

# Our Ottawa Letter

C.N.R. and G.T.P. Both Want Money—Protected Interests Very Busy at  
Ottawa—Navy Question

Ottawa, March 20.—Parliament has devoted the week to routine business and the voting of supply. The bills which have been receiving consideration and which have in all cases been advanced a stage correspond in their general character to legislation which was being put thru last session during the final week or ten days of the session. In other words, general business is this session being well advanced, while the measures of greater importance will come at the end. One of the most important debates has been fixed for next week in connection with the consideration of the estimates for the Department of Railways. It has been agreed that on Tuesday next Hon. J. D. Reid, the acting-Minister of Railways, on the motion to go into supply will make a general survey of the work of the department during the year, more particularly relating to the conduct of the business of the I.C.R. and the construction of the National Transcontinental Railway. Hon. Frank Cochrane, who is noted for a disinclination to make speeches has, since he became minister, declined to make this general statement. Dr. Reid has agreed, however, to conform to the long established custom.

After the conclusion of Dr. Reid's statement the report of the commission which inquired into the cost of construction of the N.T.R. will be analysed by Hon. George P. Graham, ex-Minister of Railways, who will probably conclude with a condemnatory motion. This will precipitate the debate which may possibly take up the remainder of the week. Mr. Graham and other Opposition members will condemn the report made by Mr. Gutelius and Mr. Lynch Staunton as being misleading in character and drafted with the object of providing campaign literature for the government. Since the presentation of the report Liberal members have been busily engaged asking questions relative to the operations of the Commission, which at the present time is charged with the construction of the N.T.R. They maintain that they will be able to show that in most instances the practices established by the original commission have been adhered to and that many of the matters complained of in the report have been duplicated since they went out of office. Just how successful they will be in refuting charges made and thereby lessening the effect of the report remains to be seen but the disposition in most quarters seems to be to suspend judgment in regard to the whole question until the report has been thoroughly threshed out on the floor of the house.

## Budget Speculation

When this debate is disposed of Hon. W. T. White is expected to make his annual budget statement. There is much speculation as to what it will contain in the way of tariff changes. The favorite guess is that there will be a reduction in the duties on agricultural implements down to twelve and a half or perhaps to ten per cent. That, it is stated, is the promise which has been made to western members by the minister of finance. It must be remembered, however, that the protectionist interests have been very busy since the opposition declared itself to be unanimously in favor of the abolition of the duty on agricultural implements. They realize that it would be absolutely necessary for the government to take some action to meet this move. They are at the present time straining every effort to hold the reduction down to the lowest possible figure. W. F. Cockshutt has been busy and Lloyd Harris, former Liberal member for Brantford, who deserted his party on the reciprocity issue, has been haunting the corridors of parliament. A resolution against the reduction of the duty has been passed in Brantford and has been duly circulated. There is no expectation, in view

of the somewhat unsympathetic speech of the prime minister, to anticipate that the government will go so far as to abolish the duties, altho such a move, it goes without saying, would be welcomed by all members from the Prairie Provinces irrespective of party. But that something will be done despite the strenuous exertions of the friends of protection is practically certain. Should this not prove to be the case there will be some interesting developments when the budget is discussed and when the opposition will undoubtedly again move for the abolition of the duties. An amendment to a tariff resolution is not a want of confidence motion and Conservative members would be free to vote for it without declaring a lack of confidence in the administration. Western Conservatives feel that while a reduction in the duty will help them to some extent from a party standpoint, nothing but the abolition of the duty can be expected to satisfy the farmer

because of the widespread belief which exists thruout the West that any moderate reduction would be made up by an increase in the valuation of implements imported.

It is almost equally certain that the budget will provide some measure of assistance to the iron and steel industry. Whether it will be in the nature of a bounty on the iron mined in Canada, as suggested by the deputation which waited upon the government last week, or an increase in the present duties is not known. Aid of any kind will serve to placate the interests which will be disposed to feel sore over the reduction in the duties on implements.

## C.N.R. Bond Guarantee

The ministerial caucus to consider the C.N.R. aid proposals was held on Tuesday morning and excited much interest and speculation. The members were in session for fully three hours and subsequent to the adjournment Premier Borden stated that no definite proposals had been submitted by the government to the caucus. The matter of aid was discussed, however, in a general way in all its aspects and, as anticipated, there was lack of unanimity as to the proposals. The members opposed to the idea of granting further aid, including

R. B. Bennett, of Calgary, were heard from, but it is understood that those favorable to the granting of assistance were in the majority. There was a somewhat general demand that the C.N.R. should lay before parliament definite information as to the present conditions of its affairs, both as to the main company and the numerous subsidiary companies which control terminals and other branches of the Mackenzie and Mann business. In so far as the caucus was concerned no definite conclusions were reached. The general feeling, however, is that the consultation of the members by the prime minister and his colleagues is nothing more nor less than stage work, the details of the understanding between the government and the company having been practically agreed to. That there will be a guarantee of bonds to the extent of from forty to fifty millions is practically certain, unless the situation should materially change from what it is believed to be at the present time.

The situation at the capital in regard to this aid has become very tense. Every announcement in the press seems to get on the "nerves" of the government and many denials have been forthcoming. This indicates a realization on the

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CANADA'S NATIONAL BIRD