

Our Ottawa Letter

Close of the Session—Naval Bill will Come Back—Meighen on Lobbying

By The Guide Special Correspondent

Ottawa, June 6.—The second longest Parliament since confederation, that of 1904 when the G.T.P. contract was under discussion still holding the record, came to a close at four o'clock this afternoon. Stress and storm marked the final scenes and it was perhaps appropriate that they should, it having been, if not the longest, the most strenuous of Canadian Parliaments. The cause of the trouble was the recently interred Naval Bill which the Senate buried so quietly a little more than a week ago. Sir Wilfrid Laurier evidently did not want to see the House rise without ascertaining whether the bill had been buried for keeps. He was assured in a most spirited manner by the Prime Minister that the bill was to rise again from the dead, but in a slightly altered form. The Premier in a word stated that the action of the Senate was a great wrong to Canada and the Empire and that next session he would again introduce the bill and that if the money was voted the three vessels which Mr. Churchill has announced will be constructed will be purchased and placed at the disposal of His Majesty. Putting Premier Borden's declaration of future policy and Mr. Churchill's announcement together one can only come to the conclusion that what is now proposed is that Canada is to become a partner with the Mother Country in the British navy and that the three dreadnoughts will not represent an increased margin of strength to meet an emergency.

Senate Reform

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who replied to the Prime Minister with equal spirit, did not fail to see this point. He was inclined to ridicule Mr. Borden's assertions that the Senate would be reformed along constitutional lines. Mr. Borden would not touch the upper House, he said, if it would only do as he desired. If he wanted to introduce a real reform of the Senate along constitutional lines the opposition would be quite willing to render the government assistance. The upper House, he said, had not deliberately killed the Naval Bill. The Senators had simply asked that the question be referred to the people. As for himself, he would continue to stand for the policy of a Canadian navy, manned by Canadians and controlled by the Canadian Parliament. On that issue he challenged Mr. Borden to carry out the promise he had made to go to the people if Parliament declined to pass the measure he introduced in December last.

And there the matter is likely to stand until the House meets again, when the issue will all be fought over again with probably the same result. But much time will be taken up which Parliament might well devote to the consideration of domestic problems affecting the plain people. But perhaps Parliament would just as soon be otherwise engaged.

Who Killed the Highways Bill?

As everybody has expected since the bill was introduced the act under which the Federal government proposed to give aid towards the construction of highways throughout the Dominion again failed to pass. The bill followed much the same course as last year, the opposition inserting amendments setting forth that the money should be divided amongst the provinces on a population basis and striking out the clause under which the minister of railways could build a highway in any part of the Dominion. The contention of the Liberals was that the government proposed to interfere with the rights of the provinces in respect to roads and that back of the bill was a sinister design to build up an effective political machine. Yesterday the bill came back to the Commons and after a heated debate the government majority declined to accept the changes made by the upper House. The million and a half it was proposed to spend was in the supplementary estimates and when the item was reached at an early hour this morning F. B. Carvell moved an amendment to the effect that the money be given to the provinces for this year as extra subsidies to be spent on roads. The ministerial majority had to vote down the proposal on a division of 42 to 21. This was the final division of the session. The Senate also made some amendments to the bill to provide for the pur-

chase of I.C.R. branch lines. The upper House proposed that when the government made a contract for the purchase of a line it should be submitted to Parliament for ratification. The bill as passed by the Commons majority provided only that a report should be made to Parliament. The House declined to accept the amendment and the bill was slaughtered.

Railway Subsidies

The striking feature of the last week of the session as a whole has been the wonderful facility with which the representatives of the people have voted away the revenue of the country. The Canadian Northern subsidies, amounting to fifteen millions, subsidies to the Temiskaming and Northern, amounting to two millions, the G.T.P. loan of fifteen millions and twenty-three millions of supplementary estimates went through at the rate of thousands of dollars a minute and with very little discussion. As a paragraphist in a Toronto evening newspaper aptly described it: "This was get away week at the capital—they got away with everything in the public treasury." The C.N.R. subsidies were debated at some length, the opposition contending that the C.N.R. should be given a loan rather than a subsidy. Mr. Burnham, of Peterboro, declared himself to be against subsidies altogether, but when the vote was taken he discreetly absented himself. The only real plain talk indulged in by way of criticism of Mackenzie and Mann came from William German, of Welland, who declared that the two as contractors for their own road had made ten million dollars out of it. They own practically all the stock and in the end will control the whole enterprise for which the people have paid out millions. He thought it was about time for "Bill" and "Dan" to show some faith in the enterprise by putting some of their own money into it as Lord Strathcona

and Lord Mount Stephen had done when they were building the C.P.R.

