

THE TIMES
MEDICINE HAT. ALBERTA.
W. LACEY AMY, Editor and Proprietor.
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That Railway Policy

At last we know the railway policy of the Alberta Government. Many of us will disagree with the policy but there is a satisfaction in knowing definitely that the Alberta Government has decided to guarantee the bonds of any transcontinental railway to the extent of \$15,000 a mile.

There is no doubt that Premier Rutherford has gone into the matter and devised the plan that is most acceptable to himself and his cabinet. The outcome of the conference they have had on the subject is most pleasing as regards the limitation of the guarantee to transcontinental lines only. This will prevent any of the charter-mortgage and government favorites getting into the Provincial treasury. It also ensures the extension of branch lines as feeders to the main line.

But in the settlement of the guarantee per mile there appears to have been only the minds of business men and not of practical railway men. It is said, and with authority, that the cost of construction for prairie railways is only about \$12,000 per mile. Then why guarantee to a greater extent? There is little extra running stock needed, and what there is should not be charged up against a branch line as the stock is used and used on every section of the line. Five hundred miles of railway would require nothing like a million and a half of extra running stock.

As a matter of fact, it scarcely seems reasonable that the bonds of a company should be guaranteed to anything like the cost of construction. An arm or person could and would undertake expenditure to any extent on the chances of making a profit, if all the expenditure was guaranteed by responsible backers. It does not seem reasonable to suppose that the railways would demand this, but they knew when to hold out and it is possible that they were more clever men than the government representatives with whom they had to deal. Many will say this is not only probable but certain.

The lack of railway development in such a rapidly growing Province as Alberta would indicate that the railways were just holding back knowing that some such munificent offer would be forthcoming from a Government, which may be fairly honest as Governments go, but is assuredly not over-strong.

The guarantee of \$15,000 per mile to the railways is the same as saying to a businessman: "You start a certain industry here and we will put up all the money you need and \$5,000 more. You take all the profits, we take all the losses." Would any man delay in accepting such an offer did profit appear even remotely possible.

The Toronto Globe suggests that (1) the Province build the roads and run them as Ontario does; (2) that the Province build the roads and let all lines run over them; (3) call for tenders from the railways. The fatal objection to suggestion (1) is that Premier Rutherford is not in the same class as regards ability and independence with Premier Whitney, as almost everyone will admit. And it is Whitney's firm stand that has made the Transcontinental Railway pay its way. And it has only paid its way.

Suggestions (2) and (3) are worthy of consideration, except that

in calling for tenders, there is not much doubt that the railways would put their heads together and do as well as they are doing now. But certainly the present policy is going to prove a poor thing for the province, and a gold mine for the railways. There are a comparative few who believe wholly in the agreement with the Grand Trunk Pacific. And yet the Alberta Government goes further. It builds all the railways, allows \$8,000 a mile more, and stands to make nothing directly and to lose all that is to be lost.

That Reduction

Albertans will be delighted to know that, probably owing to the newspaper campaign, Premier Rutherford has decided to reduce the prices on telephones in Alberta.

From the big space given the decision in the papers one would be led to conclude that the reduction would be tremendous, that, after a most exhaustive enquiry the users of telephones would now get the phones for about half the old rate. But after all the bubbles are blown off and the real liquid is arrived at, the bottom of the glass is not far off. To Medicine Hat all the reduction means is two dollars a year on business phones and nothing on residence phones. In dollars and cents this means that the Government has reduced the total tariff in this city only about \$250. To offset this there is \$30 a year more paid by the newspaper offices and six phones that were allowed the city by the Bell Company have been cut off.

Which means that with all the noise about reduced rates Medicine Hat has had practically no reduction whatever. Someone interested in the Government has caused the story to be spread through all the big dailies that the reduction will equal twenty-five per cent. This story is wild. In Medicine Hat, the reduction in dollars and cents is only forty dollars this year from a total revenue of about seventy-five hundred, or the paltry amount of almost ONE HALF OF ONE PER CENT. There scarcely seems reason for big head lines or humble thankfulness. Where does the remainder of the profit of the Bell Telephone Co. go?

