

(January 23)

Some Western Canada Topics.

BY HON. A. L. SIFTON.*

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on "Some Western Canada Topics," Hon. A. L. Sifton, Premier of Alberta, said:

Mr. Chairman, and members of the Canadian Club of Toronto.—When your President invited me the other day to make some remarks upon Western topics before the Canadian Club of Toronto, not on account of any failure on his part, but possibly because I left Ontario when very young, he stated to me that I would meet a few of the business men of Toronto, but that did not convey to me the impression of the tremendous growth in population in the past thirty or forty years. I thought there would be a few men sitting down to a luncheon together. Imagine by astonishment, when I entered this hall, to find such a large gathering. We are not in the habit in the western country of having a large hall crowded, though we have grown to some extent.

When I left Ontario thirty-five years ago to settle on the western plains, there was a population in that whole western country—a population, it is no exaggeration to say, of, at the outside, fifty thousand—scattered over the thousand miles from the Red River to the Rocky Mountains, and these inhabitants were in scattered settlements, outside of the city of Winnipeg, which had about twenty-five hundred people. During these years I have lived in different parts of the three Provinces, and though not claiming to speak with authority for the people of these Provinces, yet living there as a person of ordinary intelligence, I have absorbed a certain amount of knowledge of conditions in the West, which are different from those in

* The Premier of Alberta, Hon. A. L. Sifton, is a member of the family that had previously given conspicuous contributions to Canadian public life. His father, Hon. Charles Sifton, was a member of the Government of the old Northwest Territories, and his brother, Hon. Clifford Sifton, was for ten years Minister of the Interior in the Laurier Cabinet. Hon. A. L. Sifton served the Province of Alberta with great satisfaction and distinction as a member of its Supreme Court for several years before he was called to the Premiership last year, on the resignation of the Rutherford Cabinet. Mr. Sifton's record so far justifies high expectations of his rule of the new Province.

the rest of Canada, not only in legislative standards, but in other conditions of the country as well.

I am pleased to have the opportunity of speaking to the citizens of the great city of Toronto, which exercises great influence in the affairs of the Dominion, and of bringing to your notice those differences and distinctions which arise unnecessarily between the eastern provinces and the western.

I am not going to say that our resources, composed of what may be called settleable land, are not controlled by the Dominion of Canada in a way different from that adopted in other provinces; because, so far as homestead land is concerned, it is under the Dominion Department of Immigration; it appears to be necessary and advisable that it should be so, that the departments of land and immigration should be jointly responsible for its settlement, that the government which brings in immigrants should also conduct the settling of the vacant land. But there are in that vast country resources of different kinds. We have throughout the length and breadth of the prairie provinces what might be called swamp lands, which need only to be drained to make them exceedingly valuable; and there are grazing lands, which need to have water put upon them to make them excellent farm land. And in the Rocky Mountains, every one of the passes yet investigated shows that those mountains are ribbed with seams of hard coal; while from the international boundary to the Yellowhead Pass, all through the prairie lands are underlying stretches of softer fuels, lignite and other kinds, which will prove of great importance as the country becomes more settled.

These resources need money for their development and for the constant looking after them. They are held to be the property of the Federal authorities; still there is a divided control; they get the money, and we spend the revenue.

Then there are the timber resources. It is not with us there as it was in Ontario, when the boys of this part of the country used to gather hickory nuts and walnuts, and no timber was supposed to be any good but second-growth hickory. There is nothing of those varieties of woods in the West, but all along the northern boundary of the three provinces and up to the Arctic Circle, for seven hundred miles, practically, along the eastern slope of the Rockies, there are, still undeveloped, magnificent resources of poplar and spruce, suitable for building and manufacturing material for years to come. And there are undeveloped water powers, sufficient not only to manufacture the pulp wood of the future for years to come, and all the manufactures that will be made from

these timbers, but also to grind the grain grown on the five hundred thousand acres of tillable land to feed the cities that will arise in that country.

I am not speaking of these things with the idea of advocating that people should invest in well-concocted schemes of speculators in town lots, for the purpose of holding them for a rise in value; but I am saying them for the purpose that those who may be interested in manufacturing may know that in the western provinces is a market which is practically unlimited, and also cheap material and cheap power, wherein you would be safe in putting in branches of almost any kind of manufacturing carried on in the Dominion of Canada.

I am saying these things for the purpose of telling you who are interested in the wholesale trade, that in the growing cities of the western provinces you may establish branch houses which will develop possibly faster than some in the cities of the older provinces in the years gone by, such for example as in the city of Toronto, for they will supply those millions that will people those provinces.

I am speaking of these things to men who are interested in large financial institutions of this country, the banks and loan companies, which are dependent upon that country. When there are a million people there you have a guarantee that that country has at least reached a stage of security where it is no longer a speculative investment to open a branch of a bank or a loan company. They should not do as they did in times gone by: When times were good, people did not need money, then the banks urged it upon them; but when times got poor, they withdrew it, because it was scarce in Europe and in New York. The time has come when the financial institutions of this country must look upon that as a settled country and a place where investment is secure. And it must be treated upon the same basis as that on which the other provinces are treated; not urging the people to invest, but keeping upon a steady conservative business basis as financial institutions should be carried on.

I am also bringing these matters to the attention of people of Ontario upon another ground: it is not a political ground, because both the great parties of this country in dealing with this question affecting these provinces made what is sometimes considered a blunder. I won't say now it was a blunder; but it may have been proper in the time of thin settlements; when taking chances, that those three prairie provinces should be treated differently from the other provinces of Canada, but the time has come when they will probably demand

to be placed upon the same footing as Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and Quebec and Ontario, and British Columbia. Confederation cannot stand upon an equal footing unless all the provinces are placed upon the same standing as regards their natural resources. And those natural resources which require a large amount of money must be under constant supervision by the local authorities, upon which the people of Canada largely depend; they must be under the control of the people, and their development is going to be placed in the hands of the people. There must be one solid plane for every province, so that they shall be firmly united together.

The prairie provinces have no quarrel with the eastern provinces; there is no jealousy over political power; but a desire to live with you in unity, upon an equal footing. The people of Alberta and Saskatchewan and Manitoba must be placed upon an equality, and they will join heart and hand with the people of the rest of the Dominion, so that this Canada of ours may be a country of which we may all be proud.