

# Parliamentary Sketches From The Capital City

### A Weekly Letter From an Independent Observer Covering the Sessions at Ottawa From All Angles Without Prejudice to Hold With Party or Sect

Some very illuminating discussions on various phases of the wheat situation have occupied considerable time in the House this week and adjournment is still indefinite. The question as to whether shipping through United States ports would invalidate Canadian wheat for the six-cent British preference precipitated a discussion as to why sixty per cent. of Canadian export wheat should be routed through American ports. The debate followed East and West rather than party lines, the Maritime members being rather inclined to charge the western farmers with wilfully neglecting Canadian ports, while western members explained that the wheat producers were in no way responsible for the situation. The route of shipment is decided by the exporting grain companies who naturally choose the route most advantageous from an economic standpoint. A glance at the map will reveal this as via Buffalo and New York, the much longer rail haul to Halifax and St. John normally involves higher freight rates—although these have been temporarily equalized during the present month. Also the fact that liners sailing from New York frequently carry wheat as ballast at lower rates than regular freighters is a contributing factor to the economic situation. It was pointed out that the carrying charges on wheat from the point of production to the Liverpool market are borne by the producer to whom the difference of even one or two cents a bushel is of enormous importance.

J. A. Bradette, whose constituency lies in Northern Ontario, made a strong plea for the use of the transcontinental railway which was built, at a cost of \$100,000,000, as a direct and easy route for heavy freight between Winnipeg and Quebec. Mr. Bradette regretted that the Duff Commission had found it impossible to inspect this section of railway which has the finest roadbed, the easiest curvatures and the lowest grades of any road on this continent, but is now entirely neglected in through freight shipments. You might as well take the rails away for all the attention the road is receiving, I will not say from Parliament, but from the Canadian people as a whole," said Mr. Bradette. Mr. Stitt, (Nelson, Man.), made a vigorous protest against the apparent anxiety of the prairie members over American shipping routes to the neglect of their own port of Churchill, which in its first season has amply proved its feasibility. Mr. Stitt said that of the two and a half million bushels of wheat shipped via the Hudson's Bay route this season, the Continental Grain Company of New York had shipped two million at a saving of four cents a bushel, notwithstanding a payment of marine insurance twenty times higher than on grain shipped from Montreal. The New York company have found this route so satisfactory that they have now in storage at Churchill further shipments ready for next season. The iniquitous insurance rate, Mr. Stitt declared, is entirely unwarranted "in spite of the fact that one boat was lost this year, a boat that looked around two days before it found an iceberg. . . there is no question about that. The boat was deliberately sunk. . . I think the evidence will prove it." said Mr. Stitt. The member for Nelson contended that 50 million bushels of wheat could be shipped via Churchill each year at a saving in freight of seven cents a bushel. Mr. Bowman (Cons., Dauphin, Man.) in defending the wheat producers' stand said "Let us remind the hon. member from the Maritimes, on both sides of the House that after all the sale of wheat is purely a business proposition, and that the difference of a fraction of a cent in the quoted price may mean the sale, or loss of sale, of millions of bushels. Consequently it is extremely important that the lowest possible cost of transportation should rule in the shipment of grain."

Representatives from wheat growing constituencies, on both sides of the House, expressed the fear that any restriction in routes of shipping would inevitably result in increased carrying charges, which would absorb what was left of the six-cent preference after the toll taken by exchange. When the debate had been carried on some considerable time, with the question still apparently beclouded in many minds, the Minister of Trade and Commerce, usually the most patient of men, rose and emphatically reiterated what he declared had been explained three times already in the House, that direct shipment of wheat through a foreign country by consignment, or an interrupted shipment accompanied by the proper documents, would not be invalidated for the British preference. The second field day on wheat arose out of the Prime Minister's statement in regard to the government's responsibility in the present marketing situation. Hon. Mr. Bennett reviewed in detail wheat marketing operations past and present, which are familiar to most westerners but are probably little understood in the east. The Prime Minister explained to the House why the operation known as "hedging" or "dealing in futures" is of vital importance in marketing the Canadian wheat crop. It is necessitated by the rapid marketing of enormous quantities of wheat during the harvest season, and simply means "taking up the slack" between immediate supply and demand, to avoid disastrous breaks in the market. (Those who understand the purpose of the wheat pools, largely anathema in the east, know that this "dumping" vs. "orderly marketing" was one of the chief factors in their formation). This "hedging" operation is being carried on by Mr. J. I. McFarland, acting manager (without remuneration) of the central selling agency of the Co-Operative Wheat Producers Limited, with the sanction of the government. After explaining that the speculator, who had been useful in being willing to take a chance on temporarily-surplus wheat, had practically disappeared from the market, and the Co-Operative Wheat Producers' selling agency was now the only available hedging organization, the Prime Minister said: "I need hardly say to the House that the matter gave us very grave anxiety and concern but it was quite apparent that, unless hedging operations could be carried on there could be no marketing of this year's crop. . . Therefore, not pegging the price and not interfering in any sense with the operation of the law of supply and demand, but to secure the orderly and regulated disposition of the crop the steps I have indicated were taken, and the Canadian Co-Operative Wheat Pools Limited became the hedging agency in order to enable, with the assistance of the government, sales to take place and the crop to be marketed." Mr. Bennett said that these hedging operations could not be carried on without the assistance of the banks and the government had guaranteed the banks against loss. Any possible loss in these operations—and there may be none—would be less than would be involved in paying a wheat bonus, while "we believe the steps taken will be more beneficial to the Dominion as a whole, and will secure for the country as a whole greater advantages than if we had paid the producer a bonus as we were requested to do this year."

