

Carleton Sentinel Supplement, March 23, 1889.

PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE.

Speech of the Attorney General and Reply of Dr. Atkinson, on the Budget.

HON. MR. BLAIR.

He (Blair) would now refer to the statement of another hon. member. Perhaps he owed an apology to the house for doing so. The conduct of that hon. member, his past conduct in the house, his declarations to the people, his promise to support the government, his defense of the government's policy, his vote in this house up to the close of last session, were all in marked contrast with his speech of today. The hon. gentleman had done him the credit of showing that he had been reading his (Blair's) speech of some years ago.

Notwithstanding that the hon. member seems to have paid the closest attention to those speeches he seemed to have studied them with little effect. The hon. member had presented figures purporting to give a correct idea of the finances of the country. He (Blair) had known from certain newspaper letters the course the hon. member intended taking in this house.

He was glad of this opportunity of meeting the incorrect statements in reference to the finances of the country and was quite willing that his statement should go to the country side by side with the utterly incorrect figures of the hon. gentleman. The latter did not seem to be able to realize the difference between current and capital accounts. Any one understood that there must be calls upon a government that cannot be met out of the current account. No government could live without drawing on capital accounts. We could not build railways without doing so. The suggestion of the hon. gentleman was a merey in politics. In 1882, the Legislature provided for the erection of the Fredericton bridge, also for the building of a large number of railways in different parts of the province, and for the erection of a dock at St. John. The hon. member for Carleton went to the country as a defender of that policy and came to this Legislature as an exponent of that same policy. Last year at the close of the session he suddenly changed his views. Why? Because the government was not prepared to saddle on the country an enormous debt so as to build more railways in every county in the province.

Mr. Atkinson—I didn't contemplate the building of railways in every county in the province.

Hon. Mr. Blair—You don't? Let us see what was the resolution that you wanted carried. Here it is: Resolved, that any action of the government, or measure for enabling contracts for any province aid to railways, should be general and not sectional, and should include all, or at least the most important of said lines of railway in each of the counties of the province." Continuing, Mr. Blair said, because the government was not prepared to saddle upon the country such a debt as contemplated by this resolution the hon. gentleman then, and not till then, withdrew his support from the government. Since then he condemned every act of the government which for years he had approved. He (Blair) could only pity him from the bottom of his heart because of the position in which he has placed himself. The hon. gentleman in his figures had charged the expenditures on account of the Fredericton bridge, the Asylum annex, and the importation of stock, to current account. He thought the public would prefer that these expenditures be made out of capital account rather than not to be made at all. The actual receipts of the old government were in 1882, \$579,710; in 1881 they were \$553,584; in 1880 they were \$607,389; in 1879 they were \$516,449; in 1878 they were \$566,939, or an average of \$566,000. The actual expenditure of the old government during the same years were in 1882 \$610,236, in '81 \$590,768, in '80 \$601,000, in '79 \$605,654, in '78 \$622,767 or an average of \$605,000. Here we find under the old government an average deficit of \$40,000 a year as compared with a saving of \$12,000 a year by this government. An examination of the public accounts will show how this government has saved \$12,000 a year or in all \$72,000 of a saving since we came into power. The actual receipts were as follows: '84 \$650,463, '85 \$617,194, '86 \$634,523, '87 \$635,500, '88 \$644,879, or an average of \$636,000. The actual expenditure under this government and for the same years were 1884 \$633,658, '85 \$584,472, '86 \$623,392, '87 \$637,300, '88 \$640,806, making an average expenditure of \$624,000 which clearly shows that our average receipts were \$12,000 a year more than our average expenditures. There are some items of expenditure that are controllable. Such an item to some extent is that of public printing, the average cost of which under the old government was \$11,000 a year, and under this government \$12,600, but the increase could be very easily and satisfactorily explained.

During the government's term of office the Consolidated Statutes have been re-printed at a cost of upwards of \$40,000. This government has the bills for the House of Assembly printed, which involves a large additional item. The printing of the Educational report is not included in the public printing account of 1881 but is included in 1887. The Lunatic Asylum report, the Board of Works report, the Board of Health report are now chargeable to the item of Public Printing and the government also had printed the Liquor License Act. Under the old government the average for contingencies was \$15,200 a year. Under this government the average is \$12,000 a year. The expenditure for Executive Government averaged \$33,000 a year while under this government it has been reduced to an average of \$26,300. Under this latter item the old government expended \$40,000 a year. The cost of legislature under the old averaged \$28,000 a year

while the average under this government is \$25,000. The average of the old for the administration of justice was \$14,509 while under this government it was \$14,400. In reference to this item he might say that a large increase in it last year over the previous year was due to the fact that for jury fees alone it cost \$30,000 more in '88 than in '87. There was a deficiency in Supreme Court fees, this the government could not regulate. The government besides carrying on all the different services of the country paid \$50,000 in interest charges more than the old government. He quoted these figures from the official records.

