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OPPOSITION N B

(Tuesday's Daily.)

The thirty-nine Conservative members of parliament who solemnly and deliberately declared by their votes that lack of transportation facilities had nothing to do with the fuel shortage and the journalistic lights which have flashed approval should find interest in the following editorial copied verbatim and in toto from the Winnipeg Telegram, the leading Conservative journal in Western Canada:

"There is something in the western "transporation situation entirely be-"yond the comprehension of the man "on the street. Statistics were recently "compiled which showed that at the "close of navigation on the Great "Lakes less grain had been shipped "from Port Arthur and Fort William "than during the same period last "year. Railway officials explained "that they had to devote a large am-"ount of their rolling stock to the re-"lief of the coal famine. This was "accepted by the public as the only "possible explanation of a very "strange circumstance, but why, if so "much rolling stock was transferred "to the haulage of fuel are communi-"ties all over the western provinces "in the grip of a fuel famine. There "was no fuel famine last year when "the railways carried a very much "larger quantity of grain to the head "of the lakes than they did this year. "There is only one conclusion which "the public in its dilemma can form, "and it is this, that western Canada "is filling up at a rate which the rail-"ways with all their extensions, and "with all their additions of rolling "stock have not been able to keep "pace with. The fuel situation in "Western Canada today, coupled with "the fact that there has been a falling "off in the haulage of grain to Port "Arthur and Fort William, emphasiz-"es the fact that the development of "this western country is simply mock-"ing the efforts of the railway com-"panies to overtake it."

COAL SHORTAGE AND CA" .RT-AGE.

Thursday daily)

Taken with the report from the Crow's Nest of the failure of the C. P. R. to supply coal cars when asked for and the demand of the Winnipeg board of trade for an investigation as to why that one hundred thousand tons of coal at the Lake front is not in the coal bins of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the following Minneapolis dispatch is very suggestive:—

"With the cold wave signal flying the coal shortage in the Northwest entails not only severe suffering, but becomes a menace to human life. Glenburn, North Dakota, is seriously considering an appeal to the governors of North Dakota and Minnesota to employ the state militia to enforce the movement of coal trains. Evleth, Minn., faces darkness and suffering through deprivation of coal and apprehensive reports have come from numerous other places.

"The situation at Glenburn is summed up in a statement by the Glenburn Commercial club as follows: The dealers advise that the situation is entirely up to the railroads as shippers are unable to obtain cars to load with coal. Today we will wire Governor Searles requesting him to take up the matter with Governor Johnson, of Minnesota, and if necessary call out the militia of the two states to run coal trains. The situation all through this section is desperate and with the liability of a blizzard at any time we may freeze to death if fuel is not available soon."

The fuel shortage has been by no means limited to the Canadian side of the line, and unless the reports have been remarkably amplified the situation in the western central states has been far worse than in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. In these states the trouble is held entirely due to the inability or indifference of the railway companies, and while the Lethbridge strike has been considered the primary cause of the shortage on our side of the line the evidence is growing that either the shortage of cars or the method in which the cars were handled was a very potent contributing circumstance. This evidence is given endorsation by the situation in the central states. If the rush of the winter traffic, coupled with the difficulties of railroad operation alone produced a coal famine south of the boundary it would be an altogether unwarranted stretch of credulity to suppose that similar causes had borne no part in producing the shortage north of the border, where a fewer number of lines must handle the traffic of a much larger area.

THE LOCAL COAL PROBLEM.

Thursday's daily)

Edmonton and Strathcona have a fuel problem quite as real as the fuel problem in Saskatchewan and Manitoba though it is not immediately so serious, and is of an entirely different nature. There the problem is to procure coal at any price; here the problem is to secure coal at what is considered a reasonable price. With the people of Saskatchewan and Manitoba the question is not what they must pay for coal but whether they can secure coal; with the people of Edmonton the question is not whether they can secure coal, but what they must pay for it. In Saskatchewan there is not enough coal to supply the demand and if the price is abnormally high it is high because the supply is limited; in Edmonton and Strathcona there is and has been a plentiful supply of coal and the public complaint is that despite the plentiful supply the price is and has been unreasonably high.

