

## MR. EMMERSON REPLIES.

### Bridge Charges Swept Away at the York Convention.

FREDERICTON, Feb. 2.—The most enthusiastic and representative convention that ever gathered within the bounds of this old cathedral city met in the Y. M. C. A. hall this evening. Mr. Z. R. Everett occupied the chair and opened the meeting. Mr. Alfred Rowley, of Marysville, was appointed chairman, and after a few remarks declared the convention opened for the despatch of business. Every seat was occupied and forty or fifty electors had to stand. It was moved by Mr. J. Petty that a nomination committee be appointed to choose candidates. The committee was named in short order, and they retired to decide upon who should represent the county in the government interest. In the meantime Mr. N. W. Brown reported on the prospects in the northern part of the county, showing that there was a great reversal of feeling and that the present representatives for the county had lost the respect of the people. He had but reached the middle of his address when the nomination committee returned and through J. H. Barry, their chairman, reported the committee was unanimous in the choice of Alex Gibson, jr., F. P. Thompson, John A. Campbell and W. T. Whitehead. The report was received with applause and on motion the nomination of the candidates was made unanimous. Each of the gentlemen named then addressed the electors, promising to do all possible to carry the county, and judging by the convention and the men composing it there is no doubt of the result. Mr. Thompson made a very spirited address, dealing with the weak canvasses made by the opposition, especially showing how ridiculous it was that Mr. Hazen, a man who did not fill a representative position, should undertake to lead the opposition. He believed the people of York had become tired of being practically misrepresented. The past eight years were in reality lost so far as York's representation was concerned. His speech was a most enthusiastic and hearty one, and the applause he received showed that the meeting was with him. Mr. E. Allen was then called and gave a rousing and hopeful address. He was heart and soul in the fight and believed there was every assurance of a victory. Thomas Colter, Alex Heron and others spoke briefly, reviewing the situation and attesting to the fact that the convention was the best ever held in York. Messrs. Morrow and Harrison also spoke and each expressed the belief that Sunbury, while preparing for a fight, would be carried against all odds for the government. Among those in attendance were: Alex Little, John Petty, A. Gibson, jr., A. G. Robinson, Geo. Pugh, Horace Pugh, John Campbell, Arthur Everett, T. H. Colter, Geo. Miles, N. W. Brown, Jas. Humble, H. Niles, J. F. Vanbuskirk, S. Cowperthwaite, A. Munroe, C. Phillips, H. Brewer, M. Butler, Rev. W. W. Brewer, C. Fisher, Dr. Henry, E. Allen, J. H. Barry, John Yerxa, W. Whitford Grant.

At the close three cheers were given for the government.

Then an informal discussion followed, when the delegates pronounced in glowing terms prospects throughout the constituency. It was stated the people had become tired of the bombast and misstatements of Dr. Stockton and the four members from York and they patiently awaited the opportunity to turn them out of the representation of the county. While Messrs. Whitehead and Thompson are strong men their hands are greatly strengthened by the selection of Messrs. Campbell and Gibson as their colleagues and no man who knows the city of Fredericton and the county of York is bold enough to say that Pitts, Pinder, Black and Howe have the ghost of a chance against them.

#### Evening Meeting.

At 8:30 o'clock Premier Emmerson, Attorney General White, the York county candidates and numbers of the leading men of the party took seats on the platform. Mr. H. R. Everett, chairman, presided and in a short speech introduced the premier.

#### Mr. Emmerson's Speech.

In recent public addresses I stated that when the proper time came, whether an election took place or the Legislature was called together, I would take up the so-called "exposures" of the opposition with respect to the construction of steel bridges in this province, and it will be my duty to-night to attempt to satisfy this audience and the people of the province generally that there is not the slightest foundation for the sensational articles published in the opposition press respecting the cost of permanent structures. I think it will be generally admitted that when the Sun newspaper, on September 26th last, published its alarming report, the opposition imagined that we were then on the eve of a general election, and the article was intended entirely for dramatic effect. The charges were published in every opposition paper in the province, and the position was taken that the government were afraid to go to the country, feeling that overwhelming defeat awaited them. Since that time the opposition press has been one day predicting that there would be a general election before another session of the house, and the next day declaring that the government would hang on to power as long as they were able, and delay the sitting of the legislature until the latest possible date. It would be difficult for any administration under the circumstances to please the opposition or their press. If we decided not to hold a session then the cry would go up that we feared investigation in the house, and if on the other hand we decided to have a session then their tune would be that we feared the verdict of the people. The government has nothing to fear at the hands of the electorate, and I feel satisfied that the statement of the government's position with respect to these bridge charges will carry conviction to the minds of the great majority of the electors of this province.