EDITORIAL NOTES

At last the Railway Commission has shown the express companies that the people are not in existence purely for their benefit. Almost two years ago The Times gave instances of the exorbitant rates charged. Shortly afterwards it was announced that an investigation would take place under the Railway Commission. Nothing further was done until the first of 1909 and the Chairman of the Commission was so disgusted with the high tariff that he ordered a reversion to the old rates existing before Jan. 1, 1909. But this helps little, except that Judge Mabey promised that the whole express matter would be gone into. When a wholesale house can express as much for 25 cents, as the private individual can send for 75 cents, there is room for a big reduction some place. When a box a foot square that costs in the first place only four dollars, costs \$2.75 to bring from Winnipeg, there is an

exorbitant profit somewhere—and it is not at the receiver's end. The age of investigation has been a fortunate one for the United States; it will be a good thing for Canada when express companies are forced to cease bleeding the people.

It is amusing enough that Medicine Hat physicians and dentists, should consider it infra dig. to insert a card in the local papers when the same professions run cards in almost every other town in Canada. But the laugh is louder at the expense of our dignified professional men, when a Lethbridge doctor finds it wise to advertise in Medicine Hat, as will be found among the professional cards of this week's Times. And it is not that our medical profession takes any higher stand than the doctors of Lethbridge or any other town where doctors are willing to show that their sole business is not taking in the coin without attendant expenses.

In Calgary, Edmonton and other places the coal dealers boosted the price of coal when the cold weather came. In a case of this kind the proper treatment would be for the city authorities to establish municipal coal yards. Such dealers should be shown no mercy.

Medicine Hat may have suffered a little on account of the size of her as mains and insufficiency of wells. But this can be easily remedied, and serves as a profitable lesson. But thank goodness, in the words of a fairly well-known character, "We are not as other men are." Calgary, Macleod and several other western places are running short of coal. That is a calamity that may happen every year to coal-using towns.

Lethbridge Herald-Edmonton has a power scheme for the future. The source is at Grand Rapids on the Athabasca, 170 miles north-west of Edmonton. Lethbridge is better favored than that. Some day the water power going to waste in the city will be used to generate electrical energy for this city. But Medicine Hat is still better favored. She has power in USE EVERY DAY that is unlimited.

Again the Postmaster General hands down a statement showing net surplus of over a million dollars. And still scores of postoffices are kept down to one mail a week in order to build up this surplus. With in twenty miles of Medicine Hat there are half a dozen or more postoffices with a large mailing list, that are considered by the government worth only one mail a week. If a letter arrives in Medicine Hat on Saturday afternoon it is the next Saturday before it reaches the man to whom it is directed—simply because the government considers surplus before service. There is scarcely a newspaper in the country Liberal or Conservative, which has not condemned the postal service in this respect. But Lethbridge is too small a man to stand suggestion.

The Times must compliment The Lethbridge Herald on its fair reports of the gas situation in Medicine Hat.

Roosevelt, the "big stick" manipulator, is excelling himself with the cudgel of fate. Anybody and everybody is being hammered, so that the President can step out of office without being charged with partiality. Unfortunately, he is losing dignity by his personal attacks.

There was not much doubt as to whether the people wanted the Alberta Clay Products Company or not. There has never been such an overwhelming expression of opinion. The meeting addressed by Mr. Newall was well handled and the new agreement pleased the ratepayers who were there. The rumors that had been going around the streets were entirely unfounded.

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REDUCTION IN TELEPHONE RATES

Edmonton, Jan. 14.—At a meeting called by Hon. W. H. Cushing at the board of trade banquet in Calgary last week, the Alberta government now announces a reduction in the telephone rates.

There is a general readjustment and rearrangement in telephone rates and tolls.

In reply to an inquiry by an Alton representative today Mr. Cushing made the following statement:

"There is little to say about the matter. Four the past four months we have been considering the question of readjustment, and I have gone carefully into the details. The readjustment will mean a reduction in rates, on toll lines and exchanges formerly operated by the Bell Telephone Co. with the exception of exchanges with over 1,000 subscribers where the same rate will be maintained on business telephones. But there will be a reduction in all the exchanges upon telephones in private residences.

The government has no further statement to make just at this time. It is understood that the reduction in the price of telephone service between Calgary and Edmonton will be 15 cents, which means 12 1/2 per cent. A full statement will be made in a few days.

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MEDICINE HAT LODGE, No. 3, I. O. O. F.

Meets every Thursday evening in Cochrane's Hall at 8 o'clock.

Visiting brethren cordially welcomed.

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