

AFFAIRS AT OTTAWA.

Breezy Letter From the Capital Dealing with Matters Before Parliament.

(Special Correspondence.)

Ottawa, March 26.—The important feature of the past week was the presentation of the annual railway budget speech by Hon. Geo. P. Graham, Minister of Railways and Canals. There have been many notable speeches in the past on this subject, but scarcely one which was more comprehensive, and in which the deductions were more concise, or the recommendations laid down upon a better or more progressive basis.

CHANGE PROPOSED.

Mr. Graham proposed to place the Intercolonial under the management of a board consisting of two of the present high officials of the road, Mr. Foster, the Deputy Minister of Railways and Canals and another gentleman to be selected from one of the great railway corporations. This board to have the management of the railway, and report once a month to the Deputy Minister by a report so complete that the minister would be fully informed of the condition of things, and he would be responsible to parliament.

CANADIAN RAILWAY SYSTEM

Mr. Graham paid a tribute to the courage of the Canadian people in confronting the problems of transportation and solving them. Canada has the greatest mileage of railway of any country in the world. On June 30 last there were 22,966 miles of railway in the Dominion. The increase last year being 514 miles. Shortly after June 750 more miles were placed in operation, so that today the total mileage is 23,716 miles. Last June there were under construction 4,327 miles of railway in Canada.

Speaking of the Intercolonial, the Minister contended that it was a well managed road, although as a business proposition it was originally handicapped because it was one of the conditions of Confederation that it should be built to bind the provinces together, rather than be a money-making institution.

Last year the gross earnings and working expenses were as follows:

Gross earnings	\$9,173,558.80
Working expenses	9,157,435.53
Surplus	16,123.27

A large amount of rolling stock was charged up to working expenses. In addition to this at the beginning given to the employees aggregating of the year 1907-8, increases were \$206,000. Were it not for this item the surplus would have been \$221,000. It has been charged that fair wages were not paid on the Intercolonial, this disposes of that allegation. Mr. Graham asserted that the employees of the Intercolonial were as well off as any railway men on the continent, and that they would bear comparison with the employees of any line in North America.

WHERE THE MONEY WENT.

Alluding to capital expenditure, which appears high, Mr. Graham explained that the magnificent new shops at Moncton including a spur of railway, would cost over \$2,000,000. Speaking of these shops, Mr. Quesnel, International Vice-President of the Boiler-makers' Union, who visits all railway centres on the continent, says: "The extent of the shops and their equipment certainly surprised me. When completed and equipped they will have no inferior, and I have visited every railway shop they will have no superior not merely in Canada, but in the United States, of any importance in North America."

The Prince Edward Island Railway is a belt line and part of the government system. Upon this last year there was a deficit of \$95,367.96—which would have been some \$11,000 less had it not been for higher wages paid to that amount.

EXPENSES ARE LOW.

Mr. Graham demonstrated that the average cost per train mile on the Intercolonial was 1,295, or less than that of any railway in Canada, excepting the Grand Trunk. The Intercolonial also compares favorably with the trunk lines of Canada in the maintaining of rolling stock per mile run. The Grand Trunk is the only railway in Canada that maintains its way and structures at a figure lower than the Intercolonial. These comparisons prove that the allegation of extravagance against the government road are unfounded.

In reply to the charge that more men were employed on the Intercolonial than the business of the road demanded, Mr. Graham presented figures showing that the percentage per mile was about the same as on the other railways in the country, and that the road was not overmanned.

KEPT MEN AT WORK.

Mr. Graham alluded to the fact that other railroads in Canada reduced their staff by 17,608 employees owing to the falling off in the traffic, but that the government realized that it would be a great hardship to cut down the force, owing to a temporary condition.

Neither the Dominion Government nor the Ontario Government had dismissed men, but retained the same number, notwithstanding the hard times.

The Minister demonstrated that the Intercolonial stands as well financially as other lines running substantially through the same territory, considering them separately and apart from their transcontinental connections. The Intercolonial is a detached line, covering part of a territory, a line without focus from the west, dependent entirely upon its own trunk line.

LOW GRADE OF TRAFFIC.

The explanation of the low rate charged on the Intercolonial is found in the fact that the character of trade carried only entitles the road to charge the lower grade rate—there is also the competition by water from Sydney, Quebec and Montreal and other points to be met—the people get the benefit of the competition provided by the Intercolonial—the freight rate per ton per mile is lower on the Intercolonial than on any other railway in Canada.

