

Our Ottawa Letter

Borden on Referendum—Laurier's trip—C.N.R. now Government Owned.

(By The Guide's Special Correspondent)

Ottawa, December 14.—On the whole the week preceding the election has been an uneventful one at the capital. There will be more doings of importance before the next few days go around. The only event of importance has been the final speech of the election campaign by Sir Robert Borden who closed the fight of the Unionist forces at a well attended meeting in the Russell theatre last night. As on the occasion when Sir Wilfrid Laurier spoke in the same place the attendance was limited only by the capacity of the building. The prime minister reviewed the whole argument on behalf of the Unionists at considerable length and incidentally made the statement that it would not be possible for Parliament to convene before the middle of March. He said that the election writs are not returnable until February 27 and a fortnight would have to elapse subsequently before it would be advisable to have the house sit.

"As long as I am Prime Minister of Canada," said Sir Robert, "there will be no referendum. You cannot fight this war with referendums; you cannot fight the war with eloquent platitudes. If we have a referendum to determine whether or not we shall do our duty to the men in the trenches, why should they not have a referendum to determine whether or not they shall do their duty to us? Those duties are correlative. The Russians held a referendum when the Germans were coming over the top. Some of them were bayoneted and some were taken prisoner. That gives you an example of the advantages and the disadvantages of a referendum."

The province of Nova Scotia is to have temporary relief from the application of the Military Service Act because of the great Halifax disaster which has pretty generally upset things in the province down by the sea. Definite announcement to that effect was made today by Sir Robert Borden. The city of Halifax is also to be spared the distress which would arise out of the holding of an election at such a time. Action was taken today under the provisions of the War Measures Act deferring the voting in the Nova Scotian capital until January 28, the same date on which it will take place in the Yukon. The nominations will stand, however. An effort was made to arrange a saw-off, it being proposed that one candidate on each side should drop out, giving the other two acclamations. Nothing came of it, however, and, as conditions in the city are such as to make it impossible for the vote to be taken, the election was deferred.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier's dash through the west aroused a great deal of interest in the east. It was not thought that he would proceed further west than Winnipeg and his last week of strenuous campaigning was watched with interest. Liberals naturally claimed that Sir Wilfrid must have heard encouraging news on arrival in Winnipeg or he would not have braved the rigors of the western winter. They are asserting that this somewhat spectacular performance on the part of a man of Sir Wilfrid's age is at the present time having a beneficial effect on the opposition campaign in eastern Canada, entirely apart from what its effect may be in the west. Should Liberal wins in Ontario run up past the twenty mark Sir Wilfrid's followers, judging from their talk, will be disposed to credit it to his last week of campaigning.

Sir Thomas White, minister of finance, this week issued reply to statements made by Mr. Hartley Dewart and other opposition speakers in regard to recent payments of large amounts of money made necessary by the acquisition by the government of the common stock of the C.N.R. Sir Thomas warmly denied that the payments which have been made were not authorized. One statement was that an order had been passed paying six million dollars to Mackenzie and Mann on account of the British Columbia C.N.R. line. Sir Thomas declared this to be a fabrication. The second charge was that in the absence of the Governor-General, and without parliamentary warrant, large sums had been paid to Mackenzie and Mann through the Bank of Commerce. According to the minister of finance the facts are that Mackenzie and Mann have now transferred their stock to the gov-

ernment under the provisions of the legislation of last session and the people of Canada now own the C.N.R. Certain interest payments and obligations recently became due and under the legislation passed last session the government assumes the lawful debts of the C.N.R. Any payments made are for the public-owned road and the benefits go to the Canadian people, who could not afford to allow interest payments to be defaulted. The legislation under which action has been taken provides that: "subsequent to the transfer of the stock of the C.N.R. held by Mackenzie and Mann personally the governor-in-council may assist the Canadian Northern Railway Company, or any company included in the Canadian Northern system, in paying or settling any indebtedness of such company or postponing the payment thereof on such terms as may be agreed upon and for such purposes may take advances out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund: Provided, however, that until authorized by parliament the total of such advances shall not exceed the sum of twenty-five million dollars."

The minister stated further: "The C.N.R. stock has been transferred as pro-

vided under the act to the government. Mackenzie and Mann have no interest whatsoever in the road, and any payments have been on behalf of a public-owned line." The payments so far made total approximately fourteen million dollars.

THE HALIFAX DISASTER

Latest estimates of the number of killed in the Halifax disaster show a considerable decrease below the first estimate. It is stated that the death roll will be around 1,300. This includes the number dead and missing. A large number have been buried without identification. It will be, of course, impossible to arrive at definite figures of the total loss of life. One of the distressing features of the disaster is that there will be from 300 to 500 people totally or partially blind and two hundred made orphans. The missing list, very formidable in the days immediately succeeding the disaster, is being steadily reduced as refugees who left the city returned. Of the property damage, it is reported that five hundred houses have been totally destroyed and five hundred rendered uninhabitable while one thousand can be patched up.

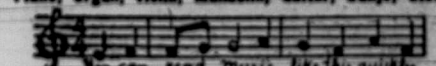
FORMER PREMIER DEAD

Sir Mackenzie Bowell died on December 10, following a week's illness at

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Belville, Ont. Sir Mackenzie was born in Sheffield, England in 1823 and came to Canada with his parents in 1833. In 1834 he entered the office of the Belville Intelligencer as a "printer's devil," from which he climbed to the editorship and proprietorship of the paper which he held ever since. He was thus a Nestor of Canadian journalists. He entered the House of Commons in 1866 and 26 years later was appointed to the senate where he was the leader of the Conservative forces until 1906. He was minister of customs in the MacDonald cabinet of 1878 and afterwards held several cabinet positions. In 1894 he succeeded Sir John Thompson as premier. Having trouble with his cabinet which he designated as a "nest of traitors" he was succeeded by Sir Charles Tupper, who was shortly afterwards defeated at the polls by the Laurier forces in 1896.

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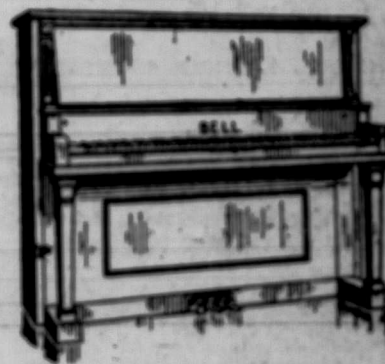
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