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OVERWORKED

While we are assured that Sir Robert Borden's indisposition is but temporary and by no means serious naturally his recent illness has occasioned anxiety as well as sympathy. It is sincerely hoped that he has by this time fully recovered and is again able to take up the heavy burden he has been carrying continuously and bravely during the past three strenuous years.

Sir Robert Borden is today Canada's one strong man and even his partial retirement through indisposition would be a national calamity. Nothing could better express this than a letter recently received by the Boston Transcript from a distinguished Canadian officer in active service overseas, when the rumour spread overseas as well as here that Sir Robert might retire from the leadership. We quote:

"Borden has from the first retained the confidence of the soldiers, because he has always sought the same end which they are seeking, and brought all available civilian resources to the search. In the coming crisis in Canada, as a result, he will have against him all the cowards, the shirkers, the skulkers, the traitors, the aliens, and, I am afraid, most of the habitants of Quebec. He will suffer from the loss of support from those who are overseas; and if he goes to the country with the traditional candidates, who have long been identified with other and debatable causes, I am afraid the forces I have mentioned will be too powerful for him. Canada then, for the moment, will be out of the war, save for the forces now here. Few in Canada are aware of the need for regular reinforcements. Even after a victory a Division is useless until recruited. After the Somme, and after Vimy we were "all in," until refreshed by new troops. If then, there be a lapse in Canada the Canadian Corps must be helpless for the time being."

This distinguished Canadian soldier concludes his letter with the appeal that the Dominion give "Borden a free hand," as the impression at the front is that if Borden wins reinforcements will go forward and that if he does not succeed no one knows what will happen. It has come clearly home to the Canadians overseas that if the Prime Minister succeeds in forming a Union Government for the enforcement of conscription and if that Government is returned to power the support that is necessary for the maintenance of the Canadian army will be speedily forthcoming. This is the one issue in the present political crisis. All who are for Sir Robert Borden are for the Canadian troops on the firing line. Those who are not for Sir Robert Borden must at least rest under suspicion of being double-minded and luke-warm in their attitude towards the war.

WAR-TIME ELECTION ACT

The War-time Election Act, of which a synopsis has already been given in The Guardian, has been designed to meet the extraordinary conditions incident to a War-time election. It is very generally recognized, even by the Liberals who precipitated it, that a war-time election is a serious blunder, that to divert the attention of the country from the one vital matter of winning the war, to split the country up

into political factions at such a time as this is a crime. It is also recognized that in order to bring the country safely through such an election, in order to prevent it falling into the hands of the country's enemies, extraordinary measures must be adopted. The War-time Election Act therefore, and very properly, makes extraordinary provisions.

There hundred thousand Canadians who valued their country and their country's honour more than life and for which they were ready to lay down their lives, are in Europe. It is only fair that they should have a voice in their country's government, a voice in the conduct of the war by their country. As far as they can be reached they will be given the vote but the impossibility of reaching even a considerable proportion of them is recognized by all. As stated by Hon. Arthur Meighen, Solicitor-General, when introducing the bill:

"Those at home who should be at home and those at home who should not be at home are in the full enjoyment not only of their ballot but of the exertion of all their faculties in whatever direction they desire to exert them in this contest, but a penalty falls on those who have been true enough and brave enough to fight our battles in that they are deprived in part of the ballot and wholly of their electorate influence. Nor can it be forgotten that some 30,000 have already fallen in the struggle. Their voices are still while the voices of those who remained behind can be heard and will be heard. Some thousands more are prisoners of war and are suffering hardships unspeakable for the sake of those at home. These men can have no voice."

To bring about such electoral conditions as will repair the injustice that would under ordinary franchise fall upon our soldiers overseas is the main object of the bill.

"It is proposed," said Mr. Meighen, "that by a measure of women enfranchisement, added strength shall be given to the voice of the soldiers of Canada. Those of their nearest kin at home may be presumed to be most likely to re-echo the sentiments of their sons overseas and by this bill the nearest female relatives of the men of our expeditionary forces who have left the shores of Canada are given the right to vote."

Accordingly, the right to vote is given by the Act to the widows, mothers, wives, and sisters of soldiers overseas, and who has a better right than these to say whether Canada shall or shall not continue in the war to the end?

