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MR. PHINNEY'S SPEECH

On the Provincial Finances and Supplementary Estimates.

On the motion for the House to go into committee of the whole on the supplementary estimates, providing for an appropriation of \$2000 for the Bathurst school investigation, \$1000 for the University and \$1000 for the Tax Commission Mr. Phinney spoke as follows:

Mr. Speaker:

The leader of the Government, sir, has with his customary unfairness and disregard of the facts, endeavored to mislead and deceive the House, and particularly those gentlemen who for the first time now occupy seats here, when he says that the leader of the opposition, and those associated with him are unnecessarily and improperly occupying the time of the House in the present debate. It may be true, sir, that we are now approaching the closing hour of the session, and that all are anxious to complete the work yet remaining, without unnecessary delay. But, sir, the Government need not expect that for that reason discussion can be prevented with reference to the financial position of the province and the general policy of the Government, the opportunity for which the motion to go into supplementary supply affords. It is the legitimate and constitutional right of the opposition to criticize in a free and outspoken manner the policy of the administration and its use of the public moneys, and the Attorney General need not suppose that he can deprive us of that right by delaying the supplementary estimates until what he poetically calls "the dying hours of the session." His attempt to do so is only parliamentary pettifoggery. If the opposition did not now call attention to the matters referred to by Mr. Stockton and others, on this side of the House, it would again be said that we were ready enough to make charges of malfeasance and mismanagement against the Government in the school houses and back settlements of the county, but when face to face with the valiant leader and his friends in the Legislature, we were "dumb as oysters." We are therefore within our right and do not propose being deprived of it. So far as the facts connected with the Woodstock bridge are concerned, sir, I have no personal knowledge of them, but I feel assured from the information I have obtained that a large and unnecessary expense has been incurred in connection with that work, not in the interest of the province but for the political benefit of the Government, and that in consequence of the location of that structure, and the

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extra expenditure of \$50,000, with the illegal assistance of the sheriff of Carleton, at least one of the nominal representatives of that county now occupies a seat in this House. For the engineer (Mr. David Brown) I have always entertained the very highest opinion. He is an engineer of undoubted ability and skill and his integrity had never been impeached, and I regret that the Provincial Secretary and his colleagues now found it necessary for their purposes to hold him up to public opprobrium. While condemning him with one breath, they seek in the next to justify the location of the bridge by the report of the man they now say is unreliable. They must settle that piece of inconsistency for themselves. With reference to the Moncton bridge, the statement made by the chief commissioner that a large portion of the lumber was obtained from gentlemen opposed to the Government is not correct. Fully seven-eighths of it was got from Mr. McCann who was recognized both in Westmorland and Kent as a very much interested friend of the government. No contracts were let for that important work and it is generally known that supporters of the Government profited largely from the expenditure, at the expense of the province.

Now, sir, having said this much with reference to these matters, I desire before you leave the chair, to avail myself of this opportunity to call attention to a few facts which it seems to me very properly to be brought to the attention of the House at this stage. I had not the opportunity of hearing the Budget speech of our Provincial Finance Minister, but from the report I have had of it, I would infer that he neither felt happy in his retrospect or pleased with the financial outlook for the province. At the last session of the Legislature, sir, after two years incumbency in the office he had succeeded either by reckless overexpenditure or by foolishly discounting an anticipated revenue which he expected the census would give us, in running the province \$90,000 in debt on current account. He then asked for and obtained, for the first time in our history, authority to raise a revenue by direct taxation, and although during the past year he had collected from these new sources \$22,410.82 he has again to admit a further deficit on current account the past year of \$23,813.98. The burden of taxation is therefore not yet heavy enough to meet the ordinary expenditure of the country, if the province continues to be governed in the reckless, spendthrift manner in which it has been, and is being run headlong into debt by the present leader. The only alternative in his opinion evidently is, further and increased taxation and additional burdens unloaded upon the municipalities, already heavily burdened and strenuously resisting the application of the taxation screws. The present session of the Legislature has been unusually prolific of Government schemes for raising money by direct taxes and it will be a remarkable evidence of indifference to the interests of the people generally if the different county councils do not indicate their dissatisfaction and resentment at such legislation during the recess, and as soon as they understand the effect upon the municipalities.