Mr. Graham showed that there had been expended on capital account altogether for government railways, the Intercolonial and Prince Edward Island railway \$94,825,192, while the total expenditure on canals had been \$93,457,874. So that if one section of the Dominion had government railroads at heavy expense, the other had government canals at an equal outlay. So that the one offset the other.

TENDER SYSTEM IS BAD.

One of the reasons for the heavy expense to which the Intercolonial is subject in the purchase of supplies is found in the fact that by advertising for tenders all dealers in supplies know exactly what the government must buy, and the quantities. As to the prices paid these were also published, and are open to all men to read.

The Minister complained that the system of public tender, and publishing the accounts of the railway in detail supplied information to the trade which operated adversely to the government, and opened the way of co-operation to maintain prices on the part of dealers. Then again the tender system operates against the government because the unsuccessful tenderer will not ship freight over the road although they may be heavy shippers.

Mr. Graham expressed the opinion that unless some arrangement is made whereby the Intercolonial will become the outlet for some transcontinental line, it will only be a local road for all time to come, and there is not enough local traffic to keep it going on a paying basis—This led the minister to favor the idea of acquiring branch lines.

MUST HAVE BRANCH LINES.

On this point Mr. Graham said that the question of branch lines must be faced, as it does not need an authority on transportation and railway traffic to understand that there can be no prosperous main line unless it is fed by branches stretching out into adjacent territory. The minister referred to the action of the Canadian Pacific in this regard, and the way in which the Grand Trunk Pacific was reaching out in the west and establishing branch lines to feed its trunk line, and the Intercolonial must do the same thing. Continuing, the Minister said that while the present conditions do not warrant the government in launching out on the acquisition of existing branch lines, and the construction of new ones, the time cannot be far distant when the government will be forced to take one of two positions, either to adopt the policy of expansion itself, or in the interest of the road and the country it serves, lease the railway to some company that will adopt these business like measures.

GRAND TRUNK PACIFIC.

On the prairie section of the Grand Trunk Pacific, Collingwood Schreiber, chief engineer western division for the National Transcontinental railway, reports to the Minister of Railways that the railway is complete from Winnipeg to 8½ miles west of Battle river, a distance of 683½ miles.

Upon the eastern division of the National Transcontinental, from Moncton to Winnipeg, a distance of 1,804 miles, the following percentage of work is done:

From Moncton to the New Brunswick line, 255 miles, 39 per cent done.

From last point to Clear Lake, province of Quebec, 398 miles, 53 per cent done.

From last point to near boundary of Quebec and Ontario, 272 miles, nothing done.

From the last point to 248 miles to the westward, 4 per cent done.

From the last point, 258 miles to the westward, nothing done.

From the last point to Winnipeg, 374 miles, 87 per cent done.

The entire line is under contract, with the exception of the entrance into Winnipeg.

The total expenditure from the inception of the work up to 31st December, 1908, is \$15,924,156.

Mr. Graham concluded his address by assuring the House that anything done with respect to the management of the Intercolonial would be done with the interests of the Intercolonial railway at heart, and above all with the object of giving the people whom this railway was built to serve, the best service at the minimum cost.

FOSTER REMINDED OF HISTORY

In the course of his speech Mr. Graham was interrupted by Mr. Foster, who asked irrelevant questions relating to imaginary deficits. Mr. Graham retorted sharply in the following words:

"What I am doing now has nothing to do with deficits. My hon. friend (Mr. Foster) has been so accustomed to deficits all his life that he has deficits on the brain."

This rejoinder effectually silenced the verbose representative from North Toronto, who has not yet recovered from the verbal trouncing administered to him by Mr. Knowles of Alberta, quite recently.

FISHER LANDS ON FOSTER.

During the discussion on the civil servants' salaries, Mr. Foster made many statements for which Mr. Fisher called him to account. Mr. Foster interrupted Mr. Fisher to say that in 1896 the Conservative party tried to get a vote through the House for agricultural purposes, and were prevented by Mr. Fisher and his leader, Sir Richard Cartwright. In reply to this Mr. Fisher said that he was not a member of the House at that time. A little matter of fact like this, however, does not trouble Mr. Foster, it is a fair example of how near he gets to the truth.

