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Aiding Public Roads.

As will be seen by reference to the report of proceedings in the Federal Parliament, published in this issue, the Government of Canada has inaugurated its policy of assisting the Provinces in the matter of improved highways. No one can doubt that the assistance to be thus granted to the Provincial Governments for highway improvements, will be of the greatest benefit, and will add considerably to the mileage of really good roads throughout the Dominion. The Federal Government has not yet decided as to the extent or character of the aid to be given the Provincial Governments for improvement of the highways. There is a movement on foot at the present time to secure the construction of a highway extending from ocean to ocean. The idea is a magnificent one, but like all other ideas of such a sweeping character will probably have to wait for a long period before it becomes a practical issue, as a considerable portion of such a road would be through an uninhabited country. Of course in constructing highways in the different Provinces this great project might be kept in mind, and the roads built to give the best accommodation to the people could afterwards be linked together and eventually form an ocean-to-ocean highway.

The implementing by the Government of the pre-election promise of Mr. Borden in this matter, at the earliest possible moment, is a fair sample of the honest and straightforward methods followed by his Government in carrying out the public trust reposed in them by the people. When Mr. Borden announced that he would favor granting Federal aid to the Provincial Governments for the improving of the highways throughout the country, he took a step in advance of any previous political leader. Before the days of railroads the highways afforded the principal means of communication between different sections of the country. Canada is probably the best watered country in the world, and the early settlers found the rivers and streams the best and quickest means of communication before the construction of highways, but they were closed in the winter season. Three quarters of a century ago the construction of railroads was commenced throughout the country, and to a certain extent the highways were neglected, because of the large demand made upon the treasury for assistance in railroad building. The extent to which Canada has aided in railroad construction has been very great. Not only was the Intercolonial built entirely with public funds but almost every other railroad constructed in this country has received substantial assistance, not only from the Dominion treasury, but from the Provinces, and in some instances from the Municipalities as well. Just now the country is considerably worried over the excessive cost of the National Transcontinental from Winnipeg to Moncton, which is asserted to be the most expensively constructed railway in the world. How much of the expenditure has actually gone into the railway, compared with the distribution of graft, which has

been so plentiful during its construction under Liberal rule, is not now and probably never will be known. The Borden Government is a Government of performance; the Laurier Government was a Government of promises.

In Canada West.

During the discussion on the Grain Bill, recently passed in the Federal Parliament, a great amount of information relative to the disadvantages sometimes suffered by the grain growers in the west was unfolded. Hon. George E. Foster, Minister of Trade and Commerce, among other things gave this graphic picture of the inconvenience and loss to which one man was subjected:

"My heart is no more soft than the hearts of other members around this table, but I have letters in my office which would almost make a man's heart bleed. I have one letter in my office of a man living out some 18 miles from his station, a newcomer who was in debt for everything that he had been using, and his implements as well, who had got his grain at last harvested and threshed out lately, but who had no order in for a car that could possibly get to him for months may be in the state of shortage and congestion there. Teaming in with his two teams a portion of his grain, what did he find? He had no cars. The car track buyer was there, but there was no car that the track buyer had into which he could put this man's grain if he had bought it. The man on the street was there, or thereabouts, but the man on the street could not buy his grain. He had no place to put it if he bought it; the elevator was chock full and had not been emptied for a long time. That man tried in vain to sell his grain or to store it, but there was no storing place for it. He took his grain back to his own farm again and kept it there. Others piled their grain out behind somebody's shed and covered it over, may be with some straw; they cannot sell it."

In consequence of late harvest and bad weather, the past season has been particularly trying to many of the agriculturists of the western country. The grain is on the hands of the raisers in large quantities, and, as the St. John Standard says, "they cannot sell it. They cannot store it. They have no barns even on their homesteads in which to put it. The grain must be piled up to rot. Why is the settler in this condition may reasonably be asked. Take the case of the man Mr. Foster quotes—a case typical of thousands of settlers in the West. The country has been pictured to him as a bonanza. He had only to secure his homestead, procure farming implements on credit, sow the seed and reap the golden harvest. There is not one Western settler in a thousand who provides for the rainy day which comes when the season is late and untoward events happen. He does not know such a day will dawn. He is never told. Countless homesteaders exist where a barn to store the grain has never been thought of. Year in and year out Nature is expected to assert herself, and the crash comes. That is what has happened in the West this year.

