

From Western Fields

MANITOBA GUARANTEE OF C. N. R. BONDS.

An Eastern Banker on Western Outlook—Important Taxation Decision—British Columbia's Timber Policy—Compensation Act thrown Out—Insurance News.

The Manitoba Government's measure to guarantee three million dollars of C. N. R. bonds for terminals has not failed to evoke considerable discussion. The bill also guarantees the bonds for extensions, running from ten to thirteen thousand dollars per mile. The Government had previously issued a guarantee of a million dollars for terminals, but this is being consolidated in the new vote.

With regard to the terminal bonds the Premier stated that the Dominion Government had contracted to pay 2 per cent. per annum on \$2,625,000 of the cost of the terminals and that the G. T. P. had contracted to pay 2½ per cent. per annum on the approximate total cost of the terminals. Those interest items amounted exactly to the amount of the Provincial Government's guarantee, which at 4 per cent. on the \$3,000,000 was \$120,000. Therefore, unless the Dominion Government and the G. T. P. defaulted, the province would never be called upon to pay the interest guarantee under the bill. On top of that were the buildings which were a first mortgage in favour of the province.

Demand for Western Municipal Bonds.

Of the four million dollars or so of municipal bonds issued in Canada during February, nearly two and one-half millions were by the four Western provinces—Alberta leading with over \$1,500,000. Good prices were obtained in almost all cases during the month.

The latest eastern banker to give his views as to the immediate prospects of the West is Mr. Alex. Laird, general manager of the Canadian Bank of Commerce. Interviewed the other day in Vancouver, Mr. Laird said:

"It is a fortunate circumstance that the return of prosperity is taking place progressively, but slowly. It means continued development on a solid foundation. I feel confident conditions are shaping to give the Dominion better times than ever before experienced and without the dangers of any boom features. Surveying the country as a whole my firm conviction is that everything points that way. The immediate outlook is bright.

The Supreme Court of Alberta has decided that the province had the right to tax the land of the Calgary & Edmonton Land Company for local improvement, and school purposes. These taxes will include arrears running as far back as 1903 in some cases. An early Edmonton despatch stated that the action in question was against the C. P. R.; that company, on the contrary, is expressly exempted from taxation, until lands are either sold or occupied, for twenty years after the issue of a crown patent.

Growing Activity in Pacific Shipping.

Western ports are more and more attracting ocean transportation interests. The latest announcement is that another steamship line between North Pacific coast ports and Nicaragua is to be established. The organizers of the new line are

said to be mostly New York men, who have obtained valuable concessions from the Government of Nicaragua. For the time being it is proposed to operate between San Francisco and Corinto, although Puget Sound and British Columbia ports may later be brought within the scope of the line.

Word comes that the Union Steamship Company has decided to build another liner, to cost about two million dollars, for the Canadian-Australian line. The new steamer will be built at the Stephen's yard at Linthouse on the Clyde, where the Makura was built. The company is asking for a larger subsidy for the service, offering to put two more steamers like the Makura in service if \$100,000 extra yearly is given for three years. The present subsidy is \$325,000, contributed to by Canada, Australia and Fiji, Canada paying the greatest proportion.

Premier McBride has announced to the British Columbia Legislature the policy of the Government with regard to the tenure of timber leases. He stated that the Government has decided that it is advisable to make the tenure of these lots perpetual, but that the matter will be held over until next session. The terms and conditions attaching to the matter will be left in large measure to the decision of the Provincial Forestry Commission.

A Meteoric Assessment Association.

After a three years' career, not over-bright, the Canadian Masons Mutual Life Association has gone out of business, the lapses having been exceedingly heavy during hard times.

The final meeting held in Winnipeg the other day was exciting. It resulted in the books being closed and the entire business being transferred by vote, under protest, to the Western Masons. The Great West Life made an offer on a favourable basis, but not of a character which appealed to the majority.

When the books were closed this week it was found that membership had dwindled to 950 and the lapses exceeded 400. The association was solvent, having something in excess of \$3,500, but the directors thought the dwindling membership called for a change. All claims have been paid.

The Workmen's Compensation Act after much argument and counter-argument, has been finally thrown out by the Law Amendments Committee of the Manitoba Legislature. Premier Roblin has promised, though, that a commission will be appointed to investigate the whole problem.

A Projected Fire Mutual.

The Retail Merchants' Association, with a membership of 1,800 through Western Canada, is applying to the Manitoba Legislature for the incorporation of a mutual fire insurance company with an authorized capital of a million dollars, \$250,000 of which is to be subscribed and ten per cent. paid up before beginning business.

The proposal to require a \$30,000 deposit at Victoria from fire companies without a Dominion charter indicates a growing realization in the West of the necessity of guarding against any repetition of the Globe Insurance Company fiasco.

Coal oil and matches formed the subject matter of a recent printed homily from the Manitoba Fire Commissioner, Mr. A. Lindback. The phosphorus match he accuses of having caused \$100,000 of fire losses in Manitoba during 1908.