

The Grain Growers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, June 27, 1917

FIFTY YEARS OF NATIONHOOD

On the first day of July Canada will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of confederation. Had the stern business of war not been engrossing our attention, the occasion would have been made one of great national rejoicing, participated in by other parts of the Empire, and to some extent by the neighboring republic. But Canada is too busy in the work of preserving the forms of democracy to devote much energy to celebrating democratic triumphs of the past. There are some phases of confederation, however, which it will be well to think over. When confederation was accomplished in 1867, only four provinces, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were involved. Manitoba came in in 1870. The following year British Columbia cast in her lot with the confederated provinces, followed by Prince Edward Island two years later. Alberta and Saskatchewan were elevated to the status of provinces in 1905. The Canada of today is vastly different from the Canada of confederation and it may be that the future will see still greater changes. A movement is coming to the front in the maritime provinces in favor of the legislative union of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Last week a resolution to that effect was carried through the New Brunswick legislature unanimously. The object of such a union would be to strengthen the position in confederation of the provinces down by the sea. Newfoundland, the oldest British colony has so far resisted all inducements to enter the union, but there is a strong and growing sentiment in favor of such a move. The great resources of the Yukon and the Mackenzie basin may yet necessitate the formation of another province in the north. National development within the next fifty years may do as much to change the map of Canada as the development since confederation has changed it. Canada is a nation of boundless resources. The capacity of its people for developing those resources is unquestioned. They are more awake than ever before to the necessity and means of developing those resources for the national well being. To such people with such a country the future holds much encouragement.

THE CONSCRIPTION QUESTION

Canada entered the war of her own free will and accord as an ally of Great Britain and the other enemies of Germany. The crisis which now faces the Allies is as much a Canadian crisis as it is British, French or Russian. In the face of this crisis, which is national and vitally affects every citizen of our country, the government is fully justified in demanding that all the resources of our nation, the men, the money, the food, and everything else be utilized in the prosecution of the war. In such a crisis, the conscription of money and the conscription of wealth in all forms is not out of harmony with the true principles of democracy. It is the same principle that has been adopted in Great Britain, in New Zealand and the United States, three democratic countries. But it should not be overlooked that in all these three countries mentioned, the governments conscripted the wealth of the country, either before or at the same time that they conscripted the man power. In England the taxation is enormous. No one is exempt. The wealthy are being compelled to pour out their wealth for the nation's defence. The same is true in New Zealand, and the taxation proposals before the American Congress will make it true in that country also. If men were the only requirement in the prosecution of the war, there would be some justification in con-

scripting men alone, but the men to fight are of no use unless they are provided with munitions and food which can only be supplied by the payment of money. Money, therefore, is just as essential as men and this has been recognized by all the other English speaking countries. Great Britain is paying a larger portion of the war expense as she goes than any other nation now in the war and the United States proposes to pay half the expense as the war progresses. In Canada, we are paying about ten per cent. of the cost and loading up the rest of the debt for the future, while millionaires are blossoming like mushrooms all over our land, fattening on the war.

It would have been easily possible to secure 500,000 soldiers in Canada by voluntary enlistment if our government had exercised even decent judgment. But conditions in Winnipeg, with the patronage and the scandals, have been such as to discourage voluntary enlistment. And it is reported that conditions in other centres are fully as bad or even worse. Even yet under proper conditions voluntary enlistment would produce a large number of recruits.

Many of those who are demanding conscription of men, including a number of the cabinet ministers at Ottawa and private members of the House, are millionaires. They will do no fighting and many of them have increased their wealth very considerably since the war began. These men should be forced to pay and pay handsomely towards the cost of the war. It would be impossible to compel them to make any sacrifice that would be at all equal to the sacrifice of men who are going to the front.

