

# The Westminster Bridge Case

The bridge over the Fraser at New Westminster was built by the Province at a cost of over one million dollars. Application was made to the Dominion for a subsidy. It was repeatedly pressed without avail. It is the policy of the Dominion Government to assist bridges over navigable rivers. It refused in this instance on the grounds that it was being built by the Province and not by a private company, which it was stated would create a bad precedent. This is confirmed by a letter which Mr. John Hendry wrote to the New Westminster Columbian. A local company had been formed to take over the bridge for the express purpose of securing the subsidy, of which Mr. Hendry was a member and the promoter. He said:

## HOW THE SUBSIDY WAS POSSIBLE.

"To obtain the subsidy which the Dominion Government was willing to give to the Provincial Government through a bridge company, a local company was formed to secure the expected \$300,000 to \$350,000 for the purpose of handing this money over to the Provincial treasury. The Columbian opposed the proposition, and it is to blame, with others, that the Provincial Government has not received a contribution from the Dominion of about \$350,000 for the construction of the New Westminster bridge."

Why the Dominion Government should be willing to give a subsidy to a private

company which would hand it over to the Province, and not directly to the Province itself, is hard to understand, except that in the latter their friends would receive no "rake-off," which is the true and only explanation.

## HOW IT IS ELSEWHERE.

Since 1881 the Dominion Government has contributed in subsidies about \$3,000,000 to some 22 or 23 bridges, sixteen of which subsidies were voted during the existence of the present Government. The greater number of them are for bridges in the Province of Quebec. The one outstanding fact in connection with the matter is that while so many bridges in other parts have been liberally subsidized it has been found impossible to induce the Dominion Government to assist to the extent of a dollar over the Fraser at New Westminster. Take the case of the bridges at Ottawa and Quebec, the latter costing the Government \$1,000,000, they are practically provincial bridges, and are only nominally private, having been built wholly out of public funds. The difference is merely technical as compared with the bridge at New Westminster. The difference which does exist is wholly favorable to assistance to the latter, it being a Government undertaking purely for public purposes, and without a cent of private interest or "graft" being involved. In the other case the friends of the Government make a profit out of the construction.

# Local Aspect of the Grand Trunk Pacific

Early last fall, after the details of the proposed contract were published and while the House of Commons was still in session, in plenty of time for action, the Provincial Government made strong representation to the Government at Ottawa and to the various members from British Columbia urging that provision should be made for the construction of the railway in British Columbia from the coast simultaneously with construction from Winnipeg west. We were assured solemnly that the interests of the Province in this respect would be carefully guarded by the Liberal members. The bill passed its second reading, minus the promised provision, and we were left as we were, at the tender mercies of the railway company. It was subsequently discovered that amendments to the act of last session would be necessary, and an early and practically a special session of the House was called for that purpose.

## A LOST OPPORTUNITY.

It was the one opportunity for our Liberal representatives to have demonstrated that their allegiance to the Province that they were sent to Parliament to represent was superior to their allegiance to party or the demands of a railway corporation. They failed in their duty and in a conception of their own political responsibilities. The bill was allowed to pass the House of Commons without provincial protests being regarded. It is understood that Mr. Morrison at one time intended to make a stand, but did not. We know not why, but can surmise. In the Senate, Hon. Mr. Macdonald's amendment, though in a measure supported by Senator Templeman in his speech, was voted against by both Senators Templeman and Bostock. Senator Templeman, wishing to secure some kudos out of the situation, placed a notice of motion similar to that of Senator Macdon-