The Liberals moved a series of amendments, including one by Hon. Frank Oliver, declaring that the C.N.R. should submit new tariffs to the railway board for the lines west of Port Arthur which should not exceed the rates charged in Eastern Canada except insofar as the company was able to show that cost of operation is higher in the West. Another called for the placing of the British Columbia section of the line under the railway commission, the company having entered into an agreement with the B.C. government that its rates are not to be controlled by the board. Western members supporting the government were impelled by party allegiance to get up and vote against these amendments.

The main argument advanced by Premier Borden and Hon. W. T. White was that the Canadian Northern was entitled to the subsidies because Mackenzie and Mann have not received as much federal support as the C.P.R. and the G.T.P. They almost succeeded in persuading the House that the two new knights of the realm have been badly treated in the past. Curiously enough they absolutely declined to include in their calculation over four million acres of land which the C.N.R. got as a result of taking over the charters of other companies and which Sir Wilfrid Laurier estimated was worth thirty-six million dollars.

Obliging the Bankers

An interesting development occurred in the House on Monday in connection with the consideration by the Commons of amendments made to the Bank Act by the Senate. The trouble was stirred up by Mr. Nickle, Conservative member for Kingston, and one of the progressives in banking matters, who strongly objected to the action of Hon. W. T. White in accepting the amendments without protest. Mr. White had previously explained that the amendments were not of any great importance and in view of the desire for early prorogation he suggested that they be accepted. He was of the opinion that they did not affect any of the principles incorporated in the act and deemed essential by the banking and commerce committee.

Then Mr. Nickle cut loose with some pretty candid remarks. He objected particularly to two of the amendments. One was the clause inserted by the committee making it obligatory upon the banks to establish transfer offices in each province. The other was the clause calling upon the banks to submit a detailed report to the government. The Senate in dealing with the first amendment made the establishment of transfer offices permissive instead of compulsory. The word "detailed" was stricken out of the second amendment of the other House. Mr. Nickle was of the opinion that the Senate had taken the very heart out of this section of the bill. "The committee on banking and commerce, or certain sections of it," he said, "fought the interests that wanted to leave the Bank Bill exactly as it was. We fought the matter fairly, day after day before the committee; we brought evidence to substantiate our position, and, after hours of work, we made our report. Now we find everything nullified by the stand patters in the Senate."

R. B. Bennett, of Calgary, desired to associate himself with every word that had been said by the member for Kingston. He said it could be asserted without any fear of successful contradiction that the Banking Act over which Parliament has labored for six or seven months is, substantially speaking, the Banking Act which was on the statute book of Canada twenty or at least fifteen years ago. He stated further that the act is not in accordance with the spirit of our institutions.

The Bankers' Lobbyist

Dr. Michael Clarke was disposed to be guided by the opinion of the Minister and expressed regret that the member for Kingston and the member for Calgary seemed to be included to form a "cave" at this period of the session.

Arthur Meighen was not so inclined, however, and jumped clean over the party traces. He said that while objecting to the action of the Senate his chief purpose in rising was to protest against the lobbyists securing too easy access to the House of Commons as had been the case in recent years. While he recognized that it is difficult to say that the lobbyist shall come this far and no further it was not difficult to arrive at the conclusion that he interferes far beyond the limits within which he should be confined. "I am informed," he said, "that within the other House, while this bill has been under consideration, the paid solicitor of the Bankers' Association sat within the rail of that House, or at all events immediately without it, and that he went so far as to interfere with statements being made by Senators on the floor of the House. That being the case, it would be a matter of extreme surprise to me if this bill had come back unemasculated. We should address ourselves to the question and decide once and for all what shall be the rights of lobbyists or what shall be the rights of representatives in these corridors, in committees and in the House generally. If we decide that, we will do a lot to remove the distrust that exists, and has existed for many years, among the people of Canada, a distrust that, I venture to say, is not altogether unfounded."

