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Topics of the Day

BUILDING the National Transcontinental Railway from Winnipeg to Moncton is now under way. The section between Winnipeg and Lake Superior Junction ought to be finished by September 1st at the latest, if wheat is to travel over it this autumn. The Grand Trunk Pacific branch from Lake Superior Junction to Fort William will be completed by that date. It is already well under way and trains can be run over it for a considerable distance. The Government section is much more backward, however, and there is little likelihood that it will be completed by the date mentioned. The present prospects are that the "spout" of the Western hopper will not be enlarged this year.

Work was begun on the New Brunswick section last week, between Edmunston and the Quebec boundary. The New Brunswick people are pleased to think that some more of their territory will be made accessible and another avenue of trade opened up. Already, in their imagination, they see St. John excelling Boston and Portland in the magnitude of its trade.

The portion of the Grand Trunk Pacific between Portage la Prairie and Edmonton is being rushed as fast as the scarcity of labour will permit.

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When the Hon. Mr. Fielding made his budget speech last November he estimated that the surplus of revenue over ordinary expenditure, for the nine months which constitute the present fiscal year, would be thirteen millions. The figures are now about complete and it would appear that the estimate was five millions too low. In 1903, the surplus was about fifteen millions, which was the record until the present year.

Mr. Fielding claims that the net public debt will have been reduced about seven and a half millions, during that period, which is pleasing indeed. The gross public debt is increasing and will continue to increase until the National Transcontinental is built and paid for.

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Senator Melvin Jones, president of the Massey-Harris Co., has come out frankly with the statement that his firm do not expect to do as much business in the West this year as formerly. Only forty per cent of last year's crop was moved before the snow came, and very little has come out since. The farmers have not been able to secure cash for new purchases. The late spring has accentuated this.

The general opinion seems to be that while the West is working under difficulties just now, its progress is not likely to be seriously hampered by present conditions. The great expansion has made money hard to procure and is limiting speculation; but the wealth and population of the West is steadily increasing. It seems, nevertheless, to be good policy for all business men at the present moment to "play safe" and be prepared for emergencies.

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There seems to be no question about the ability of the Hon. William Pugsley to carry the constituency of St. John city and county. He will thus transfer his activities from the New Brunswick Legislature to the House

of Commons. Originally a Conservative, like his predecessor in the office of premier of New Brunswick, Mr. Pugsley has been transformed into a leading Liberal. The New Brunswick statesmen find it easy to change their political name. The province is small, and the politician who fights the reigning government at Ottawa has little hope of promotion. Opinions of the ability of Mr. Pugsley vary considerably. Some claim that he is an opportunist, others that he is a man of considerable parts. There is no doubt, however, that when he reaches the House of Commons he will be the leading representative of his province. That is something. With Mr. Emmerson out of the government, one of the portfolios must, under our system, go to New Brunswick and therefore to Mr. Pugsley. Whether he will get that of Railways and Canals remains to be seen. There is no question as to his being taken into the Cabinet, and seeing that the Minister of Railways has usually been a New Brunswick man, it is only reasonable to assume that he will get Mr. Emmerson's portfolio if that gentleman does not return to the administrative ranks.

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A fast Atlantic steamship service has been talked about for years. Just now the talk has been revived to such an extent that there must be something behind it all. The Allans and the C.P.R. have improved their service considerably and a further improvement may or may not be economical. If the governments of Great Britain and Canada decide that it is important that the service should be improved and are willing to bonus a faster line of boats to the extent of a couple of millions a year, it could be done. At first blush it looks as if it would be a high price to pay for the whistle. In the meantime, the promoters of the idea are keeping the cables busy telling us how excellent are the prospects.

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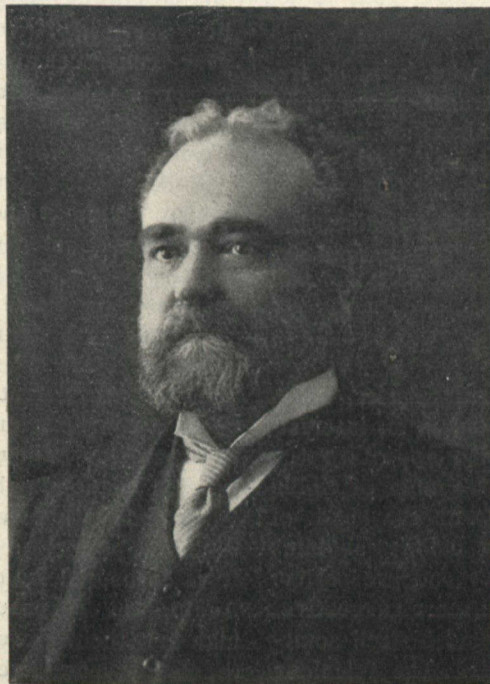
Some of the newspapers of Toronto have been making an attack on the Privy Council because it reversed a decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in regard to the contract between the Toronto Street Railway and the city. One went so far as to say that the

Privy Council had "robbed the city of its principal rights under the street railway contract" and urged that only questions affecting constitutional matters should be sent to England for adjudication.

The Canada Law Journal comes to the rescue and states that "the ignorance displayed in these criticisms is amazing." It thinks that the journal that would say such things as are indicated is decidedly "yellow" and maintains that the finding of the Privy Council is entitled to the fullest respect. That the finding reversed the opinions of three Canadian courts does not seem to influence the editor of this legal journal. His answer to the newspaper criticism in that respect is not so full as might be expected. Still in the main he is right. Criticism of the Privy Council should be based on something more important than disappointment.

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The traps for salmon fishing between Vancouver Island and the mainland are now set and the season is on. A trap costs about \$8,000 for piles and driving alone.



Hon. William Pugsley.