There are some pretty good reasons for believing that the complaints about the price of coal in the local market are well founded. In 1898 coal sold on the local market for $2.50 per ton; at present it sells at $4.50 per ton. There are three possible explanations: either, (1) the mine owners in 1898 were not making a legitimate profit, or (2) the price of taking coal from the mine and putting it in the consumer's bin has increased $2 per ton since 1898, or, (3) the mine owner now is making far more than a legitimate profit. The first supposition is exploded by the fact that the mines were being worked in 1898 and by the self-evident proposition that they would not have been worked except at profitable prices for coal. That the cost of mining and delivering has increased $2 per ton will scarcely be seriously contended. There remains the inevitable conclusion that the miner who was content to work his mine for the profits in 1898 is demanding and securing a far larger margin of profit today.

Another line of reasoning leads to the same conclusion. Coal miners operating lands secured from the crown during recent years are bound to provide "settlers" with coal at the pit's mouth for $1.75 per ton. Either (1) the coal miner is wronged in being forced to supply coal to the settler at cost or less than cost, or (2) the miner makes a profit on coal sold to the settler at this price. And in the latter event he makes an additional profit on the coal sold in town, equal to the difference between $1.75 and $4.50, less the cost of haulage to town. That the miner cannot produced coal at the pit's mouth at $1.75 or less has never, the Bulletin thinks, been contended by a competent authority; and if it were claimed the assertion would be only an admission that needlessly costly methods of mining were being employed. On the other hand it is not likely to be claimed that the cost of hauling from the mine to town eats up all, or even the larger portion, of the difference between the cost to the settler at the pit's mouth and the cost to the consumer in Edmonton or Strathcona. The larger part of this difference of $2.75 must go into the pockets of the miner, besides the profit he makes in bringing the coal to the pit's mouth at $1.75 per ton.

These radically different problems demand radically different solutions. The demand of the people of Saskatchewan is for more coal; the demand of the people of Edmonton and Strathcona is for less price. The demand of Saskatchewan can be met by opening more coal mines; but the opening of new mines has not lowered the price of coal in Edmonton and Strathcona. To solve the problem here some other method will be necessary and the most feasible plan appears to be for each municipality to secure coal mining rights on areas of good coal lands conveniently situated, from which to secure coal for municipal purposes, and in case of emergency, for the use of citizens also. Whether or not the cities should operate the mines is another and altogether different question. But the important point is that with large reserves of coal the cities would be in a position to fix a reasonable maximum price for coal for domestic purposes, with the proviso that if and when this price was exceeded the city might be expected in some manner to go into the coal mining business. Without coal resources the cities cannot "legislate" the price of coal; with such resources readily available it would probably not be even necessary to legislate; but if so they could do it effectively.

The experience of Edmonton and Strathcona probably is and will be more or less the experience of other Alberta towns and cities and to safeguard these the Provincial Government might well take the matter up and secure coal areas at various points throughout the province, which would be available in time to come as a means of preserving the residents of towns and cities from exorbitant coal prices. This general problem is the easier of solution that farmers are protected already by the provision cited above requiring coal miners on recently acquired lands to sell coal at the pit mouth to actual settlers at a fixed price of $1.75 per ton.

IT LOOKS SUSPICIOUS.

(Friday's Daily)

A prospectus issued by a new canning company holds out this among other inducements to investors: "The "price of cattle, live weight, ranges in "Western Canada from 2 to 2½ cents "per pound with unlimited supplies "available, against 4 to 6 cents a "pound in United States." Further on the prospectus says it costs about three cents to can the beef and when canned the product sells for 16 to 20 cents per pound. Allowing a liberal margin of "poetic license" for the author of a prospectus it still looks as if some one between the producer and the consumer is making more out of beef than the circumstances warrant, and making it out of both the producer and the consumer. The beef commission may give us some light on the subject.

MOROCCO AND THE POWERS.

(Friday's Daily)

A Moroccan merchant, Asaad Kalargi Karam contributes to the North American Review an article on the Moroccan question as seen from within. His attention is paid almost exclusively to the conference of foreign representatives held at Algeciras and the proposals made by them for the reformation and general well-being of Morocco. The proposals of the conference were three in number: 1, the organization of a police force; 2, the establishment of a national bank, and 3, an increase in the custom's tariff. Asaad deals with these in order and briefly, his contention being that the Moroccans do not want the police force, would not use the bank and could not pay the higher tariff.

Having disposed of the conference Asaad proceeds to tell the nations how Morocco should be dealt with. He cites clauses of the treaty of Madrid in 1861 providing that Moorish servants in the employ of Europeans were to be exempt from taxation and were not to be arrested or interfered with by the Moorish officials without the consent of the consul directly interested, and another clause allotting foreigners to accept as such servants practically whom they please. According to Asaad the practise of this provision now is that any Moor of a bad character can purchase for a handsome sum the protection of some foreigner, and that these rascals secure themselves, gather about them bands of other rascals and play havoc regardless of law.