"To place the blame on the transportation companies will not solve the problem, neither would it be just. Today there is but one line, the Canadian Pacific Railway, running East from Port Arthur to Winnipeg. The Canadian Northern is not yet completed, and the National Transcontinental after eight years of bungling administration ends in the air. If there were ten lines from

the wheat fields to Fort William in winter, and only one line coming East, as there is today, the carrying capacity of that one road. The elevators are full. That, in brief, is the transportation situation in the West today. The hopper is too big for the spout, and the inexperienced grain grower, who was not prepared for this contingency of a late season, bears the brunt.

"A powerful lesson both for Western Canada and the Maritime Provinces may be had from these unfortunate and unforeseen conditions. The Grain Commission will do much to ameliorate the congestion in the Prairie Provinces. It will secure a more equitable distribution of cars and keep a stricter supervision over transportation facilities, but it will not teach the Western settler, green and fresh from the Old Country, what he needs to know—that the rainy day comes even to the wheat grower, and that provision must be made. This is not one of the Grain Commission's duties. The obligation rests with the Governments of the Western Provinces. In their own interest, and to prevent the West from earning a reputation it does not deserve, they should include in future in their advertising and immigration campaigns a true statement of the facts."

The leading flour trade representatives of the port of New York, have filed a protest with the New York Produce Exchange against Canada establishing preferential trade relations with the British West Indies. The principal flour exporters to the West Indies put forward the allegation that such a preference would be in the nature of a discrimination, and they demanded the passage of retaliatory tariff legislation in case Canada should extend the preference to the British West Indies. This is a resurrection of Kaiser William's contention seven or eight years ago, when the German government endeavored to demonstrate that there is no such thing as a British Empire, and that any preferential legislation on the part of Canada toward any other part of the Empire is in the nature of a discrimination in favor of a foreign country. Germany undertook to retaliate, with the result that Hon. Mr. Fielding immediately clapped on the famous surtax, an action for which the minister's name will always be favorably remembered. At that time the relative balance of trade between Canada and Germany was much the same as it is today between Canada and the United States. That is, Germany had far more to lose than Canada, and she lost it. The result was, in the first place, that Canada demonstrated that the British Empire is an empire in exactly the same sense, commercially and otherwise, as the German Empire. And that whatever we may do within this Empire, fiscally or otherwise, is none of Germany's business, nor is it the business of the United States flour exporters.—Ottawa Citizen.

An agreement satisfactory both to Canada and the United States in regard to the future regulations of the fisheries is understood to have been arrived at, as the result of the recent conference at Washington. Hon. J. D. Hazen, Minister of Marine and Fisheries, who with E. L. Newcombe, Deputy Minister of Justice and Sir Joseph Pope, Deputy Minister of External Affairs, represented the Dominion government at the conference returned to Ottawa Friday. Mr. Hazen when interviewed, said a satisfactory conference had been held in

Washington with the State Department, but he was not in a position at present to make any statement. It is understood that no public announcement as to the terms of the agreement will be made until the government of Newfoundland has been informed as to the outcome of the negotiations.

Federal Parliament.

(Condensed from St. John Standard's Report.)

Ottawa, Feb. 22—The day has been spent on the tariff commission the Liberals keeping up a steady fire of objections. They managed their business with acrimony rather than acuteness however, and had the charge of seeing a first class issue picked up under their noses, by their opponents.

It would have been good business surely, to make play with the question of capitalization and watered stock, but they left it alone until the Conservatives raised it and the government put in an unequivocal declaration that cost of production includes the real capital invested.

In the evening one or two rather unseasonably rows occurred. The bill is practically done with now only a few finishing touches remaining.

The House once more went into committee on the tariff commission.

At the outset Mr. Kyte of Richmond moved the following amendment:

"And they shall hear the evidence of persons who appear before them for the purpose of making it voluntarily and who have not been so summoned."

This was ultimately modified by Mr. Pugsley as follows: "And they shall give reasonable opportunity to persons who may not have been so summoned to appear before them, and give evidence relevant to the inquiry then being held."

When Mr. Kyte moved the original amendment Mr. White took exception on the ground that it would interfere seriously with the work of the commission. This would give every person the right to force the commission to hear him.

He had no doubt that the commissioners would hear all interested parties, but the initiative should come from the commissioners. If it were 'may' instead of 'shall,' it would be all right, but the bill would not be affected. And Mr. Meighan drove home the fact that the railway commission manages to be very popular without being bound by any such rule.

Mr. White repeated that the amendment would take the control out of the hands of the commission. There was no reason to think that it would refuse to hear evidence. Every court and commission had control of its procedure.

