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Peace Gesture Made

STALIN'S expressed willingness to enter discussion for ending the Korean war could, if followed up, become a memorable Christmas present for the entire world.

While the U.S.S.R. is not officially on the field of combat, the Russians no longer make an serious attempt to deny that they are actively supporting the Communist forces. Without their help there is no doubt the United Nations' common enemy would have folded up many months ago as neither the North Koreans nor the Red Chinese have any real equipment besides manpower with which to wage a war.

Now that all the prospects for a brilliant victory for the Communist cause have disappeared, there is nothing in it for the Soviet Union except a costly drain of material. For a country which even in normal conditions demands exorbitant sacrifices from its populace to gain military strength, this expenditure on a futile fight must be increasingly disagreeable. Moreover, there is evidence that it has interfered with the Russians' pretensions as champions of peace.

In view of these considerations, it would seem worthwhile for Stalin to step into the open as peacemaker. Yet past Communist pronouncements of a similar nature make it understandable why his words have met with scepticism. It was by the same sort of encouragement through unofficial channels that the surrender talks started. At that time it was done by inserting a few come-hither lines in a radio broadcast. The invitation was snapped up by the Americans who shortly found themselves floundering around in a trap of inaction and deceit while the enemy massed its forces in greater strength than ever before.

This time Stalin's bait—if it is no more than that—is offered through a newspaper correspondent, which is an odd approach to an issue of such magnitude. Although it would be unwise to ignore it completely, there is good reason for sniffing around it with caution. The crafty old master of intrigue would hardly expect to pull again the trick of slowing down the fight, but there are other benefits he might hope to derive from the manoeuvre. It could simply be that he is trying to put himself in a good and kindly light.

The trouble is that no matter how sincere a man's motive might be, if he has previously established himself as a scoundrel, the world is likely to go on thinking of him as one. To wear a halo with grace is Stalin's almost hopeless problem.

OTTAWA DIARY By NORMAN M. MacLEOD

The staid but somewhat sophisticated city of Ottawa, which hardly raises an eyebrow at strange oriental garb or gives a flutter of excitement to a visiting dignitary, has undergone a drastic but seasonal change in the last week.

Where a week ago it was a bustling business-like national capital in more than a little uproar over the startling revelations contained in the now-famous Currie report on Army works service irregularities, it has now settled down to being just a simple overgrown town getting over Christmas and ready for New Year's.

CAPITAL TOWN

Nearly all backbench members of Parliament and a good many members of the cabinet drifted away to their homes for the holiday, leaving the capital city to the civil servants. And they were more preoccupied with Christmas trees instead of lost markets for timber, with turkeys instead of beef embargoes, and with trying to pick out the "right" embroidered hanky for Aunt Matilda instead of searching for a new line of policy to correct some serious national or international situation.

On Sparks Street, which is always regarded as a better shopping district by those who might be classed as the neo-snobish set, there was the occasional chauffeur-driven Cadillac parked outside some high-priced jewelry or fur establishment. But the majority of Christmas shoppers were hunting for the best they could get for \$7.50—their budgeted price for a particular gift—and reckoning up mentally how many days it would be before their next pay cheque was due.

Down on By Ward Market, a few blocks east of Parliament Hill, the farmers of the Ottawa valley set up their Christmas wares, made seasonal by an abundance of home-made cedar Christmas wreaths. There, the Grade 2 steno from the sprawling national defence headquarters building jostled with a Commonwealth high commissioner in the crowd.