The Conference Agreements, having passed the second reading, are being taken up item by item in committee of the whole House. A large number of items pass without comment but when discussion does arise a "good time is had by all" including the galleries. Ordinary rules of the House do not obtain in committee and any member can argue the matter out to any reasonable extent. One of the most persistent fighters in the House is E. J. Young of Weyburn, Sask., who believes in the greatest possible extent of free trade and consistently objects to the tariffs quoted in the agreements. Mr. Young delves into the operation of the tariff schedules to see just who has asked for them and who gets the benefit. The items afford an opportunity to the various members to discuss products or commodities peculiar to their particular districts and the discussions are not always on party lines, although the general principles of pro and con are observed. In items regarding hog products and lumber, in both of which the Conservative members see great possibilities, the opposition claim the preferences are entirely nullified by the exchange, a view which is persistently stressed by the independents.

supply the Canadian market in future, without increasing prices. Mr. Stevens took the opportunity at this point to rebuke the opposition for their suspicions of Canadian manufacturers. The Minister said that many members in the House seemed always ready to suspect sinister motives in every act of the manufacturers, when as a matter of fact, he had found them a fine body of business men.

By and large, the examination of the agreements in detail seems to increase rather than diminish the opposition's objections to the treaty, but the government seems satisfied to stand or fall on the results, which can only be determined by trial. In the natural course of events at least two years will elapse before an appeal to the country and much can happen in that time.

Questions are asked from time to time regarding unemployment, but there has been no discussion on that subject yet. The Minister of Labor replying to a question as to the total number of people receiving government relief at present, said that the number is now 800,000, including men, women and children, but mitigated the statement somewhat by stating that in normal times there are approximately 140,000 persons who have to be given more or less relief, with about an equal number of transients who do only seasonal work. With both government and private resources of relief becoming more and more depleted the prospect is not very bright, and there is little doubt the Labor members will have something to say on the subject before adjournment.

Hon. Mr. Rhodes advised the House that the new government loan of \$80,000,000 had been subscribed before the time expected, which is particularly gratifying as it is the first time a gov-

ernment bond has been issued at four per cent. Mr. Rhodes referred to the

splendid work done by the national committee under the chairmanship of

Sir Charles Gordon in bringing about this result.—M.L.B.

## The Letter Box

The Editor of The Haileyburian,

Dear Sir—  
Kindly allow me space in your paper to ask a few questions of the town fathers and make a few remarks about the new water system from Constance Lake.

If this work was undertaken as a relief job, why all the hurry to have it completed by May or June last? Were the council afraid the depression would be over before it could be completed and they would not then be in a position to get something from the government for nothing?

Now that the depression appears no nearer being at an end than it ever was, what (if anything) have the council in view that they can ask government assistance for and pass along to the citizens as something more that will not cost the ratepayers anything? That is, until they wake up and find they have to pay the major portion of it.

I believe there was something in a letter in The Haileyburian a short time ago stating the manufacturers who supplied the pipe (for the pipe line from Constance Lake) had invited the council or a committee of same to pay a visit to their plant and see for themselves "just how perfectly it was manufactured", and I would like to ask if the members of council who accepted the invitation are any wiser about it than they were before?

Also to remark that on the face of it, the reverse of the invitation was that probably they had supplied pipe of an inferior quality to what they would show the town fathers. Why else the invitation?

Then I understand there was ample assurance from the engineers in charge (James, Proctor & Redfern) that the water supply from Constance Lake would be adequate for the town's needs; later this assurance was qualified to imply it would or might be adequate provided the householders put in meters and did not use too much water.

Well, Mr. Editor, it does not require an engineer to see that if the people of Haileybury do not stop demanding improvements they cannot afford, and if they do not see that they are represented in council by someone with some incentive other than that of spending money faster than it can be provided by a reasonable tax rate, that presently, the available water supply from Constance Lake will much more than take care of the needs of the population which will be left in the town to use it, even though as in the past we may be able to get an occasional doler from the government for some public work that we are told will not cost us anything.

