

OPPOSITION LEADER SCORES GOVERNMENT

(Continued from page 1)

was not any information given, instead the people were told to come to the Board of Works office and look into the accounts if they wished to see how the money had been spent on the wharves, the bridges and the roads of this country. It was unreasonable to expect that people would come here from all parts of the province to seek out this information but the members of the opposition had been deluged with letters requesting information as to where the money went to and how it was spent. The hon. gentleman had said that the old government had not given any information in their reports of the Auditor General and then he pointed to this government's report to compare it with the old. But in doing that he read an indictment against this administration. If the St. John Standard was to be believed and the hon. gentlemen seemed to think that everything the Standard said must be right. He quoted from an editorial from the St. John Standard in which it stated that this year's Auditor General's Report was made up with much less detail than last year and that it was the same as under the old government. If it was wrong under the old government it was wrong now.

Hon. Mr. Murray—The hon. gentleman is an adept at distorting my remarks.

HOT SHOT FOR MURRAY

Mr. Copp said that the hon. gentleman had been unable to curb his venomous tongue and had referred to an account of his (Copp's) which appeared in the Auditor General's report of 1906 or 1907. He was prepared to have his standing in that respect compared with hon. gentlemen opposite. He had been criticized because he had been paid \$228 for work he did as counsel for the then Chief Commissioner of Public Works, when large claims of contractors for extras had been referred to a Board of Arbitration to decide, and when the contractors had employed the present Mr. Justice Barry as their counsel. The account on file in the Public Works Department would show how many days he had been engaged in the work. That was the terrible charge that the hon. gentleman had

to make against him. HE HAD PUT IN THE ACCOUNT IN HIS OWN NAME AND NOT PUT IT IN THE NAME OF PRICE & NEVERS, J.P. McCULLAY OR ANYBODY ELSE. Was that the way the hon. gentlemen opposite did when they sold lumber to the government or did they put in the bills in the names of their clerks or somebody in their employ? What he had said was true not only of a number of hon. gentlemen on the opposite side of the House but it was particularly near the hon. gentleman who had made the criticism. He thought the hon. gentleman in his endeavor to take a fling at him (Copp) might have got along without raking up any of his dead relations. The fact that the government of the day had referred the claims of the contractors for extras to arbitration and that the claims were to be investigated instead of paying them out cart blanche as the present government did with their friends, was a glowing comparison of the careful methods of the old government with those of the present administration.

THE PLEDGE BREAKERS

The Provincial Secretary in his budget speech had been in an apologetic mood as had all the gentlemen opposite; but the more they compared the record of this government with that of the old administration the more they sink this government into insignificance. It was not the record of the old administration that the people would decide upon but it was the broken pledges of this government that they must consider. Every session since 1908 there had been a series of apologies from the government benches that the government had not carried out its promises but was doing the best it could but that was not enough. If the 46 members of this House were all stockholders in a company and seven of their number as directors had caused a deficit of \$56,000 on the last year's operation there was not a man in the 46 who would not shudder if it was his own money that was being sunk and who would not stay here is the place to sink party affiliation and bring about a change. If the Board of Directors in seeking re-election were to say we lost your money but we hope to do better next year,

would the stockholders accept that statement, no, they would all vote to put in new directors. And the members of this government were not only the directors for the 46 members of this House, but also for the three hundred odd thousand people of the province whose money they had frittered away on their political friends.

SOME COMPARISON

The hon. Provincial Secretary had said that the government's position was unassailable and then he had referred to the public debt of this country. He did not wish to re-traverse all the ground which had already been covered but nevertheless he did believe it his duty on account of the position he held to give the complete and correct information to the people of this province and he approached that task with a wish to give a fair and honest statement of the financial status of this province as it actually is today. He would compare the old government with the new not for the sake of defending the old government because comparisons would show this administration to be far worse than the old but because that was necessary in order to place a complete statement before the people.

He wanted to make a comparison of the increase in the public debt under the old and new administrations. The provincial secretary had made the statement that the people of the province were not afraid of the debt as they formerly had been. That was probably true in respect to the hon. members of the Government. He proposed later on to read from the synoptic report quotations showing the opinion of his hon. friends on the increase in the debt under the old administration.

THE DEBT PILING UP

According to the Auditor General's report, the public debt of the province at the end of the fiscal year 1903 was \$3,213,946 and the figures for the remaining years were the following:

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| 1904..... | \$3,415,634 |
| 1905..... | \$3,493,113 |
| 1906..... | \$3,310,340 |
| 1907..... | \$3,590,897 |

The old government had been successful in reducing the debt from 1905 to 1906 and in the four years from the end of 1903 had increased the net debt to the extent of \$376,951 or an annual average of \$94,237. Under this government the net debt had been increased to \$4,649,877. He could have taken previous years under the old government which would have shown up the old government in a more favorable light as the increase in the net debt had not been so great as in the previous years.

A DIFFERENT SONG NOW

He would refer to some of the remarks of the hon. gentlemen opposite when in opposition, over the increase in the debt under the old government. The men who now occupied the treasury benches had made a vast increase in the debt under the old government. The present premier discussing the budget speech in 1903 had said that the then leader of the opposition members were continually referring to the increase in the public debt, but he (Fleming) had made the statement at that time that the opposition was justified in referring to the increase in the debt. He (Fleming) had proceeded year after year to refer to the increase in the public debt under the old government and his course must mean one thing or the other, either he (Fleming) had been dishonest then or he was more dishonest today by adding to the public debt at a much greater pace than had been done by the old administration.

