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Our Ottawa Letter

Ottawa May 12th 1922

Dear Editor:—

We have been having a most interesting time since I last wrote you. On May 4th a cleverly worded resolution brought in by the Government was discussed. A casual reading of it would lead one to believe that it was asking for a Parliamentary committee to discuss freight rates in general, and not a parliamentary committee to discuss whether the Crows Nest Pass Agreement was to come into effect again or be subject to a further suspension. The Crows Nest Pass Agreement was an agreement entered into by the C. P. R. and Western Canada regarding the scale of rates for freight, certain particular articles being named. On account of the unfoerseen conditions of the war, this agreement was suspended three years ago, and if nothing is done, it will automatically come into force again on the sixth day of July. I was from the first suspicious of referring this subject to a committee where experts for railways can come with a multiplicity of evidence, but the country people and the village and town people who have suffered long, would not come before this committee, many of them not being in a financial condition to do so. I was delighted with the position taken by the Progressives in the House. Mr. Crerar made a very splendid speech on this subject and pointed out that the Canadian people had spent sums of money to build railroads in order to have cheap transportation facilities, not to make a ten per cent. dividend for a company that has a reserve fund of three hundred million dollars. The Conservatives brought in an amendment saying that all the information that could be given was tabulated by the Railway Commission and that the evidence needed should be got from that source. Our group took their stand that an agreement was an agreement, a sacred thing, not a mere scrap of paper. We occupied a unique position, and in half an hour we voted twice, once against the Opposition and with the Government—once against the Government with the Opposition, thus establishing our perfect independence. Mr. Kennedy, the Minister of Railways, in speaking to this resolution, admitted that this parliamentary committee would not have any power to state generally freight rates, because that could only decide whether or not the Crows Nest Pass Agreement should be set aside for further period of time. Government measure won by 15 votes.

We spent a whole day on Oriental immigration. The British Columbia men, no matter of what party, are in perfect agreement on the question of keeping out the Orientals. The word "exclusion" in their resolution was objected to and finally an amendment substituting "restricted immigration" instead of "exclusion" carried.

About two weeks ago the Militia estimates came down. Our group complained that they were too high, and that we wanted peace, not war. After a wrangle of half a day the estimates were withdrawn, and were brought down on Friday, May 5th, with a reduction of $700,000. I would like to have seen it larger, but it is at least something, and would never have come in had it not been for our group in the House. Major Power, a Liberal, stood out for a reduction of $1,300,000.

I think the most pleasing sign is the spirit of independence in all parties. There are Liberals who take a stand regardless of the stand taken by the Government. There are also Conservatives who will not jump into line at the crack of the party whip, though not many of them yet Never before, at least not for many years, has parliament had so much power, and the Government, that is the Cabinet, so little. We are more nearly approaching the ideal of Government by the representatives of the people. A great many resolutions by private members are on the Order paper and will not be dealt with this session because Private Members' Day is over until next session. We who were new on the job did not know that if our resolutions were not in early we had no hope of having them discussed this session.—Sincerely,

—Agnes C. McPhail.

A Remarkable Hen

Sam Jenkins of Mary street, Orangeville, is the owner of a hen that has already turned 28 and is still doing a cackling business at the old stand. Mr. Jenkins secured the hen, which is of no particular breed, and cannot boast of purple blood, 22 years ago, and her former owners had her for six years, so there is no doubt whatever about the age of this elderly hen. Mrs. Hen is not much the worse for wear and produces her regular quota of eggs just like her greatgreatgreat grandchildren. When she lays an egg she is so proud of her work that she cackles more than all the other hens put together. Sam prizes his ancient cackler very highly and has refused many offers for her—Sun.

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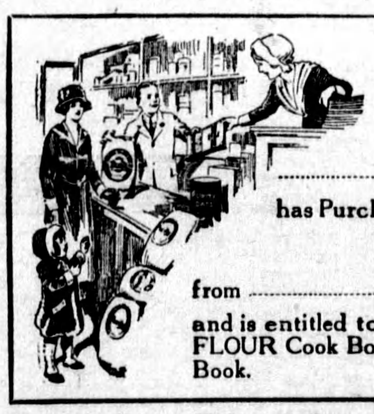

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