

## NOTES OF THE MONTH

### Public Works Extravagance.—

It was not long after the outbreak of the War that the Borden Government started to preach to the people of Canada the necessity of business retrenchment and the most careful of management as an absolutely necessary measure to combat the certain results of war. How far the Borden Government applied this doctrine to itself is nicely illustrated in the annual report of the Department of Public Works for the fiscal year 1914-15, which included just eight months of War. Expenditures on public works in Canada for that year were just \$1,291,979 greater than in the previous year. For the year 1913-14 expenditures in this department totalled \$27,991,336; for the year 1914-15, expenditures amounted to \$29,283,316. Just here it is worth recalling that for the year 1910-11, the last complete year of the late Liberal administration, public works expenditure amounted to \$11,807,035, not much more than one-third of the expenditure in the past fiscal year. The favorite Borden Government excuse that these large expenditures were to complete large undertakings necessary for the public welfare fails utterly in view of the fact that the report shows that on these large works, including Quebec Harbor, Courtenay Bay, Vancouver Harbor, Victoria Harbor, Toronto Harbor, etc., less than six million dollars was spent in the year 1914-15. Something much nearer the real reason is to be found in the report that 101 public buildings were under contract during the year. Most of these buildings, many of them absolutely unnecessary, were undertaken for political purposes only, their chief value to the Government lying in the expectation that they would make doubtful constituencies "solid" for the Nationalist-Conservative government when election time might come.

### Pap for Tory Newspapers.—

The annual report of the Auditor General for the fiscal year 1914-15, tabled in the House of Commons on February 8, shows how well the most faithful of the newspapers supporting the Borden Government were "looked after" in the disbursement of public money during the year. Among the papers which received large sums were the Montreal Gazette, which got \$105,076 for printing and \$5,824 for advertising; LaPatrie of Montreal, \$29,634 for printing and \$5,959 for advertising; L'Evenment of Quebec, \$28,986 for printing and \$6,834 for advertising; Winnipeg Telegram, \$17,094 for printing and \$4,967 for advertising; the Moncton Times, \$20,225 for printing and \$1,045 for advertising; the Halifax Herald, \$18,868 for printing and \$3,857 for advertising; the St. John Standard, \$11,702 for printing and \$3,431 for advertising; the Quebec Chronicle, \$7,387 for printing and \$6,191 for advertising. For advertising alone the Toronto Mail & Empire got \$6,871; the Toronto News got \$6,268; the Toronto World got \$4,638; the Toronto Telegram got \$5,701 and the Montreal Star \$4,260.

### A Tory M.P. on Middlemen.—

William Smith, Conservative member for South

Ontario and President of the Horse Breeders' Association of Ontario spoke plainly at the annual meeting of the Toronto Exhibition on February 23rd, when he said "When the Government is purchasing horses, all that the Government buyers pay for them should go to the owners of the horses. **The farmers have not reaped what they should out of this business in connection with the War.**" Mr. Smith's remarks were even more significant when he said "I am a strong politician, as you know, and a supporter of the Government, but I felt that I owed a greater duty to my fellow-farmers than to the Party." Possibly still stronger was Mr. Smith's comment on the fact that when he asked for information in the House of Commons as to the number of horses bought in the United States and shipped through Canada, Premier Borden declared that such information could not be given out. Said Mr. Smith: "I am a good Conservative but I cannot for the life of me see why such information should not be given; it simply strengthened my impression that my misgivings were not misplaced." Referring to the attitude of the Government toward his criticisms, Mr. Smith said "I said some plain things when the horse breeders last met in Toronto, but found when I went to Ottawa that my remarks were not appreciated there."

### Buying Wheat for New Zealand.—

An interesting sidelight on the business methods of the Borden Government, the victim in this case being the New Zealand Government, was brought to the attention of the Commons on March 1st when Sir George Foster, answering Mr. Frank Carvell, M.P., told how his Department of Trade and Commerce undertook to purchase wheat for the New Zealand Government last June. Sir George said that 1,406,732 bushels were purchased, but that the amount sent to New Zealand was only 504,223 bushels. The balance, 902,509 bushels, was sold in Canada on January 10th last, at the request of the New Zealand Government. Back of this transaction is an interesting story indicating that New Zealand lost tens of thousands of dollars on the transaction as the wheat was bought when wheat prices were highest early last summer, and was sold again when prices were very low last January. The trouble is said to have been that instead of arranging for prompt delivery when the wheat was bought, Sir George and his department wasted so much time in correspondence by mail with New Zealand asking for detailed instructions as to shipping, sacking, etc., that the New Zealand Government finally got tired of the whole transaction and cut it short by giving an order that the balance unshipped should be sold. Heavy warehouse charges were incurred in the many months during which the wheat lay at Montreal before it was finally sold, which added materially to the loss the New Zealand Government was forced to face. The incident will hardly encourage trade with New Zealand.