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North West Queen Square,
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Office Hours 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
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Office Hours 12 noon to 6 p.m., 8 to 12 p.m.
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THE MORNING GUARDIAN

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1902.

PACIFIC RAILWAY SUBVENTIONS.

Mr. Mann of the Mackenzie and Mann syndicate in Winnipeg quite recently gave out that his company will have nothing to do with the Grand Trunk Pacific scheme. "Our main line will reach Edmonton by about August, 1903," he says, and adds that "of course the rapidity of construction all depends upon the aid we are to receive from the Dominion Government during the coming session." The Grand Trunk people have already made their application for Government assistance and are equally determined to have their own road independent of Mackenzie & Mann. Here then we have the basis for a battle royal between two or three great railway corporations, and between those representing the new railway projects and the Government, if the latter stands in defence of the treasury.

The demands will run into the millions, and tens of millions, and the time is near at hand when the issue must be faced by the Government and by Parliament. The country has been spending money with a very lavish hand for years past, and the ordinary demands upon the treasury will probably increase rather than diminish in the near future. These conditions must be taken into account by our legislators. Can the country afford to heavily subsidize two more Pacific Railways at the present time? Can it assist the Grand Trunk scheme and ignore the project of Mackenzie & Mann, or vice versa? And what will be the probable outcome of the applications to Parliament? This brings us to a consideration of the attitude of the country and of the three great corporations that are to be concerned in this continental railway system.

As to the country, it may be premised that the Maritime Provinces are not directly very much concerned in building more Pacific railways at the present time. They have a general interest in the progress and upbuilding of the Dominion, and would therefore like to see the great prairie country supplied with efficient railway outlets and facilities, as a matter of course, but they will look with a rather jealous eye upon big subsidies to either the Grand Trunk or to Mackenzie & Mann, or both, because these corporations are in no sense maritime ventures, and our feeling down by the sea and as taxpayers of the Dominion has all along been that too many millions have already been expended in the west in proportion to what has been expended in the east.

When we come to Quebec Province we find a different attitude from that of the more eastern section of the Dominion. Quebec is strongly interested in the Mackenzie and Mann line, which would have its eastern terminus on the St. Lawrence, would give access to the Hudson's Bay, open up the hinterland of the Province, and give short and direct communication between Quebec, on the one hand and the Northwest, the Pacific coast and China, Japan and Australia on the other. And Quebec is likewise strongly opposed to any Government aid for the Grand Trunk project. The lower St. Lawrence country looks upon the Grand Trunk with no friendly eyes. Its present western and eastern terminal are Chicago and Portland, and its function is to switch off all the western traffic which it controls and carry it down to Portland, thus robbing the lower St. Lawrence and its ports of all western trade.

looked upon as a Quebec scheme, and its line running too far north to be of advantage to Ontario, while the Grand Trunk, which intersects every portion of that Province, would give Ontario a second and very direct highway to the Northwest. In fact it is felt that the new Grand Trunk Pacific promises to be a better road for Ontario than the C. P. R. has been or is likely to be. For these and other reasons the Grand Trunk plan may be expected to receive a strong support from the big Province of Ontario, Manitoba, the Territories and British Columbia will naturally desire to have as many railway outlets as they can get, especially as they know that the five older Provinces must bear the principal share of the burden of any governmental aid that may be given them.

The C. P. R. people, while taking the broad view that more railways are needed as outlets for the Northwest, do not hold the same view with regard to the necessity for further railway lines to the Pacific. From a hint or two that has been dropped by prominent officials of the Company we anticipate that the new applicants for subsidies will be met by the opposition of the Canadian Pacific. The rival new lines cannot be expected to assist each other but the reverse. From all of which it will appear that there are very conflicting sectional and corporate interests whose views will be presented and must be considered before this subsidy question is disposed of. It may be well for the taxpayers of the Dominion that this is so, if only to prevent the country becoming too easily committed to an unreasonably large new obligation at the present juncture.

