

A SLANDER.

Pitts' Scandalous Charges in the Quinn Matter

COMPLETELY REFUTED BY INDISPUTABLE TESTIMONY

WHEN CHALLENGED

To Produce the Alleged Incriminating Evidence he Had to Admit His Inability to Do So.

HON. MR. BLAIR'S

Crushing Reply to the Malicious Accusations Preferred Against Him.

THE REFUTATION.

Mr. Pitts, in the legislature on Thursday of last week, said that there had been some little talk back on the part of the attorney general when he (Pitts) had charged that office were sold for election funds to keep Mr. Blair's government in power, and he had almost forgotten to produce the evidence that he thought would substantiate the allegations made by himself. Possibly the letters he held in his possession might throw some light upon how many contributions had been exacted from those persons seeking favors of the government.

The first letter he would read was from the attorney general's office, a few days before the election in 1890. It was as follows:

FREDERICTON, 16th Jan., 1890.

DEAR QUINN—It is of the utmost importance that you should hand me today the check we were speaking of yesterday. Our calculations were based upon your doing this, and I do not know what the consequences will be if you do not appoint yourself Yours very truly,

J. H. BARRY.

Mr. Blair—Who is that signed by? Is that signed by me?

Mr. Pitts—Oh! no. I didn't say that was signed by you. That is signed by your legal partner, J. H. Barry, who is so assiduous in looking after your election funds. Now then we will read another letter to show how the funds were arranged for:

RECEIVED BY WILLIAM H. QUINN the sum of \$200 towards the election fund, not to be used until appointment is arranged, and if no appointment made, then to be returned.

WILLIAM WILSON.

Mr. Blair—Is that signed by me? Mr. Pitts—Oh! no. That is signed by your relative and go-between in election matters, Wm. Wilson. You would hardly be expected to give a personal receipt. Now then, we have another letter which will show that Mr. Quinn was not willing to pay \$200 for a paltry engraving clerkship.

DEAR SIR—After waiting and begging for over one year for the position in Mr. Allen's office, which Mr. Blair promised me in my store, and it now seems he will not get it. I gave the money with that object, and it was the only office vacant at that time. Please send me a check for the money and interest, as I don't feel inclined to give the money for engraving clerk.

(Signed) WILLIAM QUINN.

Mr. Blair—Are those the original letters you are reading from?

Mr. Pitts—These are copies, but the originals are available when the right time comes, and the hon. member will hardly doubt or deny their correctness. Of this \$200 there was \$150 paid back to prevent exposure at that time, and \$50 went to pay for the office of engraving clerk that Wm. Quinn received.

When the speaker took the chair in the legislature, Wednesday afternoon, Hon. Mr. Blair said he would have to crave the indulgence of the house for a short time upon a question of privilege that not only affected him but the whole house. During the twelve years he had occupied a seat in the house it had been on very rare occasions that he had trespassed upon the time of the house with respect to matters of a personal character. The present subject, however, was one which had attracted sufficient attention to warrant him to make a statement to the house. On Thursday last the hon. member for York (Pitts) had charged him with having been concerned in the sale of public offices. He had read a letter purporting to have been written by Mr. Barry, his then professional partner, two days before the general election of 1890. He then said that he would read a letter which would show that the attorney general had received the money. When Mr. Pitts was asked if his (Blair's) name was signed to it he replied no, but it was signed by William Wilson, a great friend and close relation. Then he proceeded to read a letter purporting to be from Mr. Quinn to Mr. Blair. It would be remembered that upon Mr. Pitts reading this correspondence, which was compiled afterwards to admit were only copies of the original papers, he (Blair) had emphatically and

Absolutely Denied

that he had been a party, directly or indirectly, to any transaction of the kind alleged.