Later in the debate Mr. Fisher scored heavily—he told Mr. Foster that in 1896 the people refused any longer to have him (Foster) handling the finances of the country, and he concluded a scathing rebuke to Mr. Foster in these words:

"And if today the present government is still in power, if Mr. Foster and his friends are still sitting to the left of the speaker, it is largely because the people of Canada last October, were afraid that if they allowed the leader of the opposition to attain to power Mr. Foster would again handle the finances of Canada. Judging from what we know most men will say that Canada was right, and they will continue to say that just as long as Mr. Foster is in the position which he now occupies in his party, and is the future Minister of Finance of the Conservative party."

This statement of Mr. Fisher was received with loud expressions of approval from the House.

GET THE BEST MAN.

Some discussion arose in the House on the appointment of a commissioner to succeed the late Mr. Greenway. After lengthy speeches had been delivered by members of the opposition, Mr. Michael Clark of Red Deer, traversed the whole situation in ten minutes. His speech was an example of what can be accomplished by a man who addresses himself to the subject. Mr. Clark said what was wanted was a man having capacity for work, qualifications for the position, ability to examine into, not only the needs of the farmer, but the needs of the whole community, a man of judicial qualities, who can procure and appreciate evidence from all classes.

NEW G. T. P. LOAN.

The government has given notice that a loan of \$10,000,000 may be made the Grand Trunk Pacific. This will prevent the sacrifice of securities in the present state of the money market and ensure no delay in completing the road. This is a national undertaking and the people will support the government in any action likely to hasten the time when this railroad will be open for traffic throughout its length.

The session has lasted two months, and no scandal has been brought forward yet by the opposition. Trivial matters, which at best are questions of committee. The public business appears to be conducted upon lines which indicate care in regard to the public interest.

Trade returns and treasury receipts continue to show an improvement and the economy practiced by the government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier shows that it may be trusted to guide the affairs of the Dominion safely through the period of depression.

"You give a 'prominent citizen' as authority," growled the editor "Everybody will suspect it's a fake."

"Let 'em suspect," replied the reporter airily. "If they knew the name of the man they'd be certain it was a fake."

Under the circumstances the editor did the best he could.—Philadelphia Ledger.

Mrs. Knicker—Wouldn't you vote the same way as your husband?

Mrs. Bocker—Yes, but I would first tell him which way to vote.

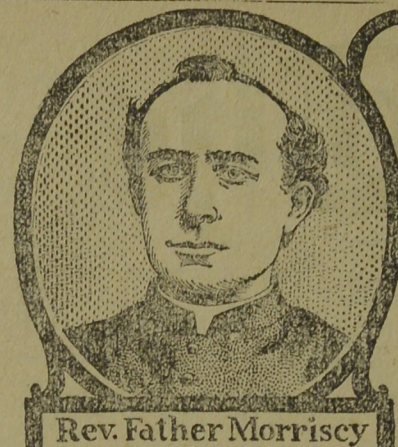
"Is there any redeeming feature about these tube gowns?"

"Well," replied the trolley magnate addressed "they pack well in a car."

—Louisville Courier-Journal.

She—Is it true that Miss Bank is going to marry the Prince?

He—Er—well they have issued a denial of the story which contradicted the report as to the falsity of the rumor that the account was untrue.—Brooklyn Life.



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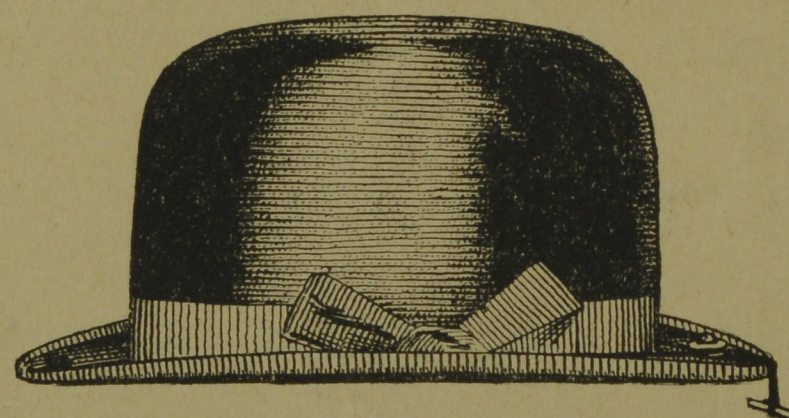


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