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News from Ottawa

Car Shortage, Hudson Bay Railway and Cement Merger discussed

By The Guide Special Correspondent

Ottawa, Jan. 19.—The week in Parliament started off on Monday with a Hudson Bay Railway debate. Naturally the subject lent itself to a discussion of present conditions in the West arising out of the blockade, the transportation question in general, the necessity for nearer markets and cognate topics. The Grain Growers' Guide came into the debate more than once, its facts and figures relating to the blockade being quoted both by Mr. J. G. Turiff and Mr. T. McNutt, of Saltcoats, who, by the way, described existing conditions in the West and their probable result more concisely and accurately, perhaps, than any member who has yet spoken.

The debate was commenced by J. A. M. Aikins, conservative member for Brandon, who moved for particulars in regard to an offer said to have been made by Milburn & Company, English steamship owners, to place steamships on the route between Hudson Bay and England. The motion concluded with the assertion that this company had also offered to place one of their Baltic steamships at the disposal of the government (presumably the late administration) for the purpose of making a practical test of the navigability of the route for commercial purposes.

In so far as the Hudson Bay project is concerned the discussion based on this motion brought out little that is new apart from statements made by Hon. Frank Cochrane, minister of railways, in closing the debate. He confirmed the announcement made recently in the daily press that the government had decided to "go full steam ahead" with the contract for the first 185 miles of the line to Split Lake, and announced that it would be necessary to send another expedition to Hudson Bay before the relative merits of Churchill and Nelson as a terminus on the Bay can be definitely settled. In this connection the minister was disposed to criticize the previous administration for not having more definite information coupled with the declaration that the road would be constructed as fast as possible. He also made this interesting announcement:

"I may say that there has recently been made to the government a proposition which gives us two strings to our bow; that is that if the Hudson Straits prove to be not navigable for a great portion of the year, a line of boats be established to run from Nelson or Churchill, whichever port is settled upon, across James' Bay to the Nottoway River in Quebec, and on down through Quebec by the trans-continental line. This would shorten the distance to the Atlantic seacoast, from Prince Albert or Edmonton, by six hundred miles. If the Hudson Bay route should

not prove favorable, the feasibility of this alternative plan could be looked into." The announcement suggests the possibility of grain being rushed out over both the James' Bay and Hudson Strait routes for several months each season.

A Burden on the West

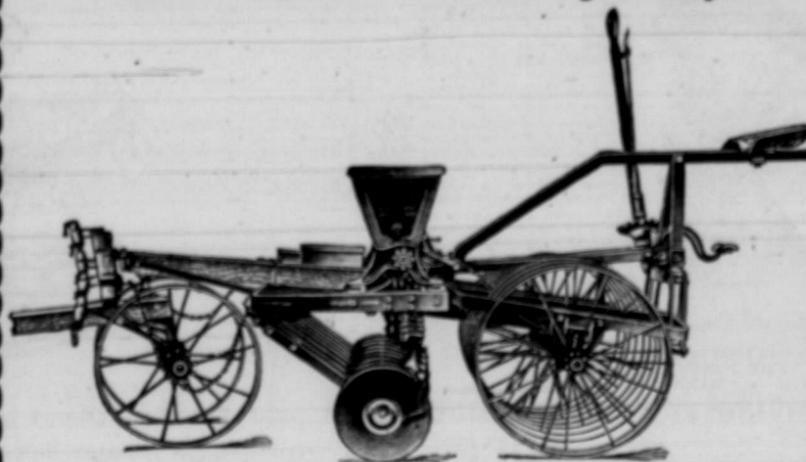
The debate would in all probability have been confined largely to the matter of transportation but for a somewhat striking and entirely unexpected sentence which occurred in the introductory part of Mr. Aikins' speech, "The farmers of Eastern Canada," he said, "can more easily pay the duties under the national policy than can the farmers of Western Canada at the present moment, for the simple reason that under that policy there has been built up in Eastern Canada excellent home markets and great industries which have effected an increase in the value of farm lands, and farmers have found for their product a close and ready market, the home market." But while admitting that the protective tariff was a burden to the agriculturists of the West, Mr. Aikins did not suggest any reduction. He would develop the home market and seek wider markets, "Canadian and otherwise British," but he would not sell to the south because that would build up American cities, he thought. His solution of the question was shorter transportation routes, including the Hudson Bay route, so long as they do not carry Canadian products across the American boundary.

Opposition members naturally seized upon Mr. Aikins' admission that the tariff constitutes a burden to the Western farmer as an evidence of the beginning of a change of faith on the part of those who opposed reciprocity. Dr. Michael Clark, of Red Deer, said he would not have spoken but for this extremely heterodox doctrine coming from a supporter of the policy of high protection. He regarded it as an evidence that the members from the West who sit to the right of the speaker are beginning to change their views on the tariff. Dr. Clark poked some fun at Mr. Aikins for his advocacy of short rail routes. Had not the party now in power just concluded a campaign in which they advocated the maintenance of the long routes from the East to the West? They were opposed to the short haul to the big market to the south. The member for Brandon, with his long and honorable connection with the Canadian Pacific Railway company, was apparently not aware that the international boundary was at the present time intersected by railways at 42 places.

Later on in the debate Mr. J. G. Turiff quoted from The Grain Growers'

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Guide the statement that at 133 points in the West there is a shortage of 7,000 cars. He estimated a probable shortage at the moment of 10,000 cars. This means that there are in the West ten million bushels of wheat which should have been exported months ago. It means that the farmers have to carry that wheat practically all winter, or pay storage for it. They have to lose in price of the wheat and also to lose the interest on accounts they owe. The Hudson Bay railway was a necessity and while approving any motion having for its object the production of information commented on the circumstance that the road could give no immediate relief such as would have been given by the possession of the market to the south.

Deplorable Western Conditions

Thos. McNutt took the same view

and then proceeded to deal more particularly with the Western situation as viewed by the people most seriously affected. "I can tell you," he said, "that there are a great many farmers in the West who will put in their crops next year with heavy hearts, because they know not where to find a market. It is one thing to sow a crop, and reap it, and thresh it, but it is another thing to market it and get a market for it. It is quite possible that the more a man cultivates the more he will lose, and it looks as though that will happen in some cases this year. I know farmers who have always employed two or three men, but who will this year put no more land under crop than they can work themselves, because they are not sure that they will get any return to pay their employees.

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