As regards Mr. Wilson's connection with it he said that he had no information or belief which led him to believe that Mr. Wilson was in any way implicated. He would have allowed the matter to rest there, feeling that he had set himself right before the house and country, but it appeared that the leading organs of the opposition had thought it expedient to take the matter up and to assume that it had been proved that this improper transaction had taken place directly with Mr. Wilson's knowledge and cognizance. I have thought, continued Mr. Blair, that inasmuch as these papers have taken this course, and that the St. John Sun in two or three leading editorials has engaged in the no doubt very pleasing and congenial task of establishing that the statement that I made was utterly untrue, and

that I was a liar

before this house and country, I am warranted in placing before the house not only my own statement with regard to this matter, but information which I have since acquired, which I think will be found to cover the whole ground of the allegation made by the hon. member for York. Speaking for myself I wish to emphasize and enforce the breadth and strength of the statement I made the other day. I wish to say that neither directly or indirectly, neither by myself nor any other person, did such transaction as that alleged take place.

I say beyond that that I have some personal knowledge of an occurrence which took place in connection with Mr. Quinn and with the election of 1890, and I will state to the house frankly what it was.

W. A. Quinn, now deceased, was a particular friend of some of my colleagues on that ticket, especially of Mr. Wilson, and Mr. Wilson was desirous, as indeed I was also, of doing anything I could for the young man in the way of appointing him to some position that he was competent to fill and which might be at our disposal, and I have no hesitation in admitting that once that there was scarcely any place vacant in the gift of the government that he did not think he was competent to fill, and that he did not apply for. I very well remember that just prior to the election of 1890 William A. Quinn called at my office to see me. The exact date I cannot fix. It was a few days before the election. That was the occasion on which anything was said by him to me or by me to him or anybody else with respect to the subject of a contribution to the election fund. He came into the inner office and said that he had come prepared to make a contribution. I would not like to say positively what the amount was that he named. It may have been \$100, or it may have been \$200. He said his father had given him this money, which he had in his pocket and which he was prepared to

put into the election fund, but his father had told him that he should exact a pledge from me that he would give this office before he would put the money into the fund. That, as I say, was the first occasion on which Mr. Quinn mentioned the subject of a contribution to me, and William H. Quinn never at any time mentioned the subject to me. I was indignant at Mr. Quinn for making this proposal, and I said to him:

"Mr. Quinn, keep your money in your pocket; go home to your father and tell him that I will take no subscription to the election fund upon any such condition."

I think I spoke to him somewhat harshly and indignantly, so much so that he went and told some of his friends that I told him he had insulted me, and that I had practically kicked him out of my office. That statement of what took place I am prepared to verify under oath.

Mr. Quinn did not give me one dollar of money.

I never saw the color of his money. I never heard that Mr. Quinn, either father or son,

Had Contributed a Dollar

to that election, from that time down to the present until the matter was referred to the other day. It had even escaped my attention that there was something in the press about a year or so ago.

Mr. Pitts—Didn't you write a letter to Mr. Quinn with regard to this question on the 14th of October?

Hon. Mr. Blair—With regard to what question?

Mr. Pitts—The question of appointing Quinn to an office.

Hon. Mr. Blair—I have not the least doubt that Mr. Quinn was wanting me to promise him an office. I know that he spoke to me repeatedly about the position referred to as well as other positions. I know he wanted to get the position of stamp vendor, and we gave it to him. If W. H. Quinn will say that I wrote to him with respect to a position I will not dispute it. But what Mr. Quinn will not say and no written document or any evidence worthy of the name will prove, is that I ever promised to Mr. Quinn or any other living soul that he would get any office in consideration of a financial contribution. The other night when the matter came up for the first time

I was surprised,

and it was not until I turned that matter over in my mind that I recalled the fact I have now described. I then gave the money to the provincial secretary and stated to him that I believed there were gentlemen in the office who could verify the statement. It did happen that John W. Wetmore, a son of the late Judge Wetmore, a most honorable young man, was a student in my office at the time, and he told the chief commissioner going down on the train the other day after seeing these allegations in the newspapers that he knew about the Quinn matter. He was in the office when the occurrence took place, and that he would write me a statement with regard to the matter. I will now read

Mr. Wetmore's Letter:

FREDERICTON, March 26, 1894.

