

From the Capital

PARLIAMENTARY DOINGS AND DISCUSSIONS.

**Conservation Commissioners' Report—Discussion upon
Cobalt Lake Mining Dispute—Senators Dis-
approve of Canadians Investing so Large-
ly Abroad—Government Owner-
ship and Control—Customs
Receipts Increase.**

The report of the Canadian commissioners to the International Conference at Washington, on the conservation of the natural resources of North America, was presented to Parliament a week ago, signed by the Dominion's delegates, the Hon. Sydney Fisher, Hon. Clifford Sifton and Dr. Beland, M.P. It embodies the unanimous findings and recommendations of the representatives of Canada, the United States, Mexico and Newfoundland.

The general principle of these recommendations is that each country shall appoint a Conservation Commission and shall make an inventory of the national resources. The first step will, undoubtedly, be undertaken promptly in the near future by each country, following which other recommendations of the conference will probably be gradually embodied in legislation.

Farmers Complain of Combines.

A deputation from the Dominion Grange has waited upon the Dominion Government with a view to having it strengthen the laws against combines. The argument advanced is that the tariff law, providing for increased duties where combines can be proved to exist, is under present conditions but imperfectly effective—since the person who may be injured by the combine must take proceedings at his own expense. The Hon. Mr. Fielding stated to the deputation that the matter would be considered thoroughly by the Government, but gave as his opinion that thus far it had been considered inadvisable to follow the plan of a Government investigating officer in such matters. "Work through the criminal law, and not through the tariff" seemed to be the gist of his advice.

Provincial Rights and Jurisdiction.

It will be remembered that some time ago, the Legislature of Ontario passed an Act extinguishing the alleged title of the Florence Mining Company to the mineral rights in Cobalt Lake. It then sold the property for \$1,000,000 to the Cobalt Lake Mining Company and confirmed the latter in title and possession. A subsequent appeal to the Dominion Government for disallowance of this provincial legislation was, upon the advice of Hon. A. B. Aylesworth, Minister of Justice, refused. During the past week, a motion for the papers relating thereto precipitated an interesting debate. The mover criticized both the Ontario Government for passing the legislation and the Dominion Government for not disallowing it.

In reply, the Minister of Justice emphasized the fact that the province had exclusive jurisdiction over property and civil rights, "however cruel and wanton may be the acts of spoliation and confiscation." It was not to be expected that this implied criticism of the Ontario Government's action would pass unnoticed and Toronto reports make it clear that one of the interesting features of this week's legislative proceedings there was Premier Whitney's

spirited response to the comments made at Ottawa by the Minister of Justice.

Provincial rights and jurisdictions, in one aspect or another, are just now calling for considerable attention. In the Senate some discussion arose over the second reading of a bill respecting the Collingwood Southern Railway Company. Both Senator Gibson and Sir Mackenzie Bowell expressed the view that all railways in Canada should be brought under federal jurisdiction. After considerable debate, pro and con, Senator G. W. Ross called attention to the fact that in 1907 Parliament had incorporated this particular company, as a company for the general advantage of Canada.

This week, too, the contentious Canadian, Liverpool and Western Railway bill was again talked out. It was pointed out that the Province of Quebec, through its agent, had protested against it in the Railway Committee, and that there was no guarantee that the company was not coming to Parliament because the powers it desired would be refused by the Government of that province. Strong opposition was taken to the principle of the bill giving the company the right to apply to water powers the expropriation powers of a railway company.

Mexican and South American Investments.

The matter of Mexican and South American enterprises backed by Canadian capital was up for recent discussion in the Senate. On motion for second reading of a bill respecting the Brazilian Electro-Steel & Smelting Company, Limited, and one respecting the Mexican Land & Irrigation Company, Senator Loughheed questioned the advisability of endorsing the principle of such bills. There was some doubt, he thought, whether Canada had constitutional right to give companies authority to carry out works in foreign countries. He doubted whether it was good policy to encourage the investment of Canadian capital abroad.

Government Telephones Proposed.

A resolution calling upon the Government either to undertake a national telephone service, or to secure by its control lower rates than are at present in force, gave rise to interesting discussion in the House this week. Those opposing the idea of a Government undertaking of this sort referred to the present control of rates through the Railway Commission, as all that could well be sought. It was pointed out that no fair comparison could be made in this matter between the conditions in Canada and in Europe. Glasgow had gone in for public ownership, but after two years' experience had failed utterly to accomplish any betterment of conditions, and was forced out of business. The nature of the telephone service in some European countries is certainly not such as would satisfy the people of this country.

Customs tax receipts for February as reported to the Customs Department show an increase of \$25,000 over those of the same month in 1908. The gain is not much, but is better than nothing.

COMMENCING FROM THIS DATE, no fireman in the employ of the Montreal Fire Department will be eligible for promotion in the service if he has reached the age of fifty.