DR. ATKINSON.

Mr. speaker, before you leave the chair I shall ask the indulgence of the house while I endeavor, as I feel it my duty, and claim it as a right, to place myself properly before the house and country, and especially before the electors of that fine county which I have the honor to represent in this house. And first, sir, as the hon. attorney general has said that I have not been able to understand the statements which in this house he made, and by which, in 1881, he sought to influence people in his favor, I shall ask him here, and now, what he does mean by those statements. What does he mean when he says that a work demanding a call upon the public treasury should be open to public tender? In view of that statesmanlike principle, how does he justify its persistent violation? I will cite him contracts made without tender in his own county; to contracts made in the county of Carleton without tender. I will cite him the public printing, a work which demands a call, and latterly a constantly increasing call upon the public treasury, and yet, so far as I am aware, for which there has not been a single call for tender. Is it because some one outside of the county of York might happen to get the tender, and thus, those political larvae, those political lickspittles, who have come out to sun themselves in the prosperity of the hon. gentleman, and who, while they bless him for five dollars would curse him for six, might be deprived of public pay? Another matter to which I referred when speaking the other day, I will call the attention of the house to it again. I may have misunderstood the drift of the attorney general's meaning. I ask of him an explanation. I demand of him an explanation. What does he mean when he says, according to the synopsis reports of the debates of this house for 1881? "He protested against the administration keeping open these positions (vacant seats in the legislative council) and sapping and mining the independence of the members of this house." * * * To talk about abolishing the legislative council is absurd. As long as there is anything to be gained by promises of seats, the council will exist." Will the principles here applied to the old government, when they kept the seats vacant, not apply to the new government when they do precisely the same thing? The legislative council is a part of the constitution of this province. Under the law, just as soon as the number of members in that body drop below a certain number, no law can be made, and the whole work of legislation will stand still. It is therefore necessary to fill the vacancies. Why are they not filled? I demand from my place in this house, and as one of the representatives of the people who are here met to deliberate, I demand of the leader of the government to know why he follows a course which once received and merited his most scathing denunciation? On page 7 of the debates of this house for the same year, you find this same gentleman reported as having said: "There should be no increase of the public debt; this is the feeling in the country, and the opposition is in favor of it." And yet the very next year you find the hon. gentleman voting for an addition of \$1,500,000 to the debt of this province by the general subsidy act, 1882. We find him, since he came into power, adding very materially to the public debt. This is the hon. gentleman who would read to me a lesson on consistency, and to the St. John Presbytery a lesson on morals! He says I don't understand his past sayings. I demand then of him an explanation of what he does mean. Again you find him saying: "\$50,000, or \$60,000, or \$80,000 for our local legislature; cannot the half of it be saved?" Doubtless this is a very abstruse proposition. I confess that to me at least it only means just what it says; and when every item of expenditure of our local government is counted, the hon. gentleman will find, I think, that the cost has never been less than \$80,000 per year since he came into power. The hon. gentleman found a great deal of fault with me for including all items of expenditure in each year on one side, and the real revenue on the other. I may say, I applied to his government the same measure which he applied to the old government. He now says it most unfair, altogether contrary to rules of finance, and entirely incorrect. Very well, it is precisely the rule which he adopted when leader of the opposition. Mr. Blair, as premier, quarrels with Mr. Blair in opposition. I leave him to fight it out. But, says the hon. gentleman, I have been inconsistent. Well, Mr. Speaker, what was the platform upon which I was elected in 1886. It was abolition of the legislative council and reduction in the cost of administration of legislation. I came to the house during the session of 1887. Did I go back on my platform? or did I not advocate the abolition of the council? I did not advocate a reduction of the cost of the administration of legislation? And, sir, the opinions which I held then I now hold. I must say that I waited for the first session for something to be done in the direction of the reforms which the hon. gentleman had promised. The first session passed; nothing was really done. The hon. gentleman introduced