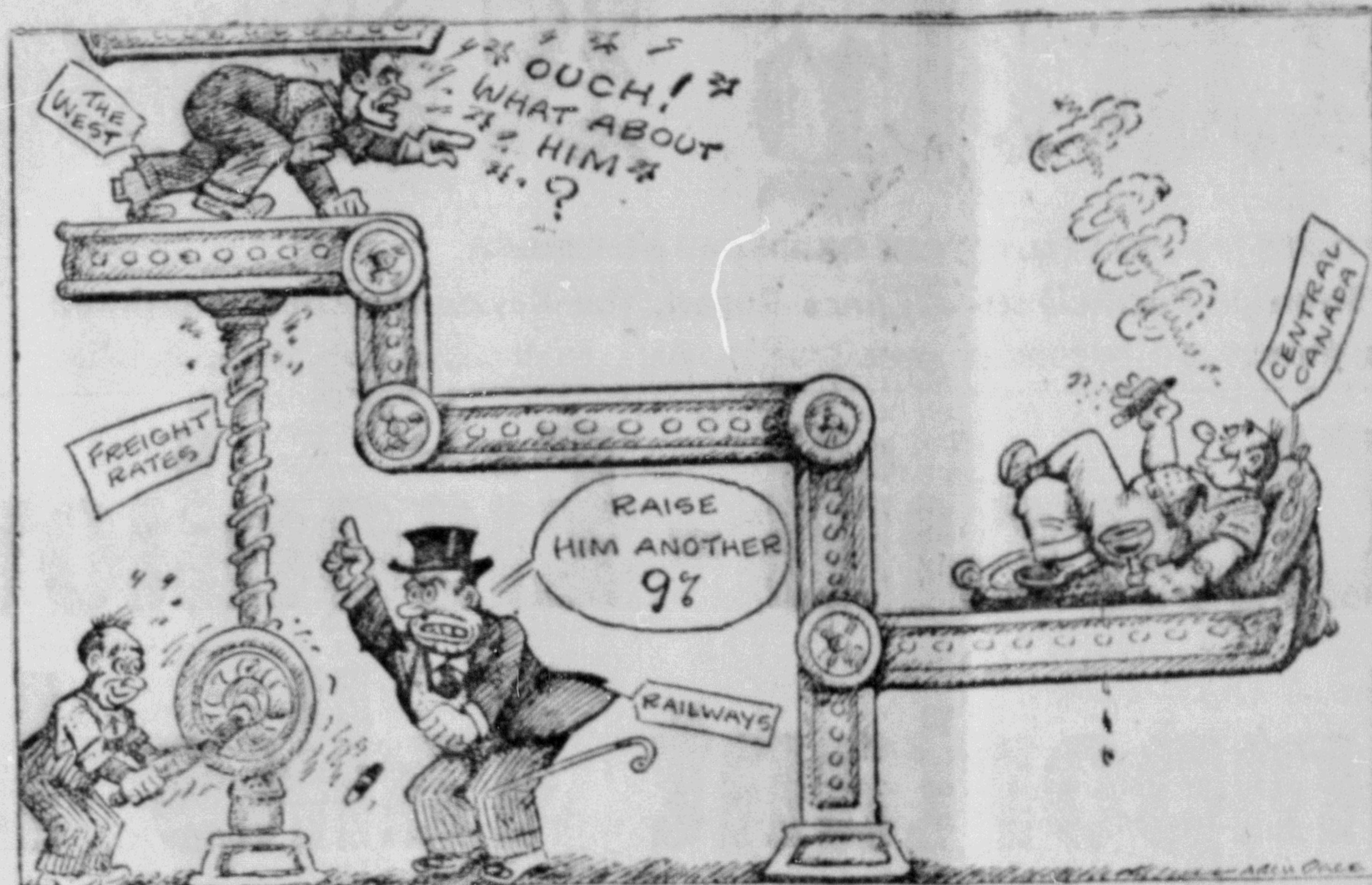
Out on Rideau Street, the crowds milled up and down the broad sidewalks, with a Lower Town brown making a wild dash to the five-and-ten for one more hank of red ribbon... while her husband probably was dashing to the nearest pub for a "quiet" beer in surroundings had in no way could be described as quiet. For the men folk, Ottawa has always been known as a great beer-drinking town.

That special hush that marks the eve of the birthday of the Babe of Bethlehem was broken here and there by carollers who roamed the streets in Ottawa on Christmas eve. Friends and relatives visited each other to exchange gifts.

Essentially, it was a small town Christmas in Ottawa.

Car Driver Distracted

VANCOUVER (CP)—Driver of a car which struck and killed a 15-year-old newspaper carrier girl was "distracted" by his girl friend, a coroner's jury was told. William Newton, passenger in the car, told police in a statement that the girl was kissing the driver and putting her arms around his neck while they were en route home from a drinking party.



SQUEEZE TACTICS AGAIN—By Arch Dale in the Winnipeg Free Press.

UNDER OUR ROOF

By JOHN STURDY

"I will get a couple of pillows," I said to my wife, "and tie them to my waist and dress up as Santa Claus for the benefit of our young son."

"Don't flatter yourself," my wife said. "You don't need the pillows."

A rather uncharitable remark, I must say. It is true that I have been having trouble with the notches of my belt lately, and the last time I bought a pair of flannel slacks I was somewhat disturbed by the salesman who told me I couldn't have pleats. "But I like pleats," I protested. "I want pleats." He shook his head. "Only pleats to size 36," he said. "After 36—no pleats."

