From the Capital

TRANSPORTATION MATTERS STILL TO THE FORE IN PARLIAMENT.

Terms of Proposed G. T. P. Loan—Progress of Transcontinental Construction—Intercolonial Railway Plans—Provision for Protecting Level Crossings —Customs Revenue Showed Gratifying Increase Last Month.

The Government's proposal to lend the G. T. P. $10,000,000—repayable in 10 years—for completion of its prairie section, is to be discussed in the House this week. The real occasion for the loan is that construction work has cost very considerably more than was foreseen at the time the probable expenditure was calculated. That the Government action under the circumstances is wise seems pretty generally admitted. No actual financial burden is at all likely to be imposed upon the Dominion thereby. Back of the $10,000,000 of 4 per cent. G. T. P. bonds secured by the property of the road, is the guarantee of the G. T. R. And the 4 per cent. interest rate should cover all cost incurred by the Government loan.

Construction Progress of New Transcontinental.

The report of the National Transcontinental Railway Commissioners, covering the work done in the construction for the last nine months of 1908, was presented to Parliament this week. During that period the total expenditure on the Government section of road was $18,866,212, making the total expenditure up to December 31, $45,924,156. At the end of the year the number of miles of grading completed was 668, and 309 miles of track were laid. The whole line from Moncton to Winnipeg is now under contract. The contract for the section between the Winnipeg and Fort William branch has been approximately 82 per cent. completed, and the contractors have been notified that the balance must be so far completed by September next as to permit of the operation of the road in handling the grain trade of the West next fall.

A report was also tabled this week on the progress made with the prairie and mountain sections of the Grand Trunk Pacific up to December 31. On the prairie section from Winnipeg to a point eight and a half miles west of Battle River, 683½ miles, the line is now completed. There are 39 elevators and 52 loading stations already built. From Battle River to a point 50 miles west of Edmonton, 72 miles, the grading and bridging are practically completed, and rail-laying is in progress. From the fiftieth mile west of Edmonton to Wolfe Creek, the end of the prairie section, 75 per cent. of the grading is done. On the mountain section the only work so far done is on the first one hundred miles east from Prince Rupert.

Future Policy for Intercolonial.

The Minister of Railways and Canals has made his awaited announcement as to the Government's future policy for the Intercolonial. It does not satisfy everyone—what Parliamentary announcement ever did? Complete removal from party politics is scarcely provided for—but some progress is indicated in that direction. The proposal is to put the management under a commission of four—two Intercolonial officials, the Deputy Minister of Railways and a practical railway man taken from some other company. This commission is to control the national roads, but be responsible to the Government through the minister.

The Government measure for dealing with level crossings of railways seems to meet with general favour. The provisions of the bill have been explained as follows by the Minister of Railways:

Two hundred thousand dollars a year for five years is to be contributed by Parliament to the fund, which will be administered by the Railway Commission. It is provided that no one crossing shall receive more than 20 per cent. of the cost of protection from the federal contribution. No crossing shall receive from the federal share of the fund more than $5,000. The board will also exercise the power to apportion the cost between the railways, the municipality and the Government fund. It is to be noted that crossings by railways not yet constructed shall be protected at the expense of the railway companies and without any charge on the fund or the municipality.

The Dominion Finances.

The Finance Minister this week brought down in the House of Commons supplementary estimates for the current year, ending with March 31. The outlay provided for is $3,521,935. There has already been spent on account of this year's business $106,000,000, and March's outlay will probably be over $7,000,000. For the eleven months of the fiscal year ending with February the expenditure on consolidated fund account totalled $67,004,842. On capital account the expenditure for the eleven months was $39,302,102. For the eleven months, entries up to the last day of February on the books of the Finance Department show a total revenue of $75,504,822, a decrease of $12,096,477, as compared with the corresponding period of 1907-08. While the year's deficit is not pleasant to contemplate, there is some consolation in remembering that Canada is not alone in experiencing sharply decreased revenue during a season of business depression. The United States is confronted with the probability of a shortage of $140,000,000 for the full fiscal year, unless there is a marked change before the end of June next.

In Canada, there is some encouragement to be taken out of the financial statement of the Dominion for the month of February. It indicates that the difficulties which the Finance Minister has had to meet during the past year or so in respect to falling revenues and increasing expenditures are lessening if not ending. The total revenue for the month was $6,567,186, as compared with $6,577,027 for February of last year. Expenditure on consolidated fund account was $3,963,626, a decrease of $424,192, and on capital account $22,486,553, a decrease of $1,036,435. The net debt of the Dominion decreased by $171,237. During the month the customs revenue increased by $41,000, and the miscellaneous revenue by $128,140 though the excise revenue decreased $123,239. The total net debt of the Dominion on February 27, was $308,054,789.

THE BELL TELEPHONE COMPANY has declared the regular quarterly dividend of 2 per cent., payable April 15, to shareholders of record March 25.