a bill into the house for the abolition of the legislative council, and in an interview with him, while the bill was, as I supposed, in the process of preparation, I suggested to him the propriety of granting a liberal life indemnity to each member of the council, hoping thereby to secure the passage of the bill. The hon. gentleman stated that he would make the indemnity provision broad enough to secure the passage of the bill. Well, sir, how broad did he make that provision? Only broad enough to include those members of the council, two, I think, who had been appointed prior to confederation. Of course, just having been elected to support the administration, I did not feel it my duty to begin by criticizing their acts, but rather to wait, to give them a fair opportunity to carry out their pledges if they would; and the house will remember, I am sure this country remembers, the impassioned declaration of the hon. gentleman during that session that he would advise the governor to cancel the commissions of one or two members of the council and have the case tried out in the courts. Sir, he has never attempted to carry out that declaration, nor do I think he intends to do so. Now, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. gentleman has dwelt upon the unfair manner in which I have made my criticism, of the finances under his government, I would say that he finds no fault with the way in which I dealt with the finances under the old government. I desire to take out of my calculation the exceptional expenditures of which he complains. The hon. gentleman accepts, I believe, my statement that the average annual income under the old government, from 1877 to 1882, was \$570,000; that the average annual expenditure was \$610,000; that the deficit was on an average \$40,000 annually. He does not find fault that I dealt in that way with the old government in my estimate. But, Mr. Speaker, included in that was a good deal of exceptional expenditure as well as in his own. Now I propose to take from both statements the exceptional expenditure under the old administration, for the period over which I have gone. The exceptional expenditure was \$393,000, including the Normal School, \$53,000; the St. John relief fund, \$25,000; redemption of debentures, \$69,600; school houses, \$31,875; consolidation of the statutes, \$18,000; R. & N. street wharf, St. John, \$4,000; lunatic asylum, \$53,873; exhibition buildings in Fredericton and St. John, \$21,355; vice regal reception, \$16,339; school loans, \$19,428; free grants, \$55,042; importation of stock, \$10,000; expenses of English delegates, \$4,423; special committees, \$3,000; short session, 1877, \$7,240; making in all, \$393,000, an average of \$65,000 per year. Exceptional expenditures under the present government, which I need not again go over, you all know them, \$170,000; average per year, \$35,000. Now we will take out these exceptional expenditures from both accounts, for both periods; and what do you find? That, if you take \$65,000, the annual exceptional expenditure, from \$310,000, the average total expenditure under the old government, you will get \$245,000 as the net ordinary expenditure, and as, according to the attorney general himself, the average annual receipts were \$570,000, there was, under the Fraser administration, an average annual surplus on ordinary current account of \$325,000. Applying the same test to the accounts of this administration what do we find? The following result:—

Average annual expenditure,	\$674,000
Less average annual exceptional expenditures,	35,000
Average ordinary expenditure,	639,000
Average actual revenue,	630,000
Average annual deficit under Mr. Blair,	9,000

As to the mistake to which the hon. provincial secretary referred yesterday, I would say that according to the figures which I gave him the annual deficit was a little over \$46,000 per year, whereas I only stated it to be \$44,000. The mistake occurred in this way. In calculating the unpaid interest on the bonded debt of this province on Dec. 31st, 1888, and although I had originally deducted this amount—in my calculations—yet inadvertently I had included it in the statement which I gave to the house, as will be seen by the fact that the deficit of which I spoke was not \$44,000 but \$46,000 by the calculation. This I did not intend, and certainly did not state. It is not a very large mistake when you take the amounts of the figures with which I dealt. Now, sir, the hon. attorney general referred to the extra interest paid by the present government as against the amount paid by the old government. In round numbers the interest paid for the period 1877-1882 was annually, \$34,000; for the present government, 1884-1888, \$79,384; extra interest annually paid by the present administration, \$45,384.

Average revenue for old administration,	\$570,000
Average revenue for present administration,	630,000
Extra revenue,	\$60,000

Now, Mr. speaker, I have made the statement that the unpaid interest on the bonded debt of this province was on Dec. 31st, 1888, about, or very nearly \$23,000. I repeat the statement. I invite the attention of the house to this matter. Go back to the year 1885, and if you do, you will find that the interest paid in that year was \$71,850. Turn to the public accounts for the year 1886 and see how much was the interest due in 1885 and previous years, but not paid till 1886, and you will see that \$45,000 due in 1884 was paid in 1886; \$13,995 due in 1885 was paid in 1886. Go next to the account of 1887, and you find that there was \$30,000 due in 1884, but paid in 1887; that there was \$75,000 due 1885, but not paid till 1887,

