

THE GUARDIAN

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CHARLOTTETOWN THURSDAY, AUGUST 31, 1950

Back to Work!

Many thousands of Canadians besides the 165,000 railway employees directly affected, will resume their normal occupations today after two weeks of enforced idleness or of interruption to their accustomed labours. It has been a fortnight such as we hope never to pass through again in this country. Every aspect of our national economy has felt the blighting effect of this strike. Under the emergency measure finally passed last night, the workers will get at least as much as the final settlement offer of the railways on which negotiations foundered last Saturday night, and the union leaders express the hope that with the appointment of a top-flight arbitrator as proposed in the Act, it will be possible to arrive at a fair adjustment of difficulties.

The Dominion Government has shown a lamentable lack of leadership in this crisis. The Prime Minister maintains that he could not act before Parliament was called, despite the fact that his overwhelming majority would ensure the passage of any reasonable emergency measure which his Government chose to adopt. The fact is, however, that the strike was brewing for months, and the date had been fixed several weeks in advance of the final breakdown in negotiations. There was nothing to have prevented the Government from obtaining parliamentary authority in advance, and to have forestalled the crisis when it came.

Now that the strike is over, it is to be hoped that the disputants will approach the problem of settling their differences in a chastened frame of mind. There has been perhaps too much high-handed talk on both sides. Important as are the organizations they represent, the overall interests of the country, which have taken the worst punishment in this upheaval, are of far greater importance.

Rain, No Game

There is no victory in the railway strike. The people of Canada, through Parliament, have intervened to declare that the parties may not continue to carry their dispute to the length of industrial warfare with Canada's pantries and national security as their battleground.

In taking away the right to strike, labour's ultimate argument, Parliament assumes responsibility for providing a substitute by which employees of public utilities will be placed in a position no less favorable than if they could strike against their employer without bringing down the whole structure of national life.

To find a satisfactory substitute will not be easy. Compulsory arbitration as it has been applied to date is far from satisfactory. Perhaps the example of an Italian strike of street car conductors provides the appropriate substitute for the country-wide tie-up. They struck but continued to operate their cars. They merely ceased to collect fares.

It would require legislation to compel railways to continue to provide services gratis during such a strike, but the parties would be put in a position to bargain realistically without bringing about a national calamity.

The Duncan Report

It has been claimed repeatedly in some quarters, especially since the railway strike tieup of our car ferry service, that the Duncan Commission in 1926 had recommended that the ferry boats should not be operated by the Railway and if this recommendation had only been implemented the Department of Transport would now be operating the boats and we would have had nothing to worry about on this score.

Unfortunately this was not the case. Had the Duncan Commission so recommended, it would have been a strong argument for successive Provincial Governments to use in their representations at Ottawa and before the Transportation Commission. Instead of making this recommendation which it should have done and failed to do, the Duncan Commission in 1926 recommended merely that the car ferry service "should not be run as part of the Railway operations, but should be run by the Railway administration under separate account for the Department."

This recommendation, it is claimed, was subsequently carried out, when the car ferry account was placed under the Con-

solidated Revenue Fund. That did not help us very much, as recent events have demonstrated. It did not save the service from being shut down when the rail strike was called, and so far as it had any effect at all it proved a drawback to the Provincial Government and to Mr. Darby at Ottawa in urging that the Transport Department should take over the operation of the service in this emergency. There was the Duncan recommendation on file, insisting that the Railway and not the Government should run the service, under a separate account. Our provincial spokesmen had therefore to resort to other arguments, giving the Duncan Report a wide berth.

It is useless trying to re-write the Report at this late date, or to read other meanings into phrases which are unfortunately all too clear in their implications. The Duncan Commissioners were evidently not gifted with prophecy. Their report had its shortcomings as well as its merits. It proved of value to the Maritimes in many ways at the time; but on this subject of responsibility for our car ferry operation, and at this particular time when we are seeking to drive that responsibility home, the less said about it the better.

EDITORIAL NOTES

A few last licks of paint and straightened palings may make the difference in deciding the Rural Beautification Contest.

Even farmers have probably had all the rain they want until it is time to fill the wells for winter.

Seven American railroad presidents have been commissioned colonels. Presumably they will rank alphabetically according to their names.

The emergency session of the Legislature will have much to do in connection with the control of the Borden-Tormentine car ferries, even though the railway strike has been called off.

Job security being such a cardinal principle of union negotiation, President Donald Gordon should not be threatened with discharge for his part in the dispute.

Bidding described as "sensational" at Australian wool sales certainly does not pave the way for cheaper clothing in the near future.

The welcome for H. M. S. Snipe, arriving here this morning, will be the warmer for our own lads now receiving Old Country hospitality.

The Bureau of Statistics reports that landings of sea fish during the first seven months of the year rose to 674,041,000 pounds from 598,290,000 in the same seven months of 1949. The value increased to \$32,974,000 from \$27,118,000. On the Atlantic coast landings totalled 428,040,000 pounds, valued at \$19,395,000, compared with 398,138,000 pounds at \$16,996,000.

John Bunyan, English religious leader and writer, died this date 1688. He spent a careless boyhood, but it was gradually borne in upon him that he was extraordinarily wicked, although he never seems to have lived an immoral life, swearing being his only vice. He was in prison oft for non-conformist preaching, and it was while in Bedford prison he wrote "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners." In 1678 appeared his "Pilgrims' Progress". In 1680 he wrote "The Life and Death of Mr. Badman". He has more than fifty other works to his credit.

While this Province has suffered as badly as any part of Canada during the strike, one redeeming feature has been the distinct improvement in mail services east of Charlottetown and west of Summerside. The postal trucks have done a better job than the railway has been doing in servicing these communities. They won't like having to go back to the more leisurely methods of mail delivery which they have tolerated for so long. There is a lesson here for our railway management which they would be well advised to act upon.

Of all criticisms, the most foolish, writes Sir W. Beach Thomas, is that which laments that "such a thing is not natural." Quite a number of farmers at first refused to use the milking machine because it was against nature. It is in fact much nearer the natural process than the hands of the milker, for the action is largely a sucking action as opposed to the mechanical manipulation of the fingers. In regard to harvesting, whether of grass or grain, anything which accelerates the process helps to defeat the worst enemy, the weather. The trussing devices, now growing more and more popular, save tons of hay, and soon, thanks to the harvester-thresher, we shall be absolved of the melancholy spectacle of the ears of oats sprouting into greenness on shocks or stooks.

