

News from Ottawa

Cockshutt Plow Prices

By The Guide Special Correspondent

Ottawa, Dec. 8.—Parliament, which met on November 15 adjourned yesterday for a long Christmas recess. Business will not be resumed until Jan. 10, when it is expected the government will have its sessional bill of fare in readiness for the House which should be able to dispose of it sometime before April 1. Up to the time of adjournment the passage of the forty-eight millions of estimates left over when the last Parliament dissolved was the most important business attended to. The supply bill authorizing the expenditure of this money received the Royal Assent, as did a bill to renew the charter of the Grand Trunk Pacific and to extend the time for the completion of the contracts. All other legislation, either of a government or private character dealt with had not reached its final stages. The only legislation foreshadowed in the speech from the throne which has yet been introduced is the bill to consolidate the Manitoba Grain and Inspection Acts, or, in other words, the terminal elevators bill. It was introduced by resolution and as presented to the House is the same bill which passed the Senate last session.

Hon. Geo. E. Foster, minister of trade and commerce, intimated that when consideration of the bill is taken up the government will have some amendments to move. Whatever these amendments may be they will be the measure of the advance which the government proposes to make over the bill of last session. It is understood that the principal change will be to enlarge the powers of the commissioners who will be named to take over the control of the elevators to lease and purchase the same on behalf of the government.

Cockshutt on Defensive

Western topics continued to engage the attention of the House during the week, but the discussion which will be of most interest to the farmers was one precipitated by W. F. Cockshutt, M.P., member for Brantford, and a stock holder in the Cockshutt Plow Company, who undertook to come to the rescue of the company in respect to the charge made by Hon. Frank Oliver and other members to the effect that, as stated by Mr. Oliver: "that after paying the fifteen per cent. tariff duty, they sell their plow at Peoria, Illinois, at \$525, and at Minneapolis at \$502. The same plow that is sold at Brantford at \$600 is sold at Minneapolis at \$502, at Winnipeg at \$680 and in Saskatchewan at \$705."

Challenges Oliver

Candor compels one to state that in the opinion of members of the House, irrespective of party, the member for Brantford did not score very heavily. Not only did he fail to refute the charges but he gave Western members an opportunity to quote fresh and conclusive proof of the truth of the statement made. Incidentally Mr. Cockshutt took a fling at Western farmers which will probably not be much appreciated. He said that when Mr. Oliver gave his figures to the House he failed to tell where he got his authority from. "It may be," said Mr. Cockshutt, "that he is following a blind guide, as did Sir Wilfrid Laurier when he followed the Grain Growers' association who came down here and led him astray before the country at the last election. It may be that the same blind guide has led the member for Edmonton to make a statement that the facts do not justify." Mr. Cockshutt then challenged Mr. Oliver to produce proof for his statements and declared that he had palpably designed to mislead the public by quoting a wholesale price against a retail one.

Claims Wholesale Prices

"If he is prepared to buy as many Cockshutt plows as one customer in the United States," he said, "he will be able to get the same price from the company also, but he cannot expect that we are going to sell a farmer a plow at the same price as we sell \$100,000 in one order. The Hon. gentleman did not take any precaution himself to find out these

facts and he sends out broadcast the statement that the Cockshutt Plow company are robbing the farmers of the West. I have here a sheet published in Winnipeg containing this statement, and it has been published in The Grain Growers' Guide as well. The Cockshutt Plow company have something else to do than to answer all the charges trumped up against them in regard to these matters in the West. But when such a charge has been as that which the hon. gentleman has made, that we are taking hundreds of dollars out of the farmers and giving the American farmer a plow at one hundred dollars less I think we are entitled to produce some facts and figures to controvert that charge."