and if you turn to the accounts of 1888 you will not find any interest due in 1885 or any previous year that was paid in 1888. Therefore, I say, that these various accounts, the amount paid in 1885, together with other accounts paid in 1886 and 1887, but due in 1885, and previous years, in all \$85,895, was the actual interest due at the end of 1885, or which should have been paid to make us square. Of that amount \$71,850 only was paid, leaving a balance of \$14,045 due Dec. 31st, 1885. Now, had the debt not been increased during 1886; had it remained at the same figure as in 1885 the interest would have been \$84,180, as will be seen by turning to the public accounts of 1885, at the end of the debenture debt account. But the debt was increased during 1886, and sir I have taken this amount of bonds during 1886 and calculated the interest on them from the date of the issue till the close of that year, and I find that the interest on the debt added during 1886 would amount to \$3,232, and these sums added together, the interest unpaid during 1885, the interest on the debt of 1885 for 1886, and the interest on the debt added during 1886; these sums all make \$101,457, the amount of interest which ought to have been paid during 1885 to square the bill. Well, sir, only \$83,815 was paid during that year. There was, therefore, unpaid interest at the end of 1886, \$17,642. Now the interest on the debt of 1886 if it had not been increased during 1887, was \$91,940. The interest on the debt added during 1887 was \$2,030, and these amounts due on Dec. 31st 1886, \$17,642, the interest on the debt of 1886; during 1887, \$91,940; and the interest on the added debt of that year, \$2,030, all amounts to \$111,612. But only \$92,407 was paid during 1887; hence the interest due Dec. 31st, 1887 was \$19,205. Now come down to 1888, and you will find by looking at the memo. at the close of the statement of the debenture debt of this Province for 1887 that the interest on the debt of that year if it had not been increased, would have been \$97,910 for 1888; but the debt was increased during 1888, and the interest on that increase I have calculated to be \$1,923. That amount together with the interest on the debt of 1887, had it not been increased, \$97,910, and the amount of interest unpaid during 1887, and due in that and previous years, \$19,205 in all, amounts to \$119,038, the total amount of interest due but unpaid previous and accruing during 1888. Of that amount \$96,227 was paid during last year, leaving a balance of \$22,811, due but unpaid at the close of 1888. Now, sir, the interest on the debt of 1888, if not increased in the present year, will be \$102,493, as will be seen by an examination of the public accounts of this year on page 196, and estimating the interest on the debt added during the year at \$2,000, and adding to the sum the unpaid interest of last year we get \$127,301, as the interest which ought to be paid during 1889. \$100,000 is all that has been provided, and as it is probable that that amount will not be paid by two or three thousand dollars, I estimate that there will be about \$30,000 of interest on the bonded debt due but unpaid at the end of the present year, and I would ask the Provincial secretary, I would ask the attorney general, I would ask any member of the government, or any of its friends in this house to explain how it is that on Dec. 31st, 1888, there was only \$9,899 of interest due on the bonded debt, whereas there was nearly \$23,000 due at the close of 1888; and as to statements that the revenue of 1884 was only \$625,000 and not \$650,000, as written down in the public account. I defy contradiction, and in confirmation of what I stated in that regard, I will read from the debate of 1885, a speech of one of the most distinguished men in this house, the speech of a gentleman who, as a scholar, as a speaker, and as a statesman easily distances any gentleman in the cabinet, with but one exception. I refer to the hon. member from the city and county of St. John, Dr. Stockton, whose worth has not been recognized by this cabinet, and whose ability eminently fits him for any position in the gift of the Province. What does the hon. gentleman say regarding the financial statement of 1884. He says on page 25 [debates 1885]: "The nominal revenue for the year 1884 was \$625,895 97; the expenditure \$638,194 91. Well, sir, in addition to that expenditure, take the expenditure during 1884 on the Fredericton bridge, \$36,545, and you have a total expenditure of \$674,545." I think this will show that I was not very far wrong when I stated that our expenditure was \$49,500 for on this estimate, which I know the Provincial secretary will not dispute, the over-expenditure is \$48,774. Next take the accounts of 1885, and I would ask the Provincial secretary if the cost of the teachers' salaries for the school term beginning with July 1st, 1885, and ending Dec. 31, 1885, was paid out of the revenue of 1885? I invite the attorney general to consider that question, and reply to it. I invite the careful consideration of the house to it. I would ask if it is not just to count the cost to the country for that term for the teachers of this Province in trying to reach a just knowledge and a proper estimate of our financial standing. I say that the accounts are cooked up, and are entirely misleading. I am not aware that the hon. gentleman who replied to me ventured to criticize my estimate of the over-expenditures of 1886, 1887 and 1888. I sought to reach a truthful statement of the financial position of this Province, and with exception of sums of money expended last year or in previous years and carried into the next, I believe I have probed our financial position to the bottom. I shall not follow the attorney general into a discussion of minor details and by which he hoped to divert the attention of the house, except to say that even on his own showing there is a large increase of the public printing of this Province.