There are others who under ordinary circumstances would have a voice in their country's government. Some of these are immigrants from those countries with which we are now at war and who have recently become naturalized Canadian citizens. Many of these have sons or brothers or near relatives in the enemy's ranks. "It would seem unnatural," said Mr. Meighen, even were it not undesirable to compel these men to do battle against their kin and against the country from which they can scarcely yet be wholly divorced in sympathy." These men are not asked to fight for us, and naturally and very properly they shall not be permitted to vote or to say who shall or shall not go to war for us. This class includes all aliens naturalized since March 31, 1902.

Conscientious objectors who on religious grounds refuse to take up arms, are excluded from military service; they are not compelled to fight against their consciences; they are very properly not permitted to say who shall or shall not fight or in what manner the war shall be carried on; they are disfranchised.

The Liberals in parliament are opposing the bill, obstructing it, delaying its passage. They have advanced no valid reasons against it. The Liberal press has sneered at it but has not been able to place a finger upon any injustice or any unfairness in it. In some quarters the woman franchise clause has been attacked on the ground that it is not broad enough, that in enfranchising only the female relatives of soldiers it declares all other women unfit to vote. The absurdity of this argument is its own refutation and yet it is about the only argument advanced against the bill.

To all real Canadians who think more of winning the war than of winning the election the bill is all that could be desired. The opponents of it will have only themselves to blame for had there been no war-time election there would have been no need of a war-time franchise bill.

NOTES

It is easy enough, apparently, to take a big German army into Russia. But even Napoleon couldn't bring a tenth of his force out again. And General December will soon be in command of the Russian wastes.

THE WAR NEEDS OF CANADA

THE NEED FOR GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF FOOD PRICES.

By Benjamin Apthorp Gould

The economists have for years been telling us that there is no way of regulating the action of the law of supply and demand in determining prices. The fact is that this law is not immutable, that its operation is constantly controlled, and that any definiteness in its action has been contradicted more than ever since the war. At the same time, it is possible to say that the operation of the law itself has not been affected, but that only the supply or the demand has been forcibly regulated. Thus, where a definite price is set for a commodity, it may be argued that as no one is permitted to buy or sell above or below this price all demand ceases for the product at a price higher and all supply at a price lower than that fixed, and that hence the law continues to operate. This is of course merely a quibble, as such an instance is actually the case of an artificial law enforceable by penalty overriding the general law of economics.

It should, however, be clearly understood that often the most effective method of accomplishing a price-regulating purpose is not by a forcible interference with the working of the economic law, but by an artificial variation of either supply or demand in order to permit the economic law to work under altered conditions. This is the means adopted by trusts and combinations to enhance prices, and is the only means open to them. The government on the other hand can use not only this method but can if necessary enforce direct price legislation by imposing personal penalties for infringing it.

So far as food prices are concerned, regulation through the control of imports and exports is comparatively easy in maintaining a minimum price for staples where home consumption exceeds home production, and a maximum price where the contrary is true. In Canada our production of food is far in excess of our consumption, and export regulations can keep prices down to any desired point. The one chief danger against which we must guard is not to establish this price-level so low as to lessen production, which during the war must be kept as great as possible. It is therefore necessary to see to it that the producer shall receive a price which shall yield him an adequate profit after taking into account the increased cost of production, and further to stimulate production not only in the dollars and cents basis, but by urging it as a patriotic duty. Both moral and economic influence should be used to make the farmer grow all that his farm can be made to yield, together with regulations in the direction of future productivity, such as forbidding the butchering of immature stock.

If the total production of a country exceeds by only ten per cent the demand for home consumption, the price of the ninety per cent used at home will be governed by the price of the exportable ten per cent, unless the latter be artificially sequestered. This is because no particular ten per cent constitutes the surplus, but it may be drawn from any part of total production. Lower prices than the price of this surplus cannot prevail, because in such case the foreign buyers would not take what was offered as surplus, but would buy the cheaper product available at home, and what was offered as surplus would not be exported but would go back into home consumption. Higher prices cannot prevail, because the home consumer would not buy what was offered for home use, but would buy the lower-priced surplus, and another ten per cent of the production would in turn become surplus and be worth only the export value.