"It sometimes happens," continues Asaad, "that after such a protege has amassed a considerable fortune his Christian protector will for a good round sum sell him to the Moorish governor of the district. The blood money having been paid down the foreigner places in the hands of the governor a written statement to the effect that he withdraws his protection from A or B. The governor then arrests A or B, throws him into prison together with all his family, friends and followers and confiscates his property to his own private use." It does not seem to have struck Asaad that a properly regulated foreign police force might find some business with governors of this sort.

After reforming the legations themselves Asaad wants the Koranic law administered by competent and honest judges but where he would get the judges he does not say.

A COMMENDABLE PURPOSE BUT A USELESS RESOLUTION.

(Friday's Daily)

To Mr. John Herron, M.P. for Alberta constituency, belongs the credit of having contributed to the debate on the western fuel question a pretty sensible speech attached to an eminently nonsensical resolution, and so wide is the chasm between the purport of the resolution and the nature of the speech as to strongly contradict the assumption of their common authorship. To suppose that the man who made the speech would personally and deliberately crystallize its object into the pompous and innocuous resolution under which it appears is a stretch of credence for which ordinary people will not be prepared. The speech may be considered the production of Mr. Herron; internal evidence declares the resolution a verbal mask prepared by some Opposition diplomat behind which the party could make a loud pretense of championing the cause of the sufferer while leaving themselves free to interpret the wording in whatever manner, time or place might make desirable.

With the purpose of the resolution no fault is to be found; indeed, it is because that purpose is particularly commendable that the resolution itself is to be condemned. The avowed purpose of the resolution was to secure to the people of the West a continuous and sufficient supply of coal; but the real substance of the resolution itself was without form and void and darkness covered the import of its language. The situation to be faced was a real, not a fanciful grievance, and called upon Parliament not for the passage of vague, pithless and pointless resolutions but to determine the actual cause of the trouble and provide, if possible, a tangible and practical means to prevent its recurrence. To meet this case Mr. Herron propounded a resolution the first half of which he himself condemned and the second half of which he did not attempt to explain; a resolution of vague and uncertain import but of import so vague and so uncertain that had it been adopted neither the Government, the House nor the country would have known what its author wanted.

This resolution the Conservative press is now endeavoring to represent to the public as something of an intellectual feat, containing a sure and certain method of avoiding all the ills of a fuel famine, which the Liberal members of the House turned down simply because it emanated from the Opposition. It is noteworthy, however, that the method of the Opposition press corresponds admirably with the language of Mr. Herron's resolution in being splendidly indefinite and beautifully vague. Just what Mr. Herron really proposed his journalistic sponsors have wisely not undertaken to inform us any more than the mover of the resolution undertook to explain to the House. But what we are assured and reassured is that the resolution embodied all that was necessary to permanently solve the question of coal land administration and that in declining to pass the resolution the House neglected an opportunity to preclude the possibility of another much lauded resolution of Mr. Herron may not be amiss to reproduce the prospectus it still looks as if some one between the producer and the consumer is making more out of beef than the circumstances warrant, and making it out of both the producer and the consumer. The beef commission may give us some light on the subject.

COAL ON CARS AT ONE DOLLAR A TON

(Wednesday's Daily)

Coal mining on a large scale is to be undertaken at Beaver Lake by a coal syndicate composed of Messrs. Robert Lee, W. J. Crafts, Claude Gallinger and J. R. Black, who have acquired and are developing what is probably one of the most valuable coal areas in the Edmonton district.

Development is already well under way and the shaft is now within a few feet of the coal bed. Within the next week or ten days samples of coal from the new mine will be sent to the city and shipping on a limited scale, if the coal taken out in development, will probably be commenced in the near future, although the mine will not go on the list of producers on a proper footing for nearly a year. By the time the G.T.P. reaches the workings the owners expect to be ready to turn out anywhere from 500 to 1000 tons of coal a day and they believe that they can mine it and put it on the cars for not over $1.00 a ton, a less rate than is being paid this winter for hauling coal up town from the local mines.