Hon. A. G. Blair, Attorney General: Dear Mr. Attorney—On Friday last I read the reports in the St. John papers with reference to the Quinn matter. I was interested in this, because at the time the deal is said to have been made I was in your office as a student, and I remember having been present in your private office when you had a conversation with poor Will Quinn, which would be in this connection. Coming down in the C. & R. R. last Friday, after reading the newspapers, I intended speaking to you of the matter, but there was no chance. There were three people talking to me, and I did not get a word in.

On the way down the chief commissioner and Frank Ellis spoke of the matter, and then told Mr. Emerson I remembered being present when Quinn made a proposition to you at the clerkship in "Carr's" office, and told him what I could recollect of the conversation. Mr. Emerson told me to remind you of the interview, and I told him I would do so the first chance I got. I went to your office in St. John on Saturday twice. The first time they said you were busy, the second time was after you left for Fredericton. Last night I saw an article in the Gleaner which let out what was reported to be a statement made by you to some of your friends re this matter, and gave you the credit. If saying that I had recollect what took place between you and the elder Quinn. This was the first intimation I had that you remembered I was present when the matter was talked of in your office. I wish now to tell you what I know of the matter, and if you wish at any time a statement from me to the following effect I will be quite willing to make it.

Shortly before the election in the winter of 1890, I was in your office with you, as I remember you were making additions or explaining to me some interstitions in a paper I had to copy. Your writing when done in a hurry, is sometimes hard to translate. While in your office, William Quinn, the younger (not the old man as stated in the Gleaner) came in and said he wanted to speak to you privately. He seemed anxious that I should go out. You were rather busy and told Mr. Quinn not to mind me, to go ahead. Quinn after some hesitation then said the old man, or his father—I do not pretend to remember the words used in that connection, but he pointed to the job in the clerk's office; that he (his father) had given him \$200 to go to the election fund, and my recollection is Quinn intimated by slapping his pocket or otherwise that he had the money with him. Then he said that his father was not to be written in writing that it would be all right about the position. That is my recollection of what took place. I am not talking without interruption and hesitatingly. You made it rather hard for him because you did not put in any word to help him out. When Will got through, you expressed your surprise to him that his father should make such a proposition to you, and although I do not remember your words, you sat on the Quinn and their scheme about as emphatically as I am absolutely to have anything to do with any such plan. Quinn then left the office looking very much crestfallen, and, I thought, wishing he had never made the proposition. At the time I was impressed with the dignified manner you maintained throughout the interview, which possibly was made more noticeable by contrast with the disgraced manner you maintained for Mr. Quinn. I remember distinctly what I have stated above, and as I said above, if any statement to the above effect will be of service to you I will readily make it. Up till last Friday I had not spoken of the matter to any one.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) J. W. WETMORE.

I think John W. Wetmore's word will be accepted by any one who knows him, as being that of a very worthy young man. Beyond this I have a letter from Mr. Barry, which he has authorized me to read to the house, and which he says he is prepared to verify under oath.

Mr. Barry's Letter.

FREDERICTON, March 26, 1894.

My dear Mr. Blair—I notice in the official report of the proceedings of the legislative assembly which I think you have in St. John press, that Mr. Pitts in the course of his remarks in the house on Thursday, the 22nd inst., told me that you had a copy of a letter written by me to the late Wm. A. Quinn in January 1890, in which he was asked to contribute to an election fund for the purpose of the election then pending in this county. I have no present recollection of having written any such letter, but that does not prove nothing as in the volume of correspondence incidental to an election campaign, if I had written the letter attributed to me, I would probably have forgotten the matter long ago. I do remember, however, of Mr. Quinn calling at my office on the 14th of October, and I understood it, simply as a friend of the government ticket, and his offer or promise to contribute to the election by any stipulation respecting his appointment to any office in the gift of the government that he may have desired at that time. I remember also that shortly before the date of the re-election—the exact day I do not pretend to state—Mr. Quinn called at our office on Carleton street and had a private interview with you. What he said to me, or what you had offered you a sum of money—\$200 I think was the amount you named—and I would not like to sign a paper promising him an office in the clerk's office of the plebe office. You further stated that you had told him to keep his money; that that was the first time in your public life proposition of so humiliating a character had been made to you, and that you had requested him to leave the office and never mention the subject to you again.