In the fight over the conscription bill at Ottawa at present, neither party officially proposes anything approaching the conscription of wealth. They are debating the conscription of man power. It is impossible to understand how our representatives in the House of Commons can be so long silent on the wealth question. All around them they see men who possess their millions and live in luxury. These representatives all declare that our war is a war for democracy. If democracy means anything, it means equality of opportunity. There is no equality in demanding that young men give up their lives for the defence of the nation while the older men who cannot fight are allowed to plunder their country in its hour of agony.

THE PROPOSED FREIGHT INCREASES

The Railway Commission has concluded its Western hearings on the proposed fifteen per cent. general increase in freight rates asked by the Canadian Pacific, Canadian Northern and Grand Trunk Pacific railways. This is one of the most impudent requests ever made by these roads, and one which it is not improbable may lead the two latter at least into a position they have been trying to avoid, i.e., nationalization. Enormous increases of maintenance charges, i.e., for labor, coal, rails, engines, cars, smaller fixtures, and nearly everything necessary to the running of a railway is advanced as the chief cause for this request. Such increased costs the last two mentioned railways assert have made it absolutely imperative they have assistance or they cannot continue their service as at present. Each wants between five and six million dollars to cover estimated increases for 1918, if prices remain as they are now. Neither will give any assurance of more efficient service, or that it will not require more money from the government. Indeed the C.N.R. officials are now preparing to make a further request for government grants of amounts known only to themselves.

But the C.P.R. is in a different position. This road that so many Canadians point to with pride as the greatest and richest and most efficiently managed system in the world, with net earnings last year of nearly fifty million dollars, which enabled it to pay its annual dividend of ten per cent., and put about twenty millions in reserve, asks in the midst of the greatest crisis this country ever faced, and when its own net operating revenues are higher than ever before, that the people of Canada be forced to contribute another twenty millions to its treasury. For that is about what the fifteen per cent. increase would mean to the C.P.R. The proposal is unworthy and unpatriotic in the highest degree, and a road making such a request at this time does not deserve to bear the name "Canadian."

A fifteen per cent. increase in rates now would fall unusually heavy on all Westerners, because they have the long freight haul to pay. The added cost of farm implements and supplies coming West, and of grain and livestock going East, must seriously curtail production at a time when certainly not handicaps but inducements should be held out for the maximum production. The manufacturer, wholesaler, retailer, or implement dealer might object as good business men to these increases, but the ultimate cost must pass on to the consumer. As a matter of fact the Canadian Manufacturers' Association has not objected to these increases, because they can pass them along, and also because their increased charges are largely responsible for the extra costs to and the demands from the railways. The C.P.R. has not one vestige of excuse for asking an increase.

The C.N.R. and G.T.P. are earning more today than ever before. Especially is this true of the former in the West, where its lines are paying well. Both could now pay their way, were it not for the senseless duplication and ruinous extra costs undertaken to satisfy pride and ambition. The country cannot afford to tax itself some thirty million dollars to give the C.N.R. and G.T.P. ten million dollars between them. If these roads must have more help, they should be forced to come to the government direct, and all that help should be given at one time. They are afraid to do this because the majority report of the government Royal Commission recommended they be taken over along with all other Canadian roads except the C.P.R., and put under one holding company free from political influence. If the Railway Commission refuses their freight increase request, they will be forced into this position and either complete nationalization of all railways should result or the report of the Royal Commission be adopted. They must go to the government in any case for money, and the government should take action to close out this chapter in Canadian railroad life by complete nationalization of railroads, or at least by going as far as recommended by the Royal Commission.

MORE FARMER CANDIDATES

The nomination of J. S. Wood, vice-president of the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association for the federal constituency of Portage la Prairie brings into the field the third farmer candidates, standing on the Farmers' National Political Platform. This platform was approved by the Canadian Council of Agriculture, and endorsed by the three great provincial farmers' organizations, and is steadily growing in favor throughout the West. It is in keeping with the new spirit of the times. The West is sick and tired of the petty party game that is played at Ottawa. The Western spirit demands progress, and progress in the direction of democracy. We