

RAILWAY ACT AMENDMENTS

(By The Guide Special Correspondent)
Press Gallery, Ottawa, May 3.

A bill to amend the Railway Act was introduced in the House of Commons on Thursday by Hon. George P. Graham, and was put down for consideration at an early date. The bill comprises a large number of amendments, including those suggested to the minister by Mr. Jas. Bower, president of the U. F. A., on his recent visit to Ottawa, with the object of placing the responsibility for cattle killed on the track on the railway company, and which were fully explained in a recent issue of The Guide.

The bill also requires telegraph, telephone and express companies to make yearly statements of their business to the government as the railway companies already do; it gives the railway commission power to compel railway companies to provide proper facilities for the prevention of prairie and forest fires caused by engines; it makes lands belonging to railway companies, but not used for railway purposes, subject to expropriation in the same way as lands belonging to private individuals, and power is given to the government, in case a railway line which has been subsidized by Parliament is allowed to fall into a state of dilapidation, to treat the subsidy as a lien upon the line and to sell it and recover the amount of the subsidy.

With regard to the section repealing the provision that stock must not be permitted to run at large within half a mile of a railway, Mr. Graham said there might be some discussion as to the propriety of this in the older parts of Canada, but he considered it a wise provision in the interests of the West, where farmers had the right to graze their cattle on lands which were not enclosed, though under the present law it was impossible in many cases to get redress when stock were killed. Complaints had also been made by farmers in the West that where stock had been killed the carcasses had frequently been buried by the railway company, making it impossible for the owners to find out where the animals had gone or to make a claim for damages, and power was given in this bill for the minister of railways, when complaint was made that a large quantity of stock had been killed, to require a return to be made more frequently than once in twelve months.

RECIPROCITY REVIEWED

In the current number of the quarterly magazine issued by the Queen's University, Kingston, Ont., Professor O. D. Skelton reviews the reciprocity question. He considers one of the chief benefits is that it has brought to an end the political stagnation which has marked public life for many years. The discussion aroused by the reciprocity agreement has stirred public sentiment from coast to coast and has given Canadian people a keener interest in public affairs than has been apparent for the last decade. He believes that the disadvantages of political party government are more than offset by party criticism which insures full discussion of every important question before it is legislated upon. He believes that there will be both loss and gain to be secured from the reciprocity agreement, but that the gains are much greater than the losses. Professor Skelton draws a clear line between the conservation of natural resources and much of the solemn nonsense which is talked under that name. He points out that the forbidding of pulpwood being shipped to the United States in order that it should be manufactured in Canada and then shipped to the United States is not conserving but protection, and that the terms should not be confused. The annexation bogey he handles very severely and does not consider that it is well founded.

Increase in Trade

He believes that there will be an increase in trade and traffic north and south, but that East and West traffic will also grow to the full capacity of Canadian railways, and he declares that if Canadian railways, with all the advantages they possess, cannot out-distance their American competitors then Canada would better seek annexation to Greenland. The writer does not believe that imperial sentiment will suffer more from reciprocity than will national sentiment, but he makes it clear that reciprocity only drives another nail in the coffin of imperial preference, as it should do. He considers that from the producers' standpoint Canada gets the best of the

bargain and that the opposition to reciprocity on the part of the Canadian manufacturers is due to the belief that reciprocity will whet the appetite of Canadian farmers for greater freedom of trade. He considers that protection is not endangered in Canada unless the protected interests in Canada by their actions excite the people to revolt. He believes that the majority of Canadian people are still willing to pay a bonus to Canadian manufacturers to assist them in competing with foreign manufacturers and so long as the United States maintains its tariff on manufactured goods, Canada will be compelled to do likewise. Professor Skelton believes that there should be a permanent tariff commission to investigate industries which demand protection and to investigate them very thoroughly. But he would not give these commissions power to fix tariff schedules as he believes that such power always should remain in the hands of the government.

Conclusions Drawn

In conclusion, he sums up as follows—

"What the fate of the pending reciprocity agreement will be in our own unclouded House and in the Senate at Washington is yet far from sure, though the chances are for passing. Already some of the more important by-products of the reciprocity agitation have developed, which may be summarized briefly:

"1. Principles again are in debate as well as personalities, the days of our senseless politics are ended for the present and the old custom of discussion in the constituencies is reviving.

"2. Cleavage of opinion between city and country, East and West, or, rather, between Ontario and Montreal, and the Prairie and Maritime Provinces, is manifest, with a tendency of both financier and farmer to follow pecuniary rather than party lines.

"3. To some, danger has been discovered to lie in the tremendous power

the British and Canadian system imposes in the cabinet; to others, in the power of wealth to sway temporary passion by newspaper control and advertising expenditure.

"4. Imperial preference has been given a serious blow, to the delight of British Liberals and the not excessive regret of Mr. Balfour.

"5. The pretences of impartiality have been dropped by both British and Canadian papers in discussing the politics of each other's country and open sympathy avowed between the parties of the same name in the two countries.

"6. Most unfortunate of all, the likelihood of the Nationalist group holding the balance of power after the next election has been increased by the attitude taken by the two older parties on this issue."

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