North Ontario, where Hon. George E. Foster is to receive the Conservative nomination for the Commons was carried by the late Conservative member, Mr. Foster, and won by a majority of six. But this was much the largest majority which that party ever obtained there. In 1897, 1898, 1899 and 1900 the riding was carried by the Liberals. In 1901 the Conservative member was elected, but a single vote. A constituency which has been four times carried by one party and five times by the other, may, under ordinary conditions be classed as doubtful. Mr. Foster is needed in Parliament on various public grounds, and especially to supply the want of an able Opposition financial critic.

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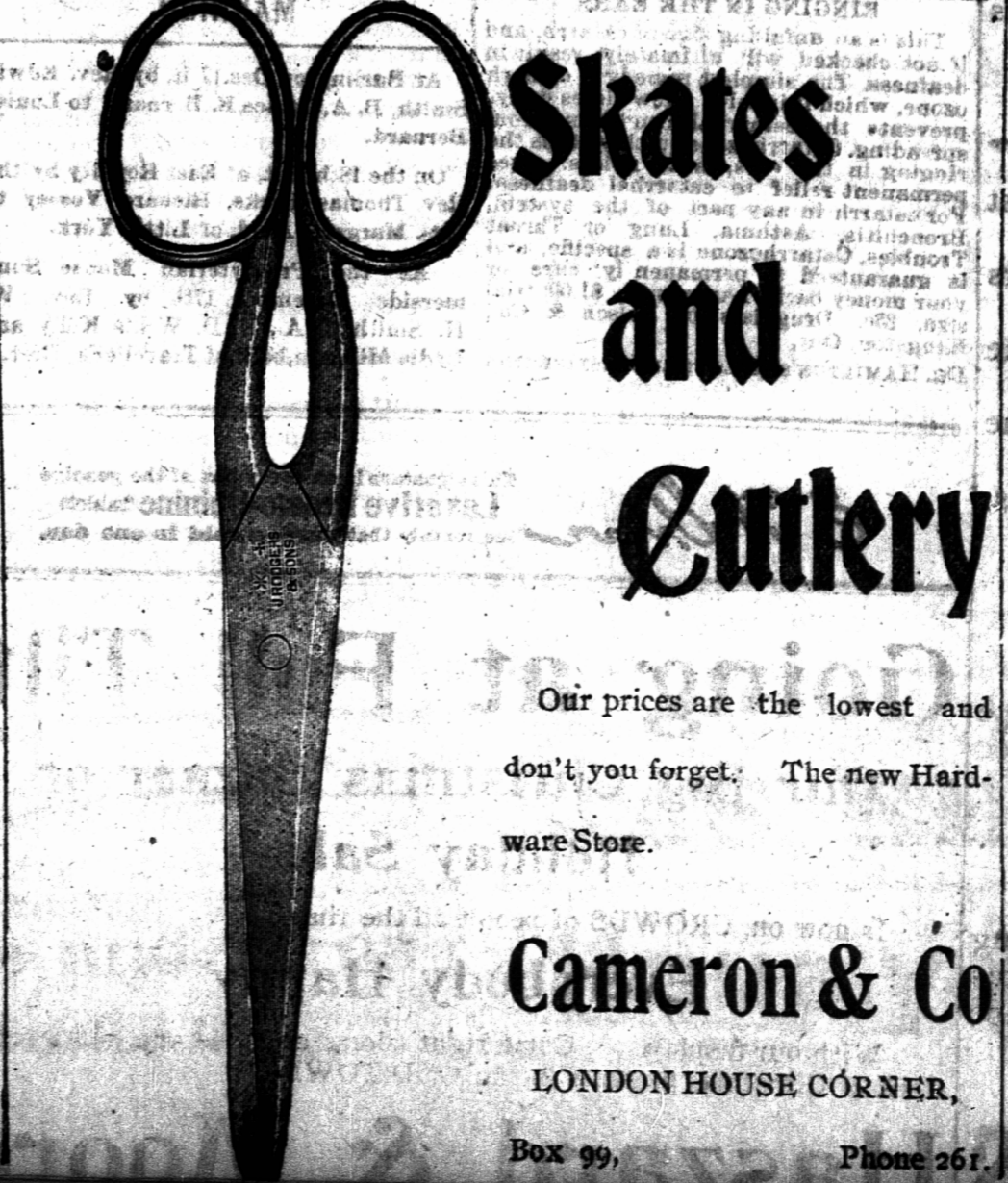
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