The property in question is section 26, township 50, range 19, and is situated just one mile south of the Grand Trunk Pacific townsite of Tofield, which is to be the hub of activity of the Beaver Lake country. Work was commenced three months ago and test shafts sunk on each quarter, showing a coal seam underlying the entire section and having an average thickness of seven feet. One of the great advantages of the Beaver Lake coal field is that the coal is so close to the surface as to make the sinking of a shaft a mere detail. On the south-west quarter of section 26 the owners found 6 1-2 feet of coal at a depth of 36 feet; on the northwest it was 8 feet thick and overlaid only 24 feet of alluvium, while on the south-east quarter a seven foot blanket was found to have only a 16-foot covering at its lowest point. Development work was commenced by putting down a double compartment shaft 8x13 feet, which is now within six or seven feet of the coal. No machinery has yet been placed on the ground and a horse winch is being used for bringing the earth out to the surface, but a hoist and pumps and all the components of a complete outfit are to be installed when the necessity arrived. At a later date coal cutting machinery, screening and crushing machinery and all the improved methods of coal mining will be adopted. Development work is in the charge of Thomas L. Parsons, an old Pennsylvanian, who has had experience in coal mines hard and soft all over the United States, and has in his time assisted in opening up what are now some very large properties. He has two men with him and this force will be largely increased when the shaft reaches the coal and cutting commences. The intention is to open the mine up thoroughly in advance of the railroad, so that when a track is laid to the mine they will be ready to go on the list of producers as one of the large shippers of Alberta. A right of way for a spur was secured only last week and arrangements made with the G. T. P. to bring hair tracks right to the shaft, so that coal will be loaded from the pit mouth right into the car without any manual labor whatever.

Speaking of the coal situation generally, Mr. Lee said that while they expected to ship a certain amount of their product into Edmonton, their real market was not yet in the map, as they hoped to supply the towns on the G. T. P., when are due to spring into existence this year between Edmonton and Winnipeg. Mr. Lee had no reservation whatever about stating that he believed the present price of coal was away too high and that he had perfect assurance that they would be able to put coal on the cars for considerably less than $1 a ton and he believed that they could ship it into Edmonton and sell it on a handsome margin for less money than it is now costing most of the Clover Bar operators to produce.

The Beaver Lake coal field is already being worked to a considerable extent although in only a small way, farmers now driving from Munsare and Chipman, on the C. N. R., twenty miles away, from Vegreville, 35 miles away, and from Camrose on the Canadian Pacific 25 miles to south. The Crafts & Lee people are the first to undertake systematic development on a large scale in the Beaver Lake district.

The Syndicate financed by Messrs. Crafts, Lee, Gallinger & Black, will probably be made into an incorporated company with in the next year, and there are rumors of at least another company being incorporated for the purpose of undertaking development on a large scale in the same district. In fact the indications are that by this time next year Beaver Lake will be an established and recognized coal field with a daily output sufficiently large to command attention in the financial and the industrial markets of the country.

WINTER RESORTS

(Montreal Daily Star)

Mr. R. J. Thomas, of Edmonton is a man who takes an original view of the resort question, but while the view is entirely a new one—at least in so far that it has not been advocated in print—it is also an eminently reasonable one. It is in short, that instead of people going down south for the winter months to revel in the tropical climate of the southern States, or the West India islands, or even of southern Europe, they should go up north to the cities of western Canada, and breathe in the bracing air of the plains.

"I have often wondered," he said to a Star reporter, while in this city yesterday, "that people have not before now awakened to the value of the climate of western Canada, which is one of the most delightful in the world, not only in the summer, but also in the winter. It is delightful, not in the same sense that Florida is delightful, but it is none the less enjoyable, though in a very different way. It is enjoyable because it is the most invigorating possible and because there are all kinds of winter sports to keep one out in the wholesome winter air. I know what the northern climate can do from my own personal experience. I came from the east, from New Brunswick, years ago, a delicate young man, for whom the doctors had recommended the west as a cure for tubercular tendencies. Just look at me now."

Mr. Thomas raised himself to the full extent of his five feet nine inches and squared his shoulders, and he certainly looked anything but consumptive.

"The whole trouble is," he continued, "that a lot of people have been deceived by that talk about "Our Lady of the Snows,' into believing that Canada is little better than the North Pole as regards climate, but not so much that it makes any appreciable difference. The fact of the matter is that the climate of western Canada is not nearly so severe as that of New York state, for instance, and is incomparably more pleasant and healthful."

ANOTHER DREADNOUGHT.

Bulletin Special.

London, Dec. 24—The contract for the battleship Superb, the third of Dreadnaught class to be laid down this year, has been awarded to the Armstrongs, of Newcastle-on-Tyne. Tenders for the hull and machinery, exclusive of the guns and armour, amount to approximately $3,3?0,000.

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