"Why refuse the people's rights?" exclaimed Mr. Nesbitt.

After a little further discussion, Mr. Pugsley proposed the compromise already given.

Mr. White said that offhand he could see no objection, and let it stand for consideration. He was inclined to think, however, that it would make no difference to the bill.

Ottawa, Feb. 23—Nearly the whole of the day was spent in discussing Mr. Cochrane's bill for authorizing aid to highways. There was a sharp debate on the second reading, the Liberals opposing it as far as they dared.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier offered an amendment advocating the handing of the money over direct to the provinces, but did not venture to push it to an actual vote. There also was an extended discussion of the bill in committee.

At the outset Sir Wilfrid Laurier attacked the procedure under which the bill was introduced, contending that it should have been introduced by resolution inasmuch as it involved the spending of money. He discussed the point at considerable length.

Mr. Borden contended that the bill called for no expenditure of money; it merely provided machinery whereby money could be spent if it should in future be appropriated. The Speaker said that he had examined the bill with this point in mind, and had concluded that it was in order.

He had no objection to take to the principle and policy of the bill; there was sufficient revenue and the demand for good highways was becoming acute, but the bill should provide a principle for the spending of the money.

Should the great provinces of Ontario and Quebec be taxed for the benefit of the smaller provinces, or were the new provinces to be taxed for the benefit of the others. The money should be expended on the basis of population. And Sir Wilfrid Laurier moved

an amendment that the House was in favor of federal assistance, but that such aid should be given to the governments of the province on a fixed basis similar to that now prescribed by the British North America Act for the provincial subsidies.

Mr. Borden said that Sir Wilfrid Laurier's objection had been raised on the first reading and answered. The leader of the opposition himself had asked how the money would be allotted. Mr. Cochrane had replied that it would be distributed on the basis of population, on the same basis as the provincial subsidies. Sir Wilfrid Laurier's doubts were vain and unnecessary; this was not a government which proposed the bill on the principle of warm sympathy and coal justice. A specific amount would be voted for each province, and the money appropriated for one province could not be spent in another.

The Prime Minister went on to say that Sir Wilfrid Laurier was wrong in saying that extraordinary powers would be conferred on the governor general in council. Mr. Cochrane in framing the bill had adopted the analogy of half a dozen railway subsidy acts passed by the Laurier government. The provinces must be consulted; there were safeguards in the need for information as to the character of the highways, under which it would be ensured that the money was spent on permanent works. The government did not propose to reserve to the Governor General power to determine what amounts should go to one province or another. The estimates passed by parliament would provide for the amounts to go to each province, and on a basis of population.

Mr. Borden noted the importance of highways, and said that the purpose of the bill was to enable provinces with limited revenues to receive assistance from the federal exchequer. He did not say that this was a perfect bill; the government had much to do since it took office, and next session a more elaborate measure might be brought down. But it was desirable that no time should be lost in implementing the pledge of the Conservative party prior to the election.

The proposal had not been greeted in the spirit shown by Sir Wilfrid Laurier; there had been unanimous approval. There was no desire to discriminate against any province because of its political complexion. The government would be glad when the session ended to take the matter up with the nine provinces. There was no ground for this obstructive motion, which sought to delay the passing of the measure and the giving of the assistance to the provinces.

Mr. Pugsley inveighed against the proposed legislation as crude and rough. Under the bill the government could take a grant for all the provinces and spend it as they liked. Two courses were open: the government might spend the money itself, and it might give the provinces the money to spend for themselves. It should take one or the other. Further, Mr. Pugsley was afraid that enormous pressure could be put upon the provinces through this means; he hinted that the favored provinces would be allowed to spend the money themselves, while in others the federal government would spend the money.

There was further debate, carried on by Mr. Haughton Lennox, Dr. Michael Clarke, E. M. MacDonald, G. W. Fowler and Mr. Germain.

Mr. MacDonald raised the cry of provincial rights. The federal government, he said, contemplated doing work on highways whose title was vested in the provinces or the municipalities.

"SENSITIVE SOUL."

Mr. Fowler devoted himself to retorting to Mr. Pugsley, whose "sensitive soul" had been pained by the roughness of the bill." Mr. Pugsley, he said, had complained of the absence of detail in the bill. In the Central Railway case there had been a remarkable absence of details—as in the case of the sim-

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G. J. DESBARATS,  
Deputy Minister of the Naval Service,  
Ottawa, Feb. 10th, 1912.  
Feb. 21, 1912—41

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