

Our Ottawa Letter

Protectionist Doctrine Finds Support With Eastern Members—Western Farmers Receive Much Free Advice

(By The Guide Special Correspondent)

Ottawa, April 18.—Considerably less than fifty per cent. of the members of the Commons came back this week after the Easter recess to resume their labors. The resumption of business was fixed for Wednesday, the continuation of the budget debate being the order of the day until disposed of. During the three days since the House has been resumed many speeches have been made. Some have been dull, while others have been of considerable interest. There will not be much excitement over the debate, however, until next week, when it is expected that Premier Borden will be back from his holiday in Virginia. Practically all the members will be here then, and the Liberals will move their amendment or amendments. Up to the present it has not been decided whether there will be one or more.

One feature of the discussion which will please many people no doubt has been the outspoken declaration of two Liberal and one Conservative member that they are opposed to any further government assistance to the C.N.R. Archie McCoig, West Kent; Wm. Buchanan, Medicine Hat; and J. H. Burnham, of West Peterboro, are three men who have come out flatfooted in opposition to the proposal. Of course it will be interesting to see if Mr. Burnham will "stick" when the proposals are brought down.

Probably the most striking feature of the budget debate has been the number of "saucy" things said about Western Canada by Eastern members and the arguments put up by ministerial supporters from Ontario in favor of more protection for the Canadian farmers. Higher duties on corn, meats, eggs, butter and other products of the farm have been advocated. Another interesting feature has been a defence of protection for the iron, steel and coal industries by W. F. Carroll, Liberal member for South Cape Breton, the home of the biggest steel industry in the Dominion.

Aikins a Mystery

Tonight the House is discussing a "mystery" speech made this afternoon by J. A. M. Aikins, the member for Brandon. Mr. Aikins undertook to place upon the pages of Hansard the attitude of the farmers of the West in regard to free wheat and free agricultural implements with running comments of his own which made it rather hard to discover just what his real views are. The speech looked like a more or less skillful effort to "straddle" the question—to argue for free wheat while leaving the door open to vote against it. He professed to believe that the minister of finance had not definitely closed the door against free wheat. One thing, however, is certain: When the government decides on free wheat Mr. Aikins will not be opposed to it.

Mr. Aikins was replied to by W. A. Buchanan who made an exceptionally strong argument in favor of the demands of the western farmers. He told the manufacturers frankly that they were making a mistake and that the grievances of the West would have to be dealt with. He appealed to the members of the House to get together and solve the problem.

A Liberal Protectionist

The debate was resumed on Wednesday by W. F. Carroll, Liberal member for South Cape Breton, who, while adhering to the opposition policy of free wheat, free agricultural implements and cheaper food stuffs, gave his hearty approval to the principle of protection for the steel, iron and coal industries. He maintained that the infant industries of this country which have not yet reached that stage which enables them to capture the home market should be given a reasonable measure of protection by whatever government happens to be in power. He added that when an industry has not only captured the Canadian market but has shown itself able

to compete in the markets of the world, that industry should no longer receive protection.

"Do the hon. gentleman's remarks apply to such a concern as the Dominion Steel Company," queried Mr. Lalor, of Haldimand, who desired to draw out the member for South Cape Breton.

"The hon. gentleman need not worry," replied Mr. Carroll, "I am going to discuss that. I never run away from discussing any phase of a situation. I take the further ground that when the manufacturers of this country feel that they are able not only to capture the Canadian market but compete successfully in the markets of the world they should be given their own way of thinking and their products should be put on the free list. They are the best judges of the situation."

Favors Steel Bounties

Mr. Carroll then went on to express his dissatisfaction with what the government had done for the steel industry. After pointing out that a bounty had been paid on pig iron since before 1896 he went on to say that in 1907 Mr. Fielding gave a bounty of \$3 a ton on wire rods. His reason for doing so was that it was preferable to put on a bounty than to provide a protective duty which would necessitate changing the basis of the tariff on the products of these rods. As a result of this action the Dominion Steel Company and the Dominion Steel Corporation, of Hamilton, had prospered. The population of Sydney, where the former company is located, increased from three or four thousand in 1897 to twenty thousand in 1911. This bounty Mr. Carroll maintained, was a better thing for the steel industry than the \$3.50 a ton duty which has now been placed on wire rods. His reason for saying this was that the minister of finance holds a bludgeon over the Dominion Steel Company and the Steel Corporation of Ontario. He had said to them that if they do not sell wire rods to the small manufacturers of nails at a reasonable price, or at the price they were getting them at heretofore, the duty would be removed. As a consequence the new duty does not mean that the steel manufacturers who produce steel rods are going to get the benefit of the \$3.50 per ton duty on their output.

Coal Needs Protection

Mr. Carroll also protested against the removal of the duty on bituminous coal used in the manufacture of coke. He thought it a serious thing for the minister of finance to interfere with the coal tariff in Nova Scotia. During the campaign of 1911 he had favored a reduction of seven cents per ton on coal because under the reciprocity pact Canada was getting a quid pro quo. We were getting a perfectly free market in the United States for slack coal which constitutes between thirty and thirty-five per cent. of the output of the Dominion Coal Company. Mr. Fielding, he said, used to be counted with sitting tight upon his coal scuttle. He did that with the approval of the people of Nova Scotia, who would be disappointed because the present minister of finance had decided to get off the coal scuttle, thereby allowing his manufacturing friends in Ontario to put in the thin edge of the wedge insofar as the duty on coal was concerned.

The remainder of Mr. Carroll's speech was devoted to the advocacy of the Liberal policy as set forth in amendments moved this session. Dealing with the free wheat question he advocated the removal of the duty maintaining that flour which sells for \$6.50 retail in Halifax can be bought in London for \$4.8 retail. He quoted from a letter which appeared recently in the Montreal Standard a statement to the effect that several milling industries in this country—the Ogilvie, the Lake of the Woods and the International Milling Company—according to their own pub-

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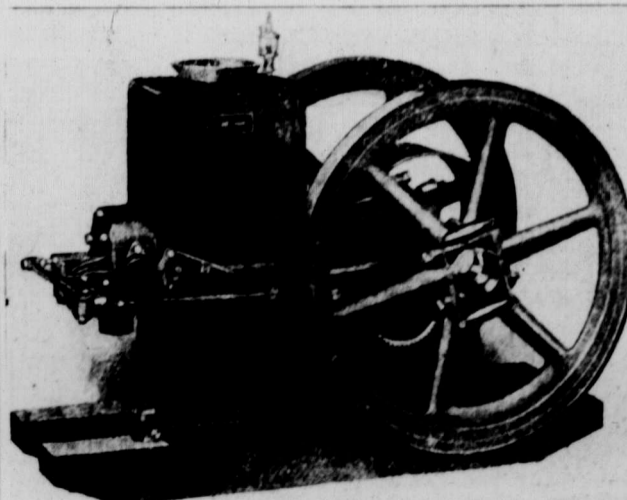
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