

The Brain Browers' Guide

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THE RAILWAY TURNING POINT

In this issue is part of a report of the evidence before the Railway Commission on the recent proposed freight increases and reclassifications. A perusal of this must clearly show everyone the burdensome nature on production of these proposals. There has been no competition among Canadian railroads in the matter of rates since 1903. Now all the roads issue their freight tariffs through a common office, and they have employed the most expert talent to compile "scientific" freight tariffs with the maximum of jokers and cost to the shippers, and the minimum of responsibility for proper service to the railroads. They make application to the Commission for certain changes and the whole onus of disproving the justice of these demands is left to the largely unorganized shippers, who often have much too short a time to prepare their cases. At this hearing a number of shippers stated that they had been unable to secure definite information regarding several proposed changes until one or two days before the Commission met. If the present system of railroading should continue it is essential that shippers have some better organization to resist these attacks. The manufacturers have traffic experts for their own protection. The consumer has been well and ably represented in a general way, but of necessity much of the technical information on classes and weights has been of eleventh hour preparation, and could have been much improved on. Consumer co-operation is needed in resisting the railroads. It is significant that representations are seldom or never made before the Railroad Commission by organized labor or city consumers.

But the present railroad raid cannot succeed. Its cost would fall very largely on Western farmers, and it comes at a time when the nation can afford to give no further discouragement to this vital matter of food production. The new changes would raise the rate on a car of twelve binders from Toronto to Calgary from \$124.00 to \$189.75, an increase of 53 per cent. They would mean much greater difficulty in getting repairs and parts of machines at a time when farmers are practicing economy in machinery as never before, and when economy of all steel supplies is of vital importance to everyone, and especially to the railways. Such changes would greatly discourage the use of small tractors, when everyone is doing his best to encourage their use on the farm. A 15 per cent. increase would mean an increase of 1-1/5 cents per bushel on wheat shipped from average Manitoba points to Fort William, 1-4/5 cents from Saskatchewan points and 2-4/5 cents from Alberta points to the Head of the Lakes. It would mean on cattle, increases of 6-3/5 cents on 100 pounds from Calgary to Winnipeg, 13 1/2 cents from Calgary to Toronto, and 9-7/10 cents from Winnipeg to Toronto. On minimum cars of 20,000 pounds, this would mean producers would have to pay \$13.20, \$27.00, and \$18.14 respectively for the various distances just mentioned. It would add \$1.50 per 1,000 feet to all the lumber sold through retail yards in Western Canada, it was stated. It would even raise the price of your soda water and two per cent beer. And what for? To give the C.N.R. and G.T.P. railroads \$11,000,000.00, to give the C.P.R. already bloated with reserves over \$20,000,000.00 or thus soak the public of Canada an additional \$39,000,000.00 when that public has bought and guaranteed these roads to a finish, and has bought and paid for rate concessions in this country which the railroads must not ignore.

What is the solution? Nationalization. There is no possible reason why all these roads

could not be as well and efficiently managed if all were nationalized. The same brains are available to run them and there would then be co-operation and concentration of effort instead of diffusion and duplication as at present. The C.N.R. and the G.T.P. must go to the government for aid. The government has the Drayton-Acworth report before it, a report specially prepared for it in record time, and advocating quick action before another season of congestion. Failing complete nationalization, the government can do nothing less than adopt that report. But it should do more. The railways are anxious to offset nationalization and hope by tiding over the present to get on their feet and remain under corporation control. Now is the time for government action in the interests of all the people.

FOOD CONTROLLER APPOINTED

The appointment of Hon. W. J. Hanna, former Provincial Secretary for Ontario, as Canadian Food Controller, is a step in the right direction. Mr. Hanna, who is one of the keenest minds in Ontario, and noted for his prison reforms, will have power to make necessary investigations of quantities, location, ownership, sources of supply, and prices of any article of food in Canada. He will ascertain domestic requirements and facilitate the export of the supplies to the Allies. He may make regulations governing the prices, storage, distribution, and sale of food, also for its conservation and consumption in all public eating places or private homes. He may requisition, store, sell, or deliver food, but his duties are arranged so as not to interfere with the powers of the grain supervision board recently appointed for the handling of this year's crop. He will receive no salary.