It is thus evident that in regard to all food staples of which a surplus is produced in Canada the government can absolutely control wholesale prices by limiting exports, and publishing export values. This can be done in either of two ways. The private owner may be allowed to arrange his own foreign sales, but permission to export may be withheld so long as prices are above the determined figure. The way to accomplish this would be to forbid exportation except under permissive licenses, to be taken out for each export shipment, and to refuse such licenses until prices were at the desired level. The other method is for the government itself to offer a fixed price, preferably at the point of export, and to forbid all private exportation. Under existing circumstances the government can fully protect itself by making this price one at which it can resell the staples, at cost if so desired or even at a profit, either to the Imperial Government or the Allies, or to neutrals. If his price be high enough to allow the producer a due profit, he has no right to complain at not being permitted to make an exorbitant profit, and both home consumer and the foreign buyer will be benefited, as well as the government itself and the taxpayers. If it decides to sell at a profit, it is a practical method of commanding the exportable surplus at the price determined, and at the same time relieving the general public by making the home price conform to that which the government has fixed as just.

The working of such a system and the ease and swiftness with which it may be put into effect is admirably illustrated by what has been done in regard to Canadian cheese. The price of cheese up to the late spring has been subject to most violent fluctuations, and was governed only by the opinion of speculative buyers as to the future course of the market. Cheese prices on the same day varied at different factories as much as two or three cents a pound. This uncertainty as to the value of milk for cheese-making also affected injuriously the stability and price of other dairy products. Late this spring individual exportation was stopped, and on behalf of the British Government, which established cheese prices in England, a price of 21 1/2 cents a pound was offered at Montreal for cheese of a fixed grade packed in a specified manner. Instantly all fluctuation of price ceased, and cheese which had sold as high as 27 cents at the factory sold at prices varying from 20 1/2 cents to 21 1/2 cents. This variation was caused by the location of the plants with different freight rates and the slightly varying costs of packing. The cheese-makers knew these costs, and consequently the buyers, the middlemen who before this action had been heavy speculators, were limited to the bare cost of doing the business, and have had to content themselves with a profit of about one per cent on the turnover. Exactly the same thing can be accomplished in regard to wheat, flour and other staples of which a surplus is produced, even if owing to greater variation in grades, freights and so forth the carrying out of the reform should be somewhat more complicated.

If such a system be put into operation, the only other matter requiring regulation to govern prices of staples at home would be the spread between retail and wholesale prices, and this can be justly regulated in accordance with conditions prevailing in different localities. If the profit of the middleman be limited, it may result in forcing such middlemen into productive pursuits, and while this might work hardship in individual instances it would be to the economic benefit of Canada as a whole, as the middleman is economically only a necessary evil. The fact that there are more shops than are needed to supply the wants of the community is undoubtedly one of the causes of the high cost of living. The competition between them does not reduce prices, but on the contrary their number and consequent limited business increases the cost of operation and permits the few large and efficiently managed retailers to charge prices which, while slightly lower than those of the corner groceries, are high enough to

allow them to make enormous profits at the expense of the ultimate consumer. The Canadian Food Controller has apparently recognized the difficulty of establishing in Canada prices arbitrarily fixed by law, as has been necessary in Europe. It would be difficult although not impossible to provide this machinery to enforce such direct price legislation, and the same end can much more easily be accomplished indirectly in some such way as I have suggested. It is to be hoped that the public will be promptly informed of the steps which are being taken, and that they be hastened as much as possible, because much dissatisfaction has been caused by the fact that public announcement and orders have hitherto been directed to the consumer, and no statement has been made in regard to proposed regulations affecting the producer, the warehouseman, whether or not of cold storage, the packer, and the wholesaler and retail middleman. Confidence in the Food Controller needs to be made general by such vigorous action on his part as will convince the people that he is a strong man, free from influence by any of the great interests. A prohibition of the use of grain in brewing or distilling would be of great value in this regard. It is well to note that the United States, which has only been in the war five months, has already adopted nearly all the above suggestions which I have been advocating for the last two years here in Canada, and has stopped exports except under license, and forbidden the use of grain in the distilleries.

DON COSSACK WOMEN RESTORE THE BISHOP. PETROGRAD, Sept. 7.—A crowd of fanatical and reactionary women

SIR WILFRID LAURIER STATESMAN OR POLITICIAN, WHICH?