His Hon. friend the Attorney General had also criticized the then government over the increase in the public debt and in speaking on the budget in 1903 had declared that the then Government had failed to realize that the House was a new House and the Opposition was not responsible for the acts of the former local Government. If his hon. friends argument then had been clear and lucid, that the opposition was not responsible for the acts of the old government. The Administration must go to the country on its own record. The Attorney General when in opposition had also said that the debt, under the old government whether large or small was more than it should be.

HAZEN WAS ALARMED

The late leader of the government (Hon. Mr. Hazen) had also deplored the increase in the public debt under the old administration. He (Hazen) viewed the increase in the debt with such alarm that he had moved an amendment to the motion to go into supply that the country viewed with alarm the increase in the debt. He (Copp) wondered what the present Minister of Marine thought today, when he (Hazen) was confronted with the startling increase in the public debt under this government which was a child of his own parentage.

In the year 1905 the present premier severely criticised the then administration for the increase of the debt that year and he said that while the revenues of the province the previous year had been greater than ever before the debt had been increased and he condemned that. Either the then members of the op-

position were trying to throw dust in the eyes of the people, or they were insincere in their criticisms. Mr. Hazen condemned the government of the day because it spent more than it received, and if to do so was wrong in 1905 what can be said of the course of those gentlemen now that they were in power and enjoying the greatest revenue the province ever has had. The revenues are the greatest ever seen in this province.

The manner in which the administration had increased the debt was shown in the following figures:

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| Net debt Oct. 31, 1907, | \$3,590,897 |
| Net debt Oct. 31, 1908, | 3,999,775 |
| Net debt Oct. 31, 1909, | 4,217,266 |
| Net debt Oct. 31, 1910, | 4,402,547 |
| Net debt Oct. 31, 1911, | 4,643,857 |
| The total increase in four years was, | 1,057,960 |
| Average increase per year, | 264,490 |

PREACHING AND PRACTICE.

At the end of 1908 when the government had increased the debt by the amount stated, their friends began to hang their heads in shame, the record of the administration was so diametrically opposite to their professions, but they were then only beginning their reckless career of wasting and squandering the public funds; they were then only in swaddling clothes and they have grown more reckless and more extravagant each succeeding year.

He was amazed the other day at the excuse the hon. provincial secretary gave for the over-expenditure last year, and when he said that it was not a deficit for it would be paid out of the revenues of the present year. A business man who had sat in the galleries and listened to the hon. provincial secretary remarked afterwards that he wished he had discovered that man and his method of financing years ago, for he would have paid only pay debts in that novel fashion.

He asked the members of the government and their supporters if their record with respect to the public debt was one of which they were proud and which they thought would commend itself to the better judgment of the thoughtful people of the province. An average increase in the debt of \$264,000 was something of which to be ashamed rather than proud and something which the government and its supporters could not justify in any respect.

Mr. Copp moved the adjournment of the debate, which was made the order of the day for Wednesday.

Mr. Copp on the order of the day being called Wednesday evening said that he desired to offer an apology to his hon. friend from Carleton, Mr.

Munro over a remark that he (Munro) had moved the adjournment of the debate on the previous evening. It was his hon. friend from Albert who had moved the adjournment and not his hon. friend from Carleton. His (Copp's) statement of the time was correct but the hon. gentleman named had been the wrong one.

THE PUBLIC DEBT

When the House had adjourned last evening he had been discussing the public debt and he had arrived at a point where he was making a comparison in the increase under the two administrations. In doing that he had quoted figures to prove that the increase had been very much larger under this government than under the old. He had not made the comparison for the purpose of defending the old administration but to show the people that if the old administration had increased the debt in an extravagant and reckless manner as hon. gentlemen opposite claimed, the record of this administration was infinitely worse because they had increased the debt to the great extent of \$4,649,857.

He might also refer to the arguments of his hon. friend the premier on the hustings he had made the public debt out as much larger than it is today. Speaking at St. John in the course of a joint debate on February 20th 1903 he (Fleming) was reported in the press supporting his party as saying he wanted to ask the people of the province if they wanted another million dollar increase in the debt during the next five years. Inferentially such an increase was not wanted. His hon. friend had been given the opportunity to run the affairs of the province and had added to the net by more than a million dollars. He (Fleming) stood convicted on his own statements at St. John and had deceived the people of the province, for in only four years he had increased the debt by over a million dollars. The Premier had also declared that an increase in the debt made it necessary to take the funds of the province out of the treasury to pay the interest. It appeared that his hon. friend was prescribing for his own funeral for that was exactly what this administration was doing today.

His hon. friend had also declared that the amount involved in the guarantee of bonds was a liability and should be included in the net debt.

The ex-Premier Hon. Mr. Hazen had spoken at Bathurst about the same time and had declared that while the old government had placed the net debt at \$3,590,000 it really had amounted to upwards of eight million dollars. If that be true the debt

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of the country today amounted to between \$14,000,000 and \$15,000,000. His hon. friends might accuse him of pessimism but he was not a pessimist. He believed in the spirit of optimism but when the present extravagances of this administration is placing the province in tremendous debt, it was hardly an appropriate time to be optimistic over the possibilities of the future.

INCREASED REVENUE

The government was not entitled to credit for collecting the revenue of the province for it was their duty to first collect all the revenues and then to spend as much as was necessary for the public services. But this government seemed to want to take credit for all the increase that there had been in the collections of revenue and he would like to refer to some of the

(Continued on page three.)

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