"Don't be ridiculous," I said hotly. "The pants I'm wearing have pleats."

"You mean, they had pleats," said the salesman, eyeing my waist. Then he added: "There's no use arguing with yourself, sir. No pleats or no pants."

USED ONE PILLOW

Well, all right, I may have a well-rounded figure but I'm still no Santa Claus. And despite my wife's nasty remark, I put two pillows—well, one, then—inside the pants of my Santa Claus suit and I was all ready for Christmas Eve.

As a concession to the Christmas spirit and a child's love for Santa Claus, the guests in our house had permitted our small son to sleep in his own room that night. Ordinarily he lives with my wife and me in the shed, owing to the fact that there is no room in the house. But on this occasion my wife was adamant. "There is no fire-place in the shed," she said angrily. "Either my baby hangs up his stockings on the fireplace or I burn down the house."

"She will, too," I told Mammy and Little Augie and Col. B. Skeffington-Smuts (Ret.) and his wife Anastasia. So it was agreed to let our son occupy his own room, and late that night old Santa Claus Sturdy crept into the living-room, carrying his sack of toys.

AN INTRUDER

I was pretty annoyed to find the sofa beside the fireplace already occupied. I was particularly annoyed because the figure sitting there was dressed like me, only fatter.

"Go away, you fake!" I told this other Santa Claus.

The eyes behind the beard gave me a piercing look. "May I inquire," he demanded in a familiar voice, "if you hold a union card? I doubt it. On the other hand, I have long been a paid-up member of the United Santa Clauses of America, Local 205. Gnome!" he suddenly shouted. "Another egg-nog!"

"Coming, sire!" called a voice from the kitchen, and in a second or two a frightful-looking gnome appeared, carrying a large, steaming mug.

"You can bring me one of those, Little Augie," I said, recognizing him.

CAN'T STOP HIM

The gnome looked inquiringly at Santa Skeffington-Smuts.

"Oh, well," said the Colonel. "If he wants to play Santa Claus I suppose we can't stop him. The more the merrier—hah, hah!"

I don't suppose you have ever sampled one of Little Augie's egg-nogs. He only makes them at Christmas time, and there is very little egg to them. They are mostly nog. It is not surprising, then, that as dawn approached there were two Santa Clauses sitting on the sofa, arms entwined, singing Christmas car-

ols, and neither is it surprising that the wife of one of them—the one with the pillows—burst into the living-room in her dressing-gown, fire in her eye.

"Of all the disgraceful exhibitions! Leave the room immediately, the three of you, and get out of those clothes! What if our small son came downstairs now and saw you? What would he think of Santa Claus! And what's more it's freezing in here. You haven't even lit a fire. Not that it would bother you, in your condition!"

She was putting a match to the kindling in the fireplace even as Santa Claus Skeffington-Smuts and Gnome Augie and I beat a hasty retreat. We went to the shed and got out of our clothes, and it was just then that we heard the screaming from the house. Back we dashed to find the living-room filled with smoke and my wife gasping for breath.

"Something's the matter with the fireplace!" she choked.

At that moment our small son appeared in the doorway. "Say, pop," he said to me, "I just saw Santa Claus. The old boy's in trouble."

"What Santa Claus?" I demanded.

"The one on the roof, stuck in the chimney."

It turned out to be Hamish, of course. A slightly burnt Hamish Santa. Seems like, come Christmas, everybody under our roof—or on it—wants to get into the act.

Committees To Be Set Up After Recess

OTTAWA (CP)—Several committees of the Commons will be established early in the new year to study various phases of government activities.

One of the first to be established after the Commons returns from the Christmas recess Jan. 12 will be the defence expenditures committee.

It will be asked to study in detail the Currie report.

George Drew, Progressive Conservative leader, has suggested there is no need for the committee to inquire into the report of an inquiry. He has proposed that a general independent investigation be made of all branches of the defence department.

Prime Minister St. Laurent has indicated the government will reject the proposal.

Another committee will review Canada's accomplishments in the field of atomic energy.