The incident is the more clearly impressed upon my mind, because you having expressed your indignation at Mr. Quinn's proposal in very strong and most unambiguous language, it is only doing you simple justice to say, as I can truthfully do, that never at any time did you or intimate to me or any one else, my hearing that Mr. Quinn was to have that or any other office in the gift of the government, in consideration of his contributing to the York election fund, and as I was pretty familiar with what was at that time in progress, I would not like to think that if any such arrangement had been made by you with your consent, I certainly would not with your knowledge of it. As a matter of fact, I never received a dollar from Mr. Quinn or from any one on his behalf as a contribution to an election fund, either at that or any other time.

Yours sincerely,

J. H. BARRY.

Hon. A. G. Blair, attorney general, Fredericton.

The Slanderous Sun.

Mr. Blair then reviewed at some length the editorial articles which appeared in the St. John Sun and which, he said, were to the everlasting discredit of decent journalism. It made no difference to that paper how much they traduced the character of a public man so long as he was opposed to them. He made no difference to them how much they distorted and perverted the evidence, or whether there was any evidence at all. The Sun had stated that the statement of Mr. Blair that he knew nothing about the Quinn compact will be accepted with considerable incredulity. He pointed out that when a public man takes the responsibility in his place in the legislature of giving an emphatic denial to imputations of this character he is entitled

to have that statement accepted

by respectable journalists until some evidence is offered which breaks down that statement. Where was that evidence? Mr. Barry's alleged letter that showed, as the Sun stated, that there was an understanding with respect to Quinn's appointment? Neither would that alleged letter bear out the absurd statement of the Sun that it seemed to threaten that a failure to contribute would be fatal to Quinn's hopes. Mr. Barry, if he wrote the letter, was referring to the election, and that alone, and had never heard that Mr. Quinn had been promised an office. The inference which the Sun drew from Mr. Barry's note, that Quinn had contributed \$200 was totally unjustified by the language of that letter, and in connecting the receipt with that note the Sun had totally ignored the fact that the receipt was dated weeks after the date of the election. The Sun says that the money may have been received by Mr. Barry. Mr. Barry says that not one dollar was received by him. The Sun says that the ticket was elected with the help of Quinn's contribution. The fact was that not a dollar from Mr. Quinn went into the election fund. The fact stood out cold and clear that notwithstanding this corrupt bargain, Mr. Quinn did not get the office at all. Was it not fair to infer from that that the promise had never been made at all? If it was made, why was it not fulfilled?

Mr. Pitts—He got another office and paid \$50 for it.

Hon. Mr. Blair—I say most emphatically that Mr. Quinn got no office for which he paid \$50, or any other sum, and if the hon. member has any regard for decency, I ask him to move for a committee of the house to investigate it. If he does so every possible facility will be afforded him, not only for that investigation but for the investigation of any other charge he has the courage to make. The Sun of the 21st inst. had said that people would be led to understand that office had been bought and sold under the present regime. He had challenged any individual to come forward

and make that charge openly.

Because he was leader of the government that was no reason why he and his colleagues should be denied fair and decent treatment. Were the allegations of irresponsible men, irresponsible even though they held seats in the legislature; men who had no knowledge of the force of the language they used, to be accepted without hesitation unless public life was to be made absolutely unbearable; unless public men were to feel that there was no protection for them against any vile and slanderous accusation that might be made. Men on all sides should unite in demanding that before a man is condemned he should be heard, and that some evidence worthy of the name should be adduced against him. It was a mere subterfuge, a base reflection upon this house, to assert that a committee composed of its members was not competent to conduct an investigation of this character. Surely our opponents have not forsaken all sense of decency and right. Surely they recognize that to us should be dealt out

The Same Measure of Justice

they would claim for themselves. It was true there were some hon. members opposite who were utterly deaf and blind to all ideas of justice and reason, but he did not believe that all were impervious to these considerations.