There is considerable divergence of opinion as to the value of a food controller's services at this stage, but the new move should be better now than later on. Food regulation is exercised in practically all the warring countries, and there is no reason why such an official should not render valuable service in Canada if he is given the co-operation due him. The United States has just appointed Herbert C. Hoover as food controller, and he and Canada's controller will work in the closest co-operation. They must, to secure the best results, and already Mr. Hanna has been consulting with Mr. Hoover in Washington.

At present the world is facing famine. Thirty million men have been withdrawn from active production in the warring countries. The shortage due to this enormous reduction in productive man power has been further accentuated by unfavorable weather conditions, submarine losses and waste. The last Argentine wheat crop was very poor, and that country as well as Australia and New Zealand are too far away from the scene of the conflict. North America must supply all the food possible. Our food controller can do little to increase production, but he can do much to eliminate waste. Possibly also he can assist in changing consumption from foods required by Allied Europe to those which cannot be sent forward for their use. The high wages in munition factories have resulted in undue extravagance, and few are as careful as they should be now. Our hotels, clubs and cafes, display just as varied and extravagant menus as they ever did. Consumption is only regulated by high prices, and in this the poor suffer most. Properly backed by the government, and with the co-operation of all, the food controller should be able to do a great deal of good.

LAND AND FOOD REQUIREMENTS

The imperatives of war are directing attention as it was never directed before to the necessity of getting land out of the control of speculators and into the hands of men who will put it to productive use. The world is beginning to feel the pinch of hunger. In the future are the prospect of a severe food shortage and the possibility of a calamitous famine. Meanwhile great stretches of the most fertile agricultural lands, well served with transportation facilities, remain as inaccessible to the men who would put them under the plow as if they were situated within the arctic circle. Commenting on this anomaly, Carl Vrooman, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for the United States, in an article on the food question has this to say—

"Millions of acres of farm land are being held out of use and other millions of acres are being cultivated on a wasteful and inefficient basis. Land values have risen at an unprecedented rate. They are based not upon what the farm will earn at the present time, but on an expectancy of what it will be worth in the future. The farmer's son or the tenant farmer, with little or no capital, cannot hope to acquire possession of a farm when the price of land is so high that his earnings would not pay the interest on the investment. The result is that land remains idle or in the hands of tenants and thousands of farmers' boys desert the country for the city. We cannot expect to get them back on the land unless we hold out to them the hope of becoming farm owners."

Mr. Vrooman suggests a federal land tax to help meet the situation and a proposal is now before Congress to direct an investigation into the practicability of such a tax. The unimproved land value taxation plank in the Farmers' Platform would, if enforced, do much to help meet the situation in Canada. Not only would a land tax on unimproved land values furnish an untapped and badly needed source of Dominion revenue, but it would also help to place unused land within the reach of those who are willing and able to cultivate it. The urgency of the food requirements of the Allies demands a lowering of the barriers that separate men from the great source of human sustenance.

ARE YOU GETTING A FARM LOAN?

Will farmers make better use of long term or farm mortgage credit arrangements now they have provision for them in these three prairie provinces? They will and in a big way, and the sooner all these plans get into full swing the better. The Manitoba Farm Loans Association, organized under the Manitoba system has now been operating about two months, but already almost \$1,000,000 of loans has been placed with nearly 300 Manitoba farmers for the most constructive kind of agricultural work imaginable. That isn't bad considering the Association is only breaking ground and feeling its way into public confidence in a line of business looked on by the Western farmer very suspiciously to say the least. The readiness with which farmers are taking advantage of the credit afforded them is a tribute to their common sense, otherwise known as business acumen. They have in the Manitoba Farm Loans Association a source of six per cent. money for at least a thirty year term. They know all charges in connection with the loans will be kept at a minimum, there will be no fine technical catches when they come to settling up, and that whatever profits are made will go back into the province to reduce interest rates. Hence the varied use this money is being put to, clearing up old mortgages, building better buildings, breaking new land, buying livestock, paying off old machine notes, etc. And the demand has only begun.

But even more interesting is the investment