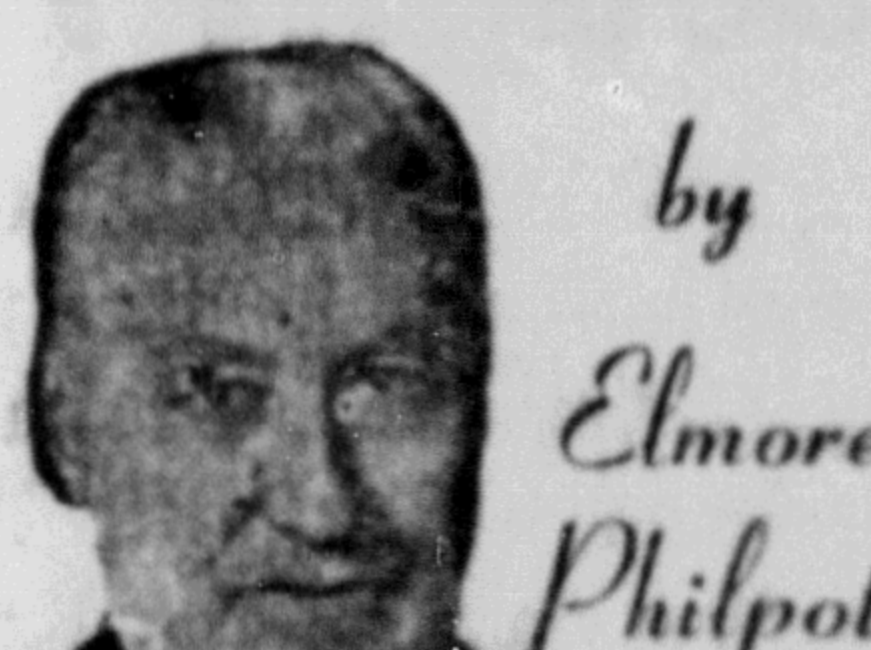
Revenue Minister McCann, who reports to Parliament for the publicly-owned CBC, has said he would have no objections to establishment of a radio committee this year.

The government has promised to establish a special committee to consider lengthy revisions to the Criminal Code.

The committee on railways and telegraph lines will be re-established to make its annual review of operations of the publicly-owned Canadian National Railways and Trans-Canada Air Lines.

Another committee may be established to consider a complete revision of the health department's Food and Drug Act.

As I See It



India and Wise Men
BEFORE I left for India a good lady urged me to visit a shrine just outside Bombay.

I hesitated to promise because my friend spoke of "Our Lady of Mount Bandra." I had visions of myself clambering up something as steep as the Himalayas. Also, the shrine belongs to the branch of the Christian religion other than mine, so I played safe and said "maybe."

But with the help of Mr. and Mrs. Bob Renwick I found the shrine alright. There was no mountain (even as big as Hamilton's) to climb—just a wee rise up which our car whizzed before we knew it.

But I was glad I went for it taught me a lesson. I knew the story of how Indian fishermen had discovered in their nets the figure, which is now enshrined as Mary the mother of our Lord. I had been told it was most lifelike. But I shall never forget the shock when I saw—not the brown haired, blue-eyed mother we westerners usually picture but a very beautiful, very dark, very very Indian-looking lady-statue. I was shocked, and humbled too. For there and all around the walls in pictures I was reminded that no nation, color, tongue or even creed has a monopoly on the Christmas story. For all the figures shown to represent the early Christians were dark like Gandhi or Nehru or Nehru's daughter.

I HAVE often wondered why the heavenly powers sent Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to be born on the fringe of the west. Why not in India, or some other place, deep in Asia?

It was not from the materialist west but from the mystic east that the Wise Men came. The eastern mind finds it much easier than the mind of the west to understand the wonderful works of Jesus, and also what He taught.

The west neglected the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount for a full 1600 years. But Gandhi demonstrated in ever-widening effectiveness that the political action taught by Jesus was not mere pious platitudes but practical, down-to-earth marching orders for a new type of army, capable of conquering the whole world, by and for peace.

OUT IN INDIA I heard more of a radiant legend, which I had already heard right here, about those Three Wise Men.

Up in Kashmir, near Tibet, holy men of the Buddhist faith say it is absurd to think that the Wise Men applied their great powers only to know when and where the babe was to be born. They say that Our Lord Himself visited Ladakh in those years of which we have no records in the Bible.

They say that the Wise Men, and others like them, never lost touch with the babe they had found in the inn.

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OUR BEST WISHES FOR 1953

Report From...

Parliament Hill

By GEORGE M. MURRAY, M.P., Cariboo

The Peace River country was very prominently before Parliament when the member for Peace River, Solon Low, made a rather vigorous attack upon the Hon. George Prudham of Edmonton, Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys, over a speech delivered by Mr. Prudham some days before.

Mr. Low chided the Minister with the fact that, although a Pacific Coast rail outlet for the Peace River country has been under discussion for more than a generation, the people are still compelled to ship their stuff an additional 500 miles east and south to Edmonton on the way to Pacific Coast ports.