Matter of Sympathy

Mr. Cockshutt then proceeded to argue that no man cultivating less than ten thousand acres would purchase one of these gang plows because it is operated by an engine costing \$4,000. It might be purchased by a farmer who proposed to take contracts from his neighbors. He has known of a case in the West where a man had plowed thirty acres per day at \$4.25 an acre, making in all \$138 per day. A man who would make that profit would probably have one hundred days in the season and after allowing \$53 for labor and working expenses he would have \$75 as a profit on his day's work. This would give a profit of \$7,500 for the operation of a plow for a season of one hundred days. He did not think that such a man was entitled to such an immense amount of sympathy.

After producing a telegram from Minneapolis to prove that the prices quoted by Mr. Oliver were wholesale prices, Mr. Cockshutt proceeded to sing the praises of the implement manufacturers. Farm implements, he said, are sold in free trade England at higher prices than in Canada. It is only the high protectionist United States that can beat Canada, "but give us time and they will not beat us. We are getting there. We want a little more time." The member for Brantford continued to elaborate his argument at considerable length.

Too Much Profit

The debate which followed was a miniature reproduction of the debate on the address insofar as reference to the defeat of reciprocity and the causes thereof were concerned, but incidentally Mr. Cockshutt and his plow figures came in for attention. Mr. Oliver accepted the statement that the figure of \$502 at Minneapolis was a wholesale price and proceeded to demonstrate that the spread is entirely too great to allow the Brantford factory to remain in a position to claim the need of protection in order to enable it to compete with American manufacturers. In elaborating this argument he said: "In order to land their plow at Minneapolis the Brantford manufacturers have to pay an American duty of fifteen per cent. If they have put in their plow at a fair valuation that duty will not be less than \$60; therefore their plow at Brantford stands them not more than \$442 against, not \$600 at Brantford, but against \$680 at Winnipeg, the point to which the same freight rate will prevail, or ought to prevail, as to Minneapolis, so that there is a spread as between the retail price at Winnipeg and the wholesale price of the difference between \$442 and \$680, or \$238 on an article that sells in Minneapolis for \$442."

Duty Should be Lowered

The conclusion is irresistible that the Canadian company must be able to compete within Canada against United States manufacturers at a lower rate of duty than that by which they are protected at present, and that when they say they cannot compete in Canada against United States manufacturers, the figures quoted by the member for Brantford are here on record showing that there is absolutely no warrant for the statement. After quoting an article

by R. McKenzie to show that in St. John, North Dakota, 163 bushels of barley will pay for an eight foot McCormick binder, while it takes 437 bushels at Brandon to pay for one, Mr. Oliver said, "These facts and these conditions are known only too well throughout Western Canada, by the people who are affected by them, and I take this opportunity of drawing to the attention of the people of Eastern Canada and the representatives of the people of Eastern Canada, and, if you like, the representatives of the manufacturing interests of Eastern Canada, to those conditions which prevail in the West, and ask them in the name of Canadian patriotism, in the name of loyalty to our country, to raise the heavy hand they have laid on this country and to allow the Western farmer fair and equal opportunity to secure the advantage proper to the conditions which surround him."

Dr. Neely Takes Hand

Then Dr. Neely, of Humboldt, took a turn at Mr. Cockshutt and piled up additional evidence to show that it is not all a case of retail and wholesale prices. He said that the member for Brantford had undertaken to give an explanation of the charges which have again and again been repeated in the columns of Western newspapers, and especially in the columns of The Grain Growers' Guide, that the Cockshutt Plow company was actually paying fifteen per cent. duty on plows which they were selling a great deal cheaper to American farmers than to Canadian farmers. It was a very strange thing that the company which has had this charge laid at its door for months past has not thought fit to refute it. Mr. Neely then produced two letters, one written by a farmer in Saskatchewan, the other by a Minnesota farmer giving quotations for Cockshutt plows on the two sides of the boundary. They made it clear that the plow under discussion costs \$705 cash at Saskatoon as against \$541 f.o.b. Minneapolis.