Then, sir, we have the additional fact, established by the Auditor General's report, that during the past year alone, the indebtedness of the province on current account and bonded indebtedness has increased \$274,137.29. This truly is a most alarming state of matters and one calculated, in view of the general depression in our cities and towns, and the justifiable outcry against increased taxation, to arrest serious attention. But, sir, in the face of this unbought state of affairs what do we find? That the Government grapples honestly and manfully with the

difficulty? No, but there is a labored attempt to conceal the true condition of the finances, and the leader of the Government while imposing direct taxes first in one direction, then in the other, coolly suggests that "if the people want the advantages of modern improvements and legislation they must pay for them" and "should not be taught that they can be spoon-fed by the government." As a result the burdens upon the people are rapidly increasing, and unless some expedient such as suggested by the Quebec resolutions is resorted to, to raise an increased revenue from the Dominion Government, the exodus from the province will grow if the present expenditure is kept up and requires to be met.

In 1890 Mr. Blair told us that the revenue of the province was amply sufficient to meet all the legitimate demands upon the treasury. He was then seeking to justify the reduction of the stampage. Now when he wants more money to squander on himself and his friends he demands the right to further to the municipalities for the support of the Lunatic Asylum, the education of the Blind, and the maintenance of Court officials.

But, sir, admitting the gravity of the situation, is it not our duty to grapple honestly and fairly with the facts, and commence the practice of a rigid economy? In the first place, it is apparent that our executive and legislative machinery is much too expensive. In a small province like this, there is no reason why there should be so many members of the executive. In addition to giving the Government a largely preponderating influence in the House, it leads to injudicious legislation and is unnecessarily expensive. Dispense with the "Forecastle" members of the Government. I do not refer particularly to the two who now fill those positions, although there can be no question that in deference to public sentiments and public morality one of the present incumbents might very properly be removed. Amalgamate the offices of Surveyor General and Solicitor General. The latter is really not required and the bulk of the work of the former is done by the office clerks. Cut down the travelling expenses of the Heads of the Departments and members of the Executive which are out of all proportion to the outlay when we consider the fact that they all travel on passes, and are in receipt of large salaries, and most of their travelling is between their residences and Fredericton. At least \$2500 could be saved in this direction. The printing of the departmental reports is now panned out to Government favorites all over the province, at exorbitant rates, and a large amount of money is wasted in this direction. At least \$3000 could be saved. The Royal Gazette is now gratuitously distributed to a large number of magistrates who do not require it, and at least \$1900 is unnecessarily spent for this purpose. Then, reduce the number of representatives to 31. This would be ample for all legislative purposes, and would save a large amount of money. It is not, sir, a matter of choice with us. It is a matter of necessity. The municipalities, on which the burden of sustaining all this legislative machinery is now being thrown, are demanding and will now more than ever demand a substantial reduction in these exorbitant and unnecessary expenditures. It is useless to longer seek to conceal the facts from them. With these economies and others suggested, and easily accepted and enforced, a saving of at least \$20,000 or \$25,000 could be effected, without impairing the efficiency of the public

services in any way. Rigid economy in all directions is absolutely required, and the Opposition demands it, in the interest of the already overtaxed people of this province.

The leader of the Government has taken great credit to himself because of the saving effected by the abolition of the Legislative Council. Now, sir, while the experiment of one Legislative Chamber may possibly prove a success, and is no doubt justified by our financial position, a large portion of the credit, if any, due for the abolition of the Council, should be given to the leader of the Opposition in that body, the Honorable Robert Young, to whose unselfish course the success of Mr. Blair's measure is largely due. But, sir, whatever financial advantage can be derived from the abolition, will be absolutely lost to the province if the present leader pursues his present policy of creating useless and burdensome offices in order to provide situations and sinecures for his defeated candidates and personal and political friends, without whose aid it seems impossible for him to run his government. We have first the appointment of a law clerk, who for his services during the thirty working days the House will be in session, will draw from the exchequer in the vicinity of \$1200, or \$40 per day. The expenditure is entirely unnecessary and unjustifiable, and I believe the result of the appointment will be more slipshod and loose legislation than any previous session has produced. The position has been given to Mr. Pugsley in order that he may be in attendance at the Legislature and of service to the Government and its officials when his special abilities are required. Anticipating his defeat in Kings at the general election he retired from the contest and published a letter in which he expressed his regret that "the pressing duties of an onerous profession" would prevent him again attending to parliamentary duties. His professional duties, however, do not appear to have been of such an onerous character as to prevent him hanging round the committee rooms of the House, and pocketing at least three times what he would have received as a representative.