Mr. Low reviewed statements that had been made by various political leaders in Alberta encouraging the people to believe that a Pacific Coast outlet would be built. Here are Mr. Low's words from Hansard, wherein Mr. Low pledges the Social Credit party to build the Pacific Coast rail outlet just as soon as they take over the government at Ottawa:

"My constituency of Peace River does, indeed, need a rail outlet to the coast. The vast majority of the people out there have no confidence whatever in Liberal promises. So they are prepared to support a movement that has demonstrated that it just does not go around at election time making idle promises. They know that a Social Credit government at Ottawa would have that railway between Hines Creek and Dawson Creek extended to Prince Rupert and/or Vancouver in its first term of office."

"The Peace River country is even now one of the greatest food producing, timber producing and mineral producing areas in America; and the 65,000 people up there are entitled to better treatment than they have had at the hands of a Liberal government here in Ottawa. They are carrying a transportation burden beyond their ability to bear, and certainly away beyond what they should bear."

COULD BUILD RAILWAY NOW

Not wishing to interfere in the discussion between Mr. Low and Mr. Prudham I could not refrain from arising, following Mr. Low's speech, to point out to the House that construction of the Pacific rail outlet could be proceeded with forthwith if the Social Credit governments of Alberta and of British Columbia were really serious about building the Pacific Coast rail outlet.

The people of the Peace River country would be more interested in having a direct rail outlet to the Pacific than in the fortunes of any party now represented in the House of Commons. Those of us who are Liberals, naturally, feel regretful that the Social Credit party has taken over in British Columbia. But at the same time, we have a great feeling of pride and confidence in the fact that our party in British Columbia actually carried the Pacific Coast-outlet line to Prince George before its defeat.

GOVERNMENT WOULD AID

Completion of the railway, as I say, is a matter of interest to all and I propose before this Parliament is over to have it placed on record, that if the governments of Alberta and British Columbia join forces in building a rail line from Prince George into the Peace River country to meet up with the Northern Alberta Railways, the treasury of Canada will give a subsidy of \$14,000,000 per mile of every mile of new construction.

I will personally suggest a contribution of \$25,000 per mile, but would leave the question to competent engineers who are better able to estimate cost of construction through the Peace River Canyon.

KNOCKS DINE PASS HIGHWAY

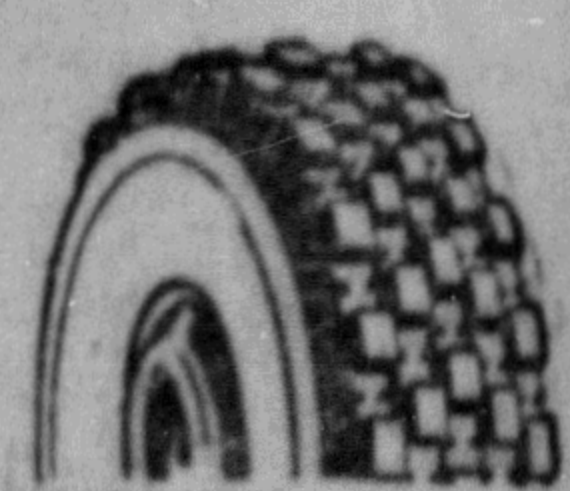
There is one feature of Mr. Low's address which will not go over very well with loyal British Columbians. He spoke derisively of the Pine Pass Highway which joins Dawson Creek and Prince George, and which was completed by the Liberals in 1952 at a cost of \$14,000,000.

The Hon. Mr. Prudham in his address had referred to this new highway as being something that the Liberals could be very proud of. Mr. Low in replying to Mr. Prudham (page 792 in Hansard) said, "He told some very interesting things about the Peace River country. I do not know why but he got mixed up with British Columbia building a little connecting highway from very near the Alberta border to Prince George."

I think it was misrepresenting the facts to give the House and the public the impression that this was a "little connecting highway." It was one of the major engineering projects of generation. Regardless of what Mr. Low may say about it, it is a magnificent highway which is of tremendous value to Albertans, as well as residents of the Peace River Block of British Columbia. Moreover, it is a highway of tremendous military value. It gives Washington, Oregon and southern British Columbia direct access to the great Alaska Military Highway.

Splendid Record

LONDON (CP)—Taxi-driver Fred Upton, 69, recently retired after 45 years' service. He estimates that his rounds have taken him over more than 600,000 miles of London's streets. He was commended by the police commissioner for his accident-free record.



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