

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

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Mr. Murdock referred to criticism passed by Mr. Meighen and some of his colleagues because no definite action had been taken under the combines investigation act passed by the King government at the session previous to the last. The reason for that, Mr. Murdock explained, was that both the House of Commons and the Senate had held, that a complaint against any alleged combine, monopoly, trust or merger should emanate from reputable citizens and placed over their signatures. Up to the last session no citizen had taken such action.

Change Has Come.

He was glad that this story was going to be changed, he said, referring to a newspaper report of the arrest of a manager of a Vancouver concern for fraud and for several violations of the act. Mr. Murdock explained that a few weeks ago the government received from some fruit producers in British Columbia a declaration intimating that a combine existed among distributors of fruit and similar products. A commissioner who had been investigating had found that in the disposition of one carload of fruit over \$900 was withheld from the producers, to whom false statements had been given. Books were padded and other evidence had been already secured to show, even before the investigation was over, a most serious and deplorable situation.

"What has been undertaken in that respect could be undertaken in certain other things in my judgment," said the minister of labor. People might ask him why he did not initiate a complaint, but he again emphasized that any charges must come from the citizens, and he assured his audience that when any complaints were received they would be thoroughly investigated.

HON. G. P. GRAHAM.

"The government has one object in view, and that is to endeavor to get Canada once more to the place of success and contentment that she occupied before the war," declared Hon. G. P. Graham, minister of railways. The situation, he said, was not alarming, though it was not as bright as during the Laurier regime. But since that time there had been a war and a lot of bad government, and a country could not thrive under these two evils.

"We have nothing to defend as a government," he said. "We are not here to boast, but to speak in confidence as to what has been done as to the progress under a government that stands for the rights of the people."

Speaks on Finances.

Dealing briefly with Canada's financial position Mr. Graham showed that while in 1922-1923 the bonded indebtedness of the municipalities of

Canada had increased \$56,000,000, and while in 1923-1924 the bonded indebtedness of the provinces had increased \$51,000,000, the debt of Canada had been reduced \$35,000,000 and the budget had been balanced. Again, the wealth of Canada exceeded its indebtedness five times. "Anyone who takes a pessimistic view as to the future of this country ought to move to some other country," he said.

"We have a railroad program in Canada which is not of our making. The railways were purchased before this government came into power. It was our business to undertake to straighten it out as well as we can." The minister was optimistic that in the course of time the Canadian National Railways would be a success. He declared that when the system was taken over from the management of Mr. Hanna it was not a national system except on the billboards.

Speaking of the appointment of Sir Henry Thornton, Mr. Graham said the government found that the G. T. R. was strongly opposed to the Canadian Northern, and if one of the heads of those systems had been appointed to manage the unified system there would have been trouble. Sir Henry Thornton had brought about co-ordination and harmony, and he was one to whom no one could take exception. Although having been born in the U.S. and receiving his training on the great Pennsylvania road, he had managed a large railway in England, and was a naturalized British subject. "Those who didn't want a broken-down Canadian didn't get him. Those who didn't want a Yankee didn't get him. But those who wanted a Britisher got him."

Put in Revenue.

Mr. Graham admitted that the surplus of last year would not be seen this year. Owing to the bad wheat crop and the fact that this was election year in the States, it had been a bad time for freight. However, the road was being managed well, and he appealed for a square deal for the people's road. They were admittedly giving a vastly improved service.

Mr. Meighen had been amusing himself and getting funny at his own expense in telling the people that the railway system of bookkeeping in regard to loans had been changed. Mr. Graham vigorously denied Mr. Meighen's claim that these loans should be added to the public debt. The reason the government guaranteed these loans was because the railways could thereby borrow at a cheaper rate. Not one dollar of the 170 millions guaranteed by Mr. Meighen and his associates from 1911 to 1921 was charged to the public debt, said Mr. Graham, turning the tables on the opposition leader.

The only time it could be charged to the public debt would be when the railways fell down. But we believe they will be a success if the people give them a chance.

W. L. Mackenzie King Papers

Speeches-1922 - 1932

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