Massey-Harris and Elections

Dr. Neely then turned his attention to the Massey-Harris company. He produced copies of two letters sent out from the Saskatoon agency of that company to an agent whose name he was not at liberty to reveal. The first, which was dated Sept. 11, 1911, brought the price of binders, mowers and other farm machinery down to "rock bottom" prices. But these instructions did not remain in force long. On Sept. 23, two days after the election, a second letter was sent out cancelling the first. He had been informed that while the price of binders had not been increased since the defeat of reciprocity a large increase had taken place in the price of parts of the binder; that the prices for repairs have gone up from fifty to 150 per cent. This was an intolerable condition for the farmers of the West who have no quarrel with the manufacturers of the East except that they want a square deal. "Does the manufacturer not know," he queried, "that when the Western farmer prospers he must share in that prosperity? Does he not know that if the Western farmer gets more for his barley, his wheat and his live stock, he is going to have more money with which to purchase agricultural implements in the East, Cockshutt plows, and Massey-Harris binders if you please?"

Fresh Evidence

J. G. Turiff was also to give an illustration as to prices which rather upset the contentions of Mr. Cockshutt. He said he knew a farmer in his constituency who owns a Cockshutt plow which he bought in the United States for \$500. He came to Canada and settled near Weyburn, going into farming extensively. A year after his arrival he desired to buy another Cockshutt plow and made the discovery that he would have to pay more than \$700 for it in Canada.

J. A. M. Aikens, of Brandon, speaking late in the course of the debate, said that he had no doubt the administration, recognizing the failure of the recent administration to give relief to the farmers of the West, by the reduction of the duties on agricultural implements, will now do what they think should be done for the agriculturists, both East and West. He had confidence in the administration and believed that there will be a reduction of the duties on plows, harrows, rakes, mowers and reapers generally. A reasonable reduction of these duties, he thought, would create a greater confidence between the East and the West.

First Duty of Commission

In this connection it may be stated that the correspondent of The Guide hears that when the tariff commission is named one of the first duties of its members will be to inquire into the affairs of the implement manufacturing firms of the Dominion and to make a report of the same to the government, with whom will then rest the responsibility of reducing the duties or leaving them as they are.

Other debates of the week included an inconclusive discussion on the Manitoba boundary question, inaugurated with the idea of getting a definite statement from the government and a wrangle over the dismissal of public officials. Premier Borden declined to be drawn on the boundary question and was accused by Sir Wilfrid Laurier of withholding the details in order to help Sir James Whitney in his campaign in Ontario. Hon. Robt. Rogers, in his first set speech, said Manitoba had been placed on an equal footing with Alberta and Saskatchewan and that the increased subsidy which the province would receive would be worked out by actuaries.

Decapitation Goes On

The debate on the dismissal of public servants shows that there have been more decapitations in the Maritime provinces up to the present time than elsewhere. Premier Borden's statement as to the government policy was hardly as clear cut as might be expected from one who has been so closely identified with the question of civil service reform. He hoped that the time would come when the outside service would be placed under the Civil Service Act, but did not give the impression of one who was in any particular hurry about remedying existing evils. He said that the rules laid down by Parliament had been violated by the late administration.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier said that his government had not dismissed public officials without giving them an inquiry, unless a member of Parliament was ready to give a written statement that an official was guilty of partizan conduct. This rule, he said, was not now being followed, but officials were being replaced without any one member of Parliament having the courage to charge them with being partizan.

Hon. L. P. Pelletier did not make any bones about his intention to restore to their former positions any persons dismissed in 1896. Which, of course, suggests the possibility; in some cases, of an official who has not been partizan being dismissed to make room for one rightfully dismissed for partizan conduct. There is no doubt that both parties are tarred with the same stick with regard to the dismissal of officials after a change of government, and the sooner the outside service is placed under a commission the better it will be for all concerned.

WANT REDUCTION ON SUGAR FREIGHTS

At a meeting of the board of railway commissioners to be held on December 14, the Dominion Sugar company of Wallaceburg, Ont., will apply for an order directing the railways to readjust their freight rates on sugar in carload lots from Wallaceburg to Winnipeg and other points.