I come now, sir, to deal with the hon. gentleman's remarks regarding my action on railway resolutions brought up by the government, during last session. He began by dealing with the amendment moved by the hon. member for Westmorland. If hon. members will refer to the journals of last session they will find that the hon. gentleman stated then as he states now that that amendment committed the house and the government to the building of lines of railway in every county in the Province. He therefore objected to the amendment as out of order, and unconstitutional. Well, if the speaker had sustained his contention I certainly would not have had the opportunity of voting on the amendment, and to put it in his own words, would not have committed political suicide, but his honor ruled that the amendment was only an expression of opinion that any aid given to the lines mentioned in the resolution should be postponed till aid should be given to other lines and would not commit the house or the government if passed to a general subsidy act. That, sir, was my view then, that is my view now; moreover, the hon. gentleman knows what my sentiments were on the question of the subvention of railways in this Province. He knows that I urged upon every member of the government, with but one exception; he knows that I urged upon this house the policy of subsidizing such lines of railway as have already received the Dominion subsidy. He knows perfectly well that I stated here in this house that when Nova Scotia, British Columbia, P. E. Island, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec combined to give half enough to the construction of any local line of railway in New Brunswick, that it was a sound policy for the Province to contribute the other half to its own development. He knows that I stated then, and I repeat it now, that the policy of the government as embodied in the railway resolutions submitted to this house during the last session, deprived the Province of participating in the benefits of railway subsidies, granted by the Dominion government to local railways, situated in this Province. Sir, these were my sentiments then; these are my sentiments now. But sir what is the position of the hon. gentleman? It is a well known fact that the subsidies voted for railways in King's, and St. John was not the heart of the hon. gentleman's policy. His chief object was to get a subsidy for a railway between Fredericton and Woodstock. It is true that railway was contained in the subsidy act of 1882, but the hon. gentleman knows that the act of 1882 only subsidizes unconditionally, 250 miles of railway, as that no proposition from any company could be entertained for any line or railway not contained in the 250 miles mentioned, unless by the assent of the assembly of this Province. Therefore the passing of the railway resolutions has all the force of granting a subsidy to a third line of railway between Fredericton and Woodstock. The policy of the hon. gentleman was to subsidize a line of railway, to plunge the Province \$200,000 further in debt; to aid the construction of a third line of railway between Fredericton and Woodstock, between two other parallel lines, not averaging 25 miles apart, and in which the Province has invested \$1,600,000 of money or land. His policy was to force through this house a measure for the construction of a railway entirely superfluous; to lessen the value of railways already existing, and in which the Province has so largely invested. My policy was for the local government and the federal government to work together in the construction of our railways and in the developments of our Province. I am willing for the electorate of this Province to say which was, which is the most statesmanlike policy. And now, sir, before I resume my seat, I desire to express my obligations to the hon. member for the County of Northumberland [Mr. Burchill] for having the courage and the manliness to express his disapprobation [in which I am sure he voiced the sentiment of this house] of the manner and method of the unjust attack, made by the attorney general, and I desire further to say that the good sense, the firmness, the moderation and fairness with which the hon. gentleman has represented the fine county from which he comes will commend him to the electorate of that constituency. To the hon. member for the County of Kent, a gentleman whose rectitude of character, whose talents and whose learning so well fit him for the duties of a representative, and enable him, with so much credit to himself, and so much advantage to his country, to perform the duties which here fall to his lot, my thanks are due for his defence of myself against the ridicule of the hon. member for the County of King's. Sir, the position in which I stood at the time, having been lashed by the hon. attorney general to the extremity of his ability, unable either to reply to him or the honorable member, I do submit it was amount of very great tyranny, and whether I have written, as intimated by the attorney general, anonymous letters to the public press denouncing the government, I shall neither affirm nor deny, but will remind the hon. gentleman that although he regards such an act as a nefarious crime, a distinguished writer upon the British constitution has said, "he who criticizes the actions of a government does a service to the state," and, sir, if I have been guilty of so unparalleled a crime, I have had for an example a most illustrious statesman, a gentleman, than whom a more powerful writer, a more eloquent orator, a more patriotic statesman never was given to parliamentary life in any Province in Canada; a gentleman whose name and fame will be eternized in bronze and marble, by his grateful countrymen, long after the name and fame of the attorney general of this Province is covered with the dust and ashes of forgetfulness or remembered only with execration—I refer to the Hon. Joseph Howe.