The Sun also states that the subject of the appointment was discussed between a member of the Quinn family and Mr. Barry. The fact was that it was never discussed with Mr. Barry at all. It was discussed with me, but does it follow from that circumstance that I have been dickered and trafficking with offices?

The Sun also states that the Blair-Wilson ticket got the benefit of the contribution. It just so happened that Mr. Quinn did not contribute a dollar, and Mr. Wilson authorizes me to state that he

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"If," says the Sun, "the plea of ignorance is made by the leader of the government in this case, we can estimate the value to be placed upon any contribution he may make of allegations as to the sale of other offices." Then, all you have to do is to make a charge, and though a man denies it most positively and does all that a man can do, the public is justified in assuming everything again him.

I say that in my opinion a man had better stab his enemy in the back. He had better take away his life than take away the character and reputation that are dear to him by such vile attacks as these, and that Mr. Scott would be pardoning a man for course, and he is merciless, if he pursued me through a dark alley with a dirk, than to write such contemptible articles with reference to a man who had the misfortune to differ from him in politics.

Mr. Blair then said that he desired to make a statement on behalf of William H. Quinn, whereby, in consideration of the payment to me of \$200 as a contribution to the election fund, he had been engaged to obtain for him the appointment to the office of deputy clerk of the York election.

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Hon. A. G. Blair, Attorney General, city: Dear Sir—I notice in reports of the proceedings of the assembly that you have branded as a slanderer, Mr. Wilson authorizes me to say that if they have any such receipt, he demands that they should produce it. Mr. Blair then read the following letter:

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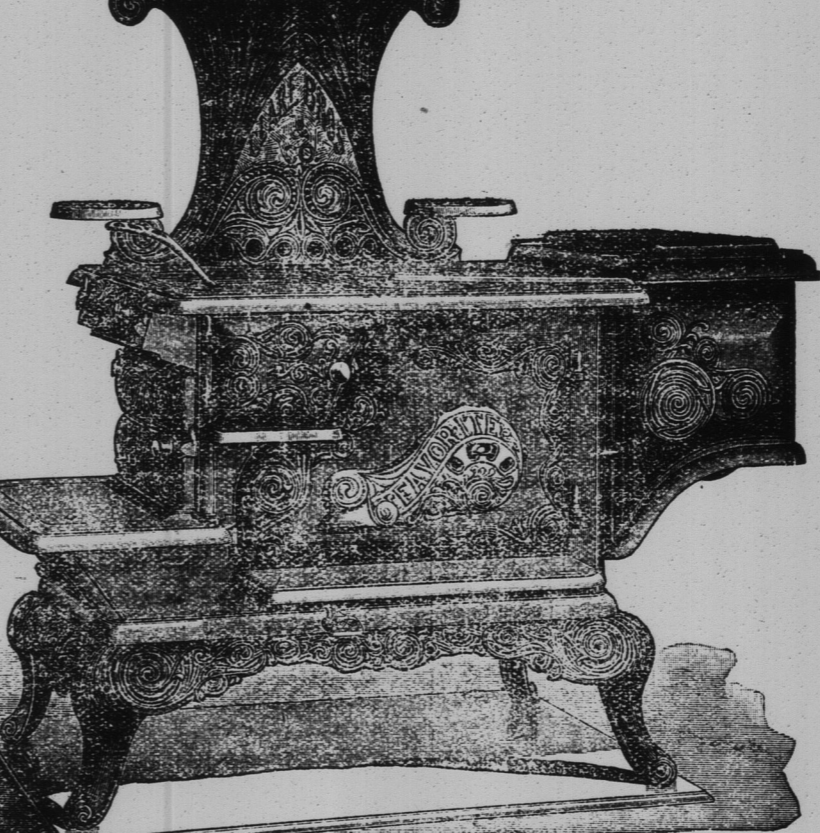
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