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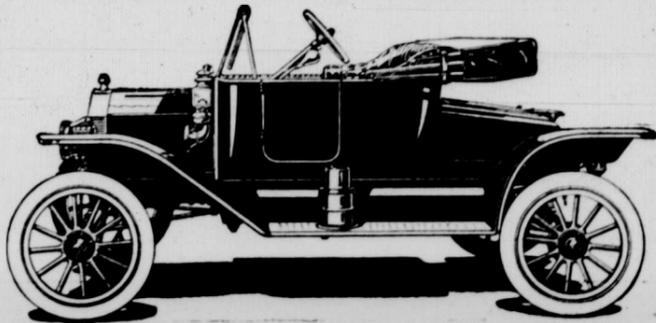
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Our Ottawa Letter

Graham Defends N.T.R. Commission in Seven-Hour Speech—Implement Men Quit Liberal Party

(By The Guide Special Correspondent)

Ottawa, March 27.—This week in Parliament has been given over largely to a debate of the alleged scandal in connection with the construction of the National Transcontinental Railway by the late government. The discussion was commenced on Tuesday and will be continued well into next week. Announcement was made at the beginning of the week that the budget speech would be made on Monday next by Hon. W. T. White, but, owing to the prolongation of this debate, Mr. White's statement has been put over until Monday, April 6.

The N.T.R. debate has developed a curious situation. The discussion is based upon a motion by Hon. George P. Graham, ex-minister of railways. This is a motion of censure charging that the Staunton-Gutelius report is a wilfully partisan document; for which the government deserves the censure of the House. Insofar as a defence of the Commission and its findings is concerned the government is on the defensive. On the other hand in regard to the charge that there was much extravagance in connection with the construction of the road the opposition is doing the defensive work.

Several unusually long speeches have been made on the N.T.R. report, including an effort of over seven hours by Hon. George P. Graham, and a reply by Hon. Arthur Meighen of about three and a half hours' duration. It is, as a consequence, practically impossible to summarize the arguments on either side.

It would appear from the standpoint of the government that the best point made by the commissioners against the Liberals was in connection with the contract let to M. P. and J. T. Davis, on which they made a profit of \$740,000 without doing any of the work themselves. It would seem that after the full statements which have been made on both sides of the House that the old commissioners would have been better advised had they cancelled this contract when it was not proceeded with at once and also if they had not, as shown by the solicitor general, relieved the contractors of the liability clause which made them liable for a fine of \$5,000 per month for failure to live up to the terms of their undertaking.

The chief weakness of the situation for the government, undoubtedly lies in the circumstance that the report made by Messrs. Staunton and Gutelius was in some respects a palpably partisan document. The commissioners failed to conceal their determination to make capital against the late government and the Grand Trunk Pacific. This, of course, was a very foolish thing for them to do, because it has created the opinion that the commissioners, and perhaps the government, was actuated by a desire to harm this great national undertaking. Another apparent weakness has been the failure of the commissioners, or the ministerial speakers, to place their fingers upon one specific case of graft in connection with the paying out of the \$140,000,000 which was expended by the commission named by the late government to construct the road. For months previous to the production of the report of the investigating commission statements were made broadcast that startling revelations were to be expected. It follows naturally that, no charge of graft being made and the criticism being confined to charges of mismanagement and extravagance, there is disappointment in government circles which is freely expressed by the members in private conversation.

Mr. Graham, in concluding his long speech, said he had tried to show that the gentlemen who composed the investigating commission had their views fixed long before they were put on the commission. He claimed to have shown that one of the commissioners was an enemy of the policy, and the other an enemy of the project. "I have tried to show," he continued, "that the government of Canada will not act on the find-

ings of this commission, because every day of its life the government is violating the chief findings of the commission."

Mr. Graham went on to say that as a result of the changes in the grades Canadian ports would suffer. He had endeavored to warn the government

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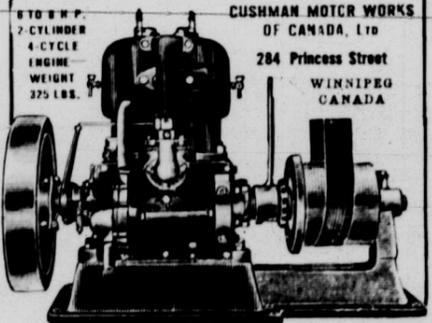
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