Sir.—As every reader of Canadian history knows, the Tariff Question has filled a large place there, particularly since 1874. The attitudes of Sir Wilfrid Laurier at different times are certainly not such as we should expect of a statesman. It is difficult to follow him through them all. It is said that early in his political career he favored protection but that may be given the go-by. His attitude was more pronounced when Sir John A. MacDonald and Dr. Tupper forced the issue previous to 1878. He was an out-and-out Free-trader till about 1890, when he adopted the idea of Commercial Union between Canada and the United States. It was a curious fad—indeed, to understand it—would be to condemn it at once, but to help out the dish it was mixed up with another fad, Unrestricted Reciprocity. The elector could have his choice. The former involved a uniform tariff, also pooling the revenues of the two countries, and then dividing it up in some unstated proportion. The latter policy was to be absolute free trade between Canada and the United States, and each country to have an independent tariff against all other countries, including the Mother Country. The writer heard Mr. Laurier state at a meeting in Charlottetown: "We will have trade flowing as freely between two countries as the streams that cross and re-cross the international boundary." The election fought on these issues was Sir John A. MacDonald's last contest, and his last political triumph. The rejection of those dangerous fads set at rest the tariff agitation for some time. Following this the Manitoba school question before referred to sprang up and gave better promise of success, but to prevent the tariff question being a help to his opponent, and to have attention centered on the school question Mr. Laurier, through his first lieutenant, Mr. Tarte, gave the manufacturers private assurances that their protection would be continued by the Liberal party in the event of success at the polls. This volte-face on his part left the manufacturers free to oppose the Conservative party in Ontario where sympathy with Manitoba in her free school policy was strong. Looking back at this chapter of history and observing how readily one policy was abandoned and an opposite course pursued by Mr. Laurier in the attempt to attain office did he not surely act the part of the politician?

There was only one sincere purpose running through all these acts, viz: to attain power

PREFERENTIAL TRADE

Great claim is made for Mr. Laurier's large vision in placing a preference provision in his first tariff, giving Great Britain an advantage in Canada's markets. The idea was not new, neither was the purpose imperial. Sir Charles Tupper, whilst High Commissioner at London, started a campaign for Preferential Trade between Britain and Canada. He advocated the policy of Canada placing a lower tariff on British goods than on others and in return Britain should arrange to give Canada an advantage in her markets.

The idea had a true imperial germ in it, and Sir Charles Tupper's arguments and appeals attracted wide attention throughout the whole British Empire. The great Joseph Chamberlain was impressed with the vision of it and was ready to advocate it as a part of his propaganda of tariff reform. He saw great mutual advantage in it, and also a plan of making the Empire stronger and less dependent on other countries for her trade and supplies, especially in time of possible need, as we have seen since entering this present war. But let every Canadian now consider what happened. Sir Wilfrid, being an anti-imperialist, did not like this imperial idea, neither could he endure the thought of Sir Charles Tupper getting such credit for his policy. He therefore gave Britain the preference and asked no advantage in return. Such a boon could not be otherwise than popular in Great Britain at that time so firmly wedded to Free Trade. When Sir Wilfrid made his first visit to England as premier, he wanted all the glory that was coming to him and at the first opportunity made this announcement regarding his preferential tariff. At a reception given him in Liverpool he spoke for Canada thus, regarding the Trade Preference:—"Ours is a free gift. We ask no compensation. Protection has been the curse of Canada. We would not see you come under its baleful influence, for what weakens us weakens you."

Protection was a curse and a weakness, yet he adopted it to attain power and continued it to retain power. So much then for his sincerity. Again, his pronouncement at Liverpool compelled Chamberlain to drop Sir Charles Tupper's plan entirely from his program.

Sir Wilfrid scored an apparent victory, was at the time lionized for his generosity, and killed the hope of Britain giving reciprocity advantage to other parts of the Empire. The unwisdom of that policy is now seen by Britain. This war is teaching stern lessons of necessity and true statesmanship for the policy then rejected is the accepted one for the Empire after the war, with Lloyd George as its chief advocate. Time has shown Sir Wilfrid on this great question to be a politician and nothing more. Sir Charles Tupper is dead, but his policy lives after him as the true imperial idea. More anon.

I am, sir, etc.

STUDENT.

at Taganrog, in the territory of the Don cossacks, hearing that their champion, Bishop Loann, had been forbidden to preach in the Cathedral, marched to his house and insisted that he preach. After the service, the women made a wild demonstration at the city hall. They complained that the building did not contain the portrait of a single Romanoff and demanded that the bishop be given for his residence the palace in which Emperor Alexander the First died. They marched through the streets crying: "Russia is perishing—orthodoxy is perishing—down with the synagogue—"

GROUND UNEVEN

John Humphreys is telling this one in his "Home From the Front" scene: "Fellow appealed at the tribunal 'cos he 'ad one foot shorter than the other. They passed 'im for general service abroad. The ground's very uneven in France."

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