spot on the skin, that it spreads and so rapidly that in a few hours the whole fruit is entirely given over to the process of disintegration.

Victoria is the spot on the political skin of Nova Scotia, but unlike the tropical fruit, its presence has been suspected for some time, and the result of yesterday serves only to confirm what has long been more than a suspicion, that the people of the sister province are but awaiting their opportunity to register their emphatic protest against the shameful crime being perpetrated against the Murray Government.

Diary of Events

HISTORIC DAYS IN CANADA

On this date in 1839, when the boundary dispute between New Brunswick and Maine was at a critical stage, Sir John Harvey, the Governor of the Province, issued a proclamation asserting British rights and demanding the withdrawal of Maine troops. He regarded the attempt of a force of 200 armed men from Maine to drive off persons cutting timber on the disputed territory as an invasion of Her Majesty's dominions. Two days before Rufus McIntyre, land agent for Maine, and two others sent to drive trespassers from the disputed forest land, were taken as prisoners by Frederickson, particularly released by order of the Governor, Governor Fairfield of Maine, replied to Sir John Harvey's proclamation by calling out 10,000 troops for active service. For days thereafter it seemed that the United States and Great Britain were to be plunged into a third war. Many American leaders, including the eloquent Daniel Webster, clamored for war. New Brunswick was equally aroused and regiments, artillery and volunteers flocked to the front, while Nova Scotia promised all her militia and \$500,000, and the Canada's offered substantial aid in money and men. President Van Buren was not of the same party, however, and he sent General Winfield Scott to confer with Sir John Harvey. A temporary peace was patched up, on the basis of a joint occupancy of the territory in dispute, and in 1842 the matter was settled by arbitration.

THE HUMAN PROCESSION

"FRIDAY, THE THIRTEENTH COMES THREE TIMES IN 1914"

This year will be three times as unlucky as last, if we are to accept the "Friday the thirteenth hoodoo" as a fact, for today is the first of three such combination dates in the 1914 calendar. Next January 13th, and in November, the thirteenth will fall on a Friday. In 1913 there was only one "Friday the thirteenth," in the month of June. Nothing particularly superstitious about that date, and an examination of many thirteenthths that fell on a Friday indicates that that "jinx" is even more innocuous than the other superstitions which people used to worry about, when there was no real trouble in sight. For actors, pugilists and baseball players, Friday, the thirteenth and other hoodooes and jinxes may still serve a useful purpose as alibis, and to secure publicity. The common or garden individual will be unable to get a single quail or a thrill out of the fact that today is Friday, the thirteenth. Even for the few who fear there is the consolation that a careful perusal of the advertisements in the papers of Friday, the thirteenth, may result in the discovery of many bargains in the stores on Saturday, the fourteenth.

"SLAUGHTER OF THE MACDONALDS"

The thirteenth of February is a day of tragic memories for the Macdonald clan, for it was on that date in 1892 that the terrible Glencoe massacre occurred. The Macdonalds were a Jacobite clan, the partisans of James II., and had not surrendered on the day set by King William. The story of the massacre reads like a contemporary dispatch from Mexico. Sir John Dalrymple, afterwards Earl of Stair, was a bitter enemy of the Macdonalds, and he obtained a royal decree "to extirpate that set of thieves," which the king is supposed to have signed without reading. The decree ordered that every man under seventy be slain, and the execution of the order was entrusted to a party of 120 soldiers of a Campbell regiment. Under the guise of friendship the soldiers were hospitably received by the Highlanders on February 13, 1892. At night the treacherous troops attacked their hosts, while the latter were asleep, and began a general massacre. Sixty men were slain, while the women and children and the very old men were turned out naked in a freezing night, and many of them perished.

FIRST THINGS

FIRST "FAST MAIL."

The first fast mail on a railway west of the Mississippi was run over the Hannibal and St. Joseph line, a northern Missouri railroad between Hannibal on the Mississippi and St. Joseph on the Missouri. This road was completed fifty-two years ago today, Feb. 13, 1892, and in the following April a test fast mail run was made. The mails were then carried overland from St. Joseph to Sacramento, and in order to get a government contract, it was necessary to establish a new record for speed. The locomotive was a crude affair, burning wood, the women were light, and the track was not ballasted. Add Clark was the engineer, and his instructions were to make a record that would stand for fifty years. Moreover, he came near doing it—in fact, he did it, so far as that particular railway is concerned. The distance from Hannibal to St. Joseph is 206 miles, and the fast mail covered the route in a few seconds over four hours, or at the rate of fifty miles an hour for the run. This included two stops for fuel, but these were brief, for small armies of men were waiting each with an armful of wood. Add Clark, the engineer, took his life in his hands in making this epochal run, and he deserves rank in history as a hero.

Try It

Mr. Bryan is being criticized because he charged \$300 for being the guest of honor at a Virginia gathering. People who have never been guests of honor don't realize how trying it is.

Oh! That's The Exception

"I tell you," the orator exclaimed—"and the experience of a lifetime confirms my statement—that if you want a thing well done you must do it yourself!"

"How about getting your hair cut?" asked his friend.

HIGH GRADE FURS.

High grade furs at special prices this week; real bargain values at H. Mont. Jones, 54 King street.

IN LIGHTER VEIN

AND HE DID



AND HE DID

Spot and Cash
 Being a trust sport won't help you as much as a savings-bank account.

Tantillizing

Debtor—I want to pay that little bill of yours.
 Creditor—Very well, sir.
 Debtor—But I can't.

No Time For That

"I've never heard him say an unkind word about anybody."
 "No, he's too busy talking about himself."

Discretion

Willis—Paw, what is discretion?
 Paw—Discretion means using the telephone to tell your wife that you won't be home until two in the morning, my son.

Cat

Cynthia—"How do you like my new hat?"
 Margie—"I think it is charming. I had one just like it last year."

Blaming Mother

"My mother made me what I am," said the political speaker as he proudly threw out his chest.
 "Well," said a small man at the rear of the hall, "she must have put in most of her time at other things."

JUST THE WEATHER WE NEEDED TO SELL Felt Shoes, Overshoes and Skating Boots

Our February Reduction Sale is Your Opportunity

Added to the splendid assortment of High-Grade Leather Footwear reduced, we offer you now Overshoes, Felt Shoes, Skating Boots and Warm Slippers at further reduced prices.

SALE GOODS CASH. NO APPROPRIATION. COME FOR BARGAINS.

Men's and Women's "McPherson Highgrading Hich," \$3.50
 Skating Boots \$2.75
 Boys' sizes \$2.35
 Men's Jersey Storm Front \$1.65
 Overshoes \$1.15
 50c. per pair off Ladies' and Children's Overshoes.
 Above Knee Length \$1.50 Jersey Leggings, all sizes, .. \$1.00
 All kinds of Gaiters and Leg-gings reduced.
 Men's, Women's and Children's Felt and Leather Sole Woolen Slippers, 30c., 45c., 55c., 65c.
 Ladies' "Cossey" Felt \$1.00 and \$1.25 Slippers 65c.

Come and ask for what you want, and save money on every purchase.

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