This brings us up to the present—the meters that have been purchased and their installation.

I would like to enquire whether these are to remain the property of the town after being installed? And if so, how do they expect to keep track of and control over them when they are left on private property?

What is to prevent the householder from claiming possession of them or removing them if he so desires?

Where do they get their authority to place meters on private property against the wishes of the owner? Or penalizing anyone refusing to allow them to be installed?

If, on the other hand, they are to become the property of the householder, where do they get their authority for proposing to issue debentures to purchase an article which by the nature of its use, should be a private possession?

Would it not, Mr. Editor, be much better, even at this late date, to leave the meters where they are until we see whether the pipe line will ever be fit for the purpose for which it was planned, or whether the water supply will be sufficient or not to take care of the requirements of our diminishing population.

Respectfully submitted by  
"One Who Would Like to Know"

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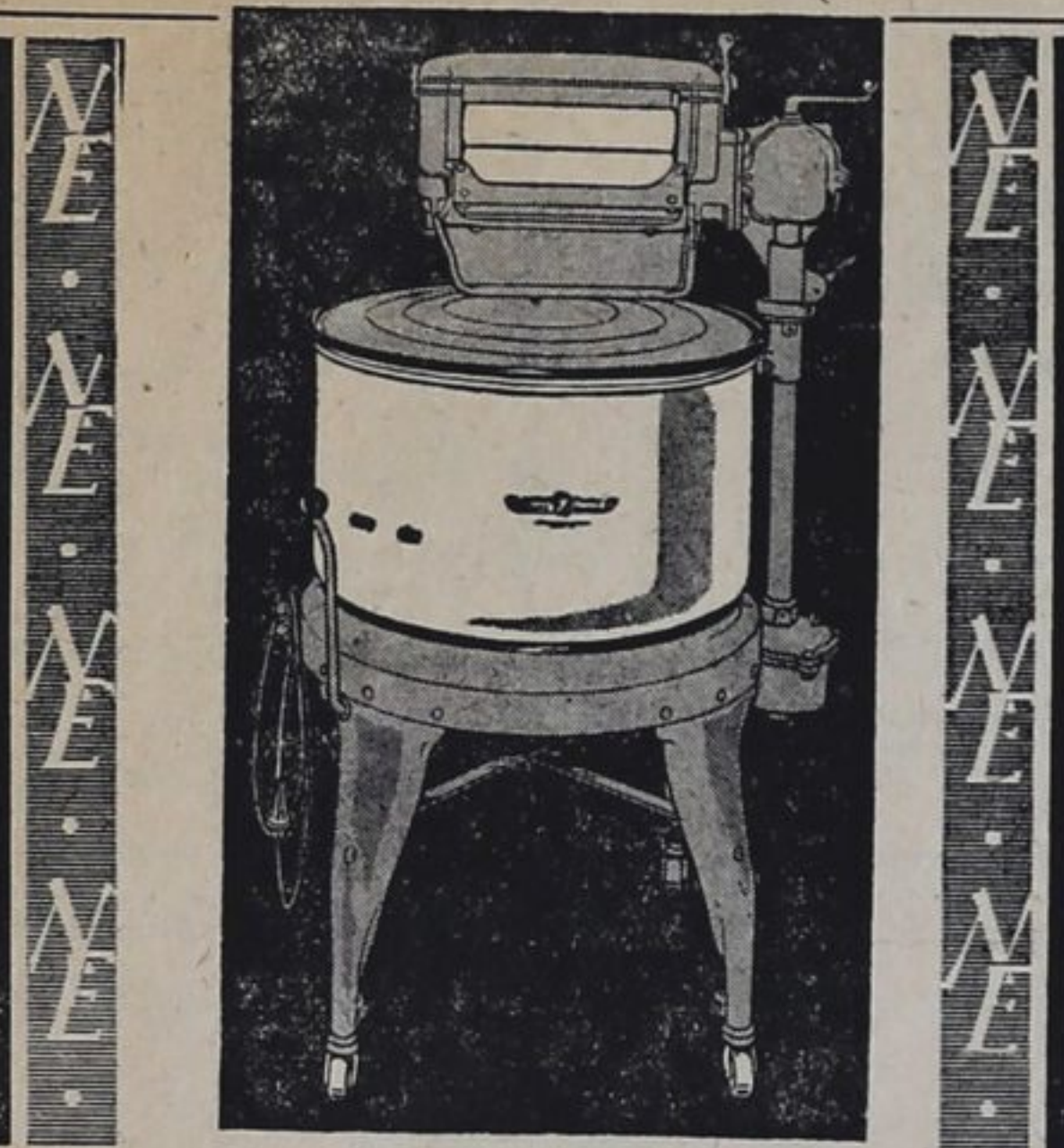
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