The office is unnecessary. The duty of supervising legislation falls upon the leader of the House for the time being. It has long been attended to by that officer—long before the present Attorney General grew weary of his responsibilities. To aid him in this duty he has a Solicitor General, a law committee, and the legal talent on the Opposition side of the House which is always fairly and ungrudgingly given to such work. Prior to confederation when legislation of a much more varied and important character devolved on the Assembly the Attorney Generals of those days did the work and did it well. Attorney Generals Wetmore, King and Fraser never deemed it necessary to impose the expense of a law clerk on the province. But now Mr. Pugsley must be provided for.

Then we have Mr. A. D. Richard, who for a few brief months held the office of Solicitor General for which he drew the salary without performing any services. No vacancy could be created for him after his defeat in Westmorland. Mr. Hetherington of Queen could, by means of which the public are not yet fully informed, be persuaded to resign and make way for the "Defeated of York," but none of the Westmorland trio—not even that large hearted, generous and philanthropic gentleman the present Deputy Speaker, Killam, could be induced to resign for Mr. Richard.

Mr. Killam—I offered to resign.
Mr. Phinney—Well you took good care not to do it. The report is that an Inspectorship of Bridges was to have been

created and if that had materialized no doubt the honorable gentleman would have considered himself quite competent for that. Possibly the fact that the office was not created may account for the fact that no vacancy could be found for Solicitor General Richard. He was made use of, and then when he had served the purpose of the Government he was shamefully thrown aside. When the deal with Judge Landry failed and when that gentleman found that his friends would not support him in the compact proposed by the Attorney General, then A. D. Richard was seduced by the offer of the Solicitor Generalship to desert his former political friends and join hands with the man whom he had hitherto persistently opposed. He merited defeat but having sacrificed himself to aid the Government, he was shamefully deserted in the hour of his defeat, and now we find him appointed to an unnecessary office as engrossing clerk of this House. This is one of the expedients to which the Attorney General resorts at the expense of the Province.

I now desire to call attention to another incident of misappropriation of public money in my own county. In the summer of 1891 a bye election took place in the county of Kent. The Attorney General went into the constituency with all the requisite "resources of civilization." Money was freely spent, and extraordinary expenditures authorized all over the county. Where the money came from was a mystery. Many of the people were led to believe that the special expenditures would be met out of the Great Road Grant, but the fact is that the Bye Road Grant for the next year had to meet the bills. When my then colleague Mr. Leger and I met to divide the grant I found that we were just \$1074 short of our usual grant. I asked for an explanation but could then obtain none. Mr. Leger intimated that he would explain it when the Assembly again met, but unfortunately for his calculations, he found himself amongst the slain at the general election which followed. And now, sir, I find on reference to the auditor general's report, page 199 that in addition to the amount of the grant appropriated by Mr. Leger and myself, \$1004 of the grant is now said to have been distributed amongst parties, several of whom were not Bye Road commissioners, and from whom no accounts or vouchers have yet been received. Outside of the printed Bye Road distribution list placed in the hands of the commissioners, I find the following charge:—

Anselm L. Allair.....	\$ 76.03
Joseph P. Richard.....	12.01
Maxim Babineau.....	41.53
F. O. Richard.....	207.59
John Miller.....	88.88
Fidele P. Babineau.....	42.44
Enoch Steeves.....	51.76
A. C. Johnson.....	52.44
Louis Caisse.....	11.17
Belouie Daigle.....	31.13
Simon J. Mezeroll.....	156.81
Robert Mitchell.....	41.57
William Irving.....	191.64

The large proportion of which is unaccounted for. In addition to this, sir, I find that from the annual grant of \$3,992 to the county, \$70 have been deducted and placed to the credit of the county on an old bye road indebtedness. It need not therefore, be a matter of surprise that our bye roads are in need of repairs when our money is thus misappropriated to meet political schemes. On behalf of the people whom I represent I have to enter my protest against such misconduct and dishonorable influences exerted upon the electorate is not confined I regret to say to Kent. Throughout the Province, the same influences are at work. In the county of York it is a notorious fact that public offices and official positions have been sold to persons who contributed to the election funds. The Government may succeed in retaining power for a time by such dishonorable means but in the end the people will discover how their money is being squandered, and will demand that the men who are so abusing their public trust, shall make way for other leaders who will see that the revenues of the province are honestly and economically expended, and that the legislation promoted shall not be designed to add to the burden of a people already heavily overtaxed, to keep up expensive official and legislative machinery.