To those who have not carefully followed the proceedings of the legislature for the last four or five years the sensational charges with respect to the cost of permanent bridges, enlivened as they

were with flaming head-lines, might naturally have some effect, but with members of the legislature and those who have carefully watched the proceedings of the legislative assembly the charges were not likely to have much weight. In fact, there was little if anything new contained in the startling newspaper articles. Indeed, they were largely a rehash of the insinuations that have been made in the legislature for some years past by the honorable member for York, Mr. James K. Pinder, familiarly known as the "King of Nacawic." At a meeting of the public accounts committee of the legislature on the 17th of last March, Mr. Pinder claimed "that these accounts showed that many prices received by the Record Foundry Company were 100 per cent in excess of what they should be," and on the same day in the legislature that gentleman made a speech in which he stated that "rumor connected the stockholders of the Record Foundry Company with the department of public works." On both occasions I went into this matter as I thought, very thoroughly, and while the Sun newspaper gave great prominence to the report of the insinuations of Mr. Pinder, it did not have the fairness to publish any report of my answer to Mr. Pinder's insinuations, contenting itself with the statement that "Hon. Mr. Emmerson replied at some length." I do not wish to make any complaint as to the Sun's manner of conducting its newspaper business, but I do think that a sense of fair play and justice might have suggested to it the desirability of publishing my answer to the charges which had been insinuated against the department over which I have the honor to preside. In my answer on those occasions I stated that I was prepared to meet at any time any definite charges made against my department, but that it was very difficult to meet those indefinite insinuations of wrong doing. I then and there met the insinuation that I was financially interested in the Record Foundry and Machine Company with a statement that I was not financially interested in the company to the extent of a single red cent. I desired to explain, however, that I would not withhold the facts; that it was true my wife had received as a legacy from her father \$500 of stock in that company. One of the honorable members for Restigouche, Mr. Mott, arose and stated that the house did not want to know about that, but I answered, as the official report will show, that I wanted the country to know the exact facts and the precise extent to which I am interested.

#### Justified by Mr. Sumner.

In this connection I desire to quote an extract from the speech of Mr. Sumner, one of the opposition members in the legislature. It is as follows: "He (Sumner) desired to say that Mrs. Emmerson had a right to hold stock in the Record Company. Her father had started that enterprise fifty years ago, and he was a man with the profound respect of all who knew him. He (Sumner) resolved Premier Emmerson from any suspicion of wrong-doing because of the small amount of stock held by Mrs. Emmerson in that enterprise, which stock had been left by her father. His only regret was that the amount of stock was not a great deal greater. He was willing to pay New Brunswick concerns like the Record Foundry a little more for work than to have it done outside the province." That was the way in which Mr. Sumner answered the insinuations of his colleague, Mr. Pinder. That was, as I have stated, on the 17th of last March, and yet the Sun newspaper and other opposition journals, in their "startling exposures" of September 26th last sought to create the impression that they had unearthed something which was then seeing the light of day for the first time. If the dramatic production of September 27th sought to create any impression at all it was that there

had been boodling in connection with the giving of some contracts to the Record Foundry and Machine Company; that in return for these contracts the company were contributing money to members of the government for election or other purposes. Now what are the facts of the case with respect to this Record Foundry and Machine Company?

#### Stockholders Opposed to the Government

Many of the leading stockholders in that company are gentlemen who have always been opposed to me politically, but I thought it was in the interests of the province that when this work could be done by our people it should be done by them, regardless of the fact as to whether the concerns were composed of political friends or opponents. The company, I believe, has a capital of \$80,000, and one of its leading stockholders is Senator Wood, a gentleman who has always been opposed to me both in the federal and provincial fields. The books of the company are open to everyone of its stockholders, and does any sane man imagine that it would be possible for the company to contribute to election funds without every stockholder being aware of the fact? The very idea is almost too absurd for serious consideration. Then if the papers publishing these charges did not mean to create the idea that there was boodling in connection with the contracts, what force would there be in their charges? Surely no member of the government would be foolish enough to consent to have paid a greater price for the construction of these bridges than was necessary, particularly to a company composed largely of political opponents. If the government could get two bridges for the price of one, would they not from a political standpoint be anxious to have twice the number of bridges erected that they have been able to have built, because if they were able to largely increase the number of bridges without materially increasing the total cost it goes without saying that the government's popularity would not suffer in consequence.

#### Former Canvass Contradicts This One.

When we ran an election some years ago one of the canvasses used against us was that the work in connection with steel bridges was obtained in Ontario and Quebec that could just as well have been done here; and as far back as the year in which I assumed charge of the department of public works I resolved to have the work done in our own province if it could be done consistent with good workmanship and fair prices. There has scarcely been a session since 1892 that I have not from my place in the legislature put forward the idea that our chief object should be, not how we could obtain the cheapest bridges but how we could obtain structures which would endure for generations—structures that would last several times beyond the number of years covered by their bonds—structures that would not entail a heavy interest after a few years, as had been the case with most of the bridges previously built in this province. I am ready to admit tonight that if our object had been to erect, under the guise of permanent bridges, structures that would cost the least possible money, we might have erected bridges after the style of the Hampton bridge, the Trout Creek bridge at Sussex and the Salisbury bridge, which were constructed under contract by the Canadian and Dominion Bridge Companies, at a much less rate than those bridges cost; but we were after permanency in all that the name implies, and I am here to challenge any competent engineer in this or any other province to say that the prices we have paid for the quality of bridges that we have had erected are excessive.

#### Road and Bridge Problems.

The questions involved in the road and bridge service of the province have