E. W. Nesbitt, of North Oxford, replied with some heat that he had been a member of Parliament for three or four years and that no lobbyist had ever approached him in the general sense of the term. Previous to becoming a member of the committee he had been asked to vote for bills, but since becoming a member of committees of the House he had been given a wide berth. Mr. Nesbitt took one exception to the statements made about the solicitor for the Bankers' Association who happens to be his own brother, Mr. Wallace Nesbitt, K.C., of Toronto. "I want to tell my hon. friend," he said, "that my brother does not have to stoop to be a lobbyist for the Bankers' Association or for any other body in this country. My brother is quite independent of any corporation in this country. He came here as a lawyer representing the Bankers' Association and if he were asked by the leader of the Senate (Mr. Loughheed) to take a seat on the floor of the Senate he would have been rude to have refused." Mr. Nesbitt further declared that he personally resents lobbying and by that he meant "taking a member by the sleeve and leading him off and talking him into something that his own judgment would not let him do," which would appear to be a very good off-hand definition for the practice of lobbying as it prevails at Ottawa.

(Signed) GERALD LIVELY.

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Sometime They'll Carry Freight

Sir Danny's after dollars, and Sir Willie's after cash;
With a "gentleman" called Hanna and the patriotic Lash.
(When you've counted "Mr." Nicholls you've the great quintuplicate—
It's mostly called the "C.N.R." when dealing with the state).
By the help of bits of bunting, and shouts of "Let's be free,"
They're going to get "mazuma" that was made by you and me.
Now I'm going to give some reasons, which I've culled from near and far.
Why every British Object should support the C.N.R.
First—The higher cost of living is admitted now by all,
Five dollar smokes are sure to cost five twenty in the Fall;
The frequent trips to Europe, they must take a lot of dough,
Let's give 'em forty millions—it will help to make things go.
Then there are lots of little things which they are sure to need,
Which they must have because of want, and not because of greed;
(They're quoting little chinless counts a good bit under-par).
The "baby" wants a jewelled top, and "Maud," a motor car.
There's a silver fox for "Mother," and "Tommy" wants a yacht;
And then there's wine and shiny stones for—I needn't tell you what.
Then think what it must cost to cook that patriotic hash
In "The Canadian Countryman," as served by Mr. Lash.
Again there is "The Guide" to buck, the Socialists to slate—
It costs a lot of money, does a railroad up to date.
They bear the "White Man's Burden," to bear it better still
They've got a lead-pipe cinch upon the waters of Brazil,
And there are mines in Mexico, a most unsettled land;
It's a costly process, pacifying every rebel band.
And the natives want a tramway under Corcovado's height,
Sal Paulo wants a power plant, and Monterrey wants light.
Again, there are lobby-men to square—perhaps some parliaments?
They'll make that fifteen millions look as small as twenty cents.
Then there are labor troubles—those agitators ask
That workers have enough to eat—it's a most ungrateful task.
This building of Dominions, this opening up of lands—
These little sums they're asking for are really small demands—
Then the bad I double W raise trouble on the line;
And profits look like wilting at a place called Porecupine.
There's the actual cost of building—it really gave 'em shocks
When contractors from the Rockies said the rock was mostly rocks.
Then they must grab the waterfronts; there are townsites to locate.
And there is coupon-clipping, and there's stock to irrigate.
There is rock among the mountains to be sold for garden plots
And sub-dividing muskies into fancy building lots.
The Empire-builder's lot is just the hardest 'neath the stars—
The boards of trades are after rates, the farmers after cars—
So let them have the money, and don't ask for it back
But paint their pretty pictures all around the Union Jack.
Then, when you're on your uppers, and without a bite or sup,
Just think of the Dominion you are helping to build up.
You give them all they're asking for, and then sit down and wait,
And, perhaps, when they are ready, they will start to carry freight.