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HOW THE LIBERALS WERE DEFEATED IN THE PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND ELECTION

(Correspondence St. John Globe)
Charlottetown, P. E. I., July 31—The Liberals are taking their defeat in the provincial elections philosophically, and having recovered from the shock are planning to profit from their experience to re-organize the party and be ready when the next test of strength comes.

If ever a government deserved re-election, it was the Bell Government. They gave the country a good administration; their general policy was safe and sound. When they came in, they found the finances in a bad condition, the heritage of former governments who knew the unpopularity of taxation, and shrank from imposing any more, though the revenue sadly needed it.

When the Conservatives went out in 1919 they left a large deficit, even though their Premier had estimated a small surplus of about \$700. A statement prepared by the Auditor when the new party took charge on September the 9th, showed that the adverse balance between revenue and expenditure was \$250,000, and at the end of the year, after the Liberals had been in four months, it had been reduced to \$232,000.

The Opposition questioned the figures, claiming that they did not get credit for all the receipts due them, and that the Liberals purposely failed to collect the taxes in order to make the worse possible showing against their opponents so as to have an excuse for increasing the taxes. The Opposition accordingly, made all sorts of ingenious calculations which varied widely with regard to the deficit, but none was below \$77,000. The Independent Member in the House set it down as \$100,000. Even if the Independent Member's calculation is accepted, increased taxation was unavoidable.

The Public Works had suffered for want of adequate revenue; the school teachers were on the verge of strike clamouring for higher salaries which both political parties admitted were too low. At the last session, prior to the election, the Conservative Government had passed an Educational Tax act by which they proposed to raise \$75,000 more for education, but they suspended operation of the act until a plebiscite had been taken on it at the general elections. The Conservatives were almost wiped out at the polls in 1919. The educational plebiscite failed to carry and the new government found themselves face to face with a very serious situation. To give the teachers what they demanded meant \$100,000 more revenue. Another \$100,000 was needed to place the public service in proper shape, and to provide for the interest of increased debt. It was also proposed to take advantage of the 40-60 Federal Highways proposition, and give the Island the improved roads which were greatly needed.

How was this additional \$200,000 to be raised? There were the claims of Prince Edward Island against the Dominion for additional subsidy, the campaign cry often raised in the past when a way was sought to get around the tax tug-a-boo. But, in view of the two million Federal debt, the prospects of getting help from Ottawa at that time were not favorable. To tax or not to tax was the question! The Liberals were in a dilemma. Increased taxation meant more revenue but an angry electorate prejudiced against taxation. To follow along the old path meant increased debt, vacant schools, the public services neglected. The Liberals after many caucuses determined on the courageous course thereby taking their political lives in their hands. They introduced a new Taxation Act as equitable as it was possible to make it, according to their view, making all classes pay what they believed to be their proper share, but with the increased burden comparatively light on the farmers. Incomes which were formerly subjected to a flat rate of 2 p. c., were put on a sliding scale, the higher the income, the higher the rate.

They took advantage of the Federal Grant for highways. The first year they paid the 60 p. c. for which the province was liable out of general revenue. Thereafter they funded the auto license fees, borrowing money on the strength of these, the fees being sufficient to pay off the interest and principal of the highways debentures at maturity, so that auto owners alone paid for the improved roads.

The new tax act gave the Liberals \$200,000 more revenue. Half of it went as additional salaries to teach-

ers. The \$200,000 did not prove too much—the people were not over-taxed, because taxation is lower in this province than in any other part of Canada. The debt which had been increased by \$185,000 under the Conservatives, was reduced at the rate of \$25,000 a year, and there was an average annual surplus of about \$3,000. Finances were so stabilized that the Island bonds issued in 1921 sold higher than any other provincial bonds in Canada. The scores of schools vacated by teachers leaving for the West where they were attracted by higher salaries, were all filled again. Nearly 500 miles of splendid roads were built. The Agricultural Department for the first time in its history placed under a practical and progressive farmer, Hon. W. M. Lea, was most efficiently administered. The new Commissioner of Public Works, Hon. Cyrus W. Crosby a conscientious and capable man handled the chief spending department with a minimum of waste, and not a single charge of graft was levelled against him during his regime. When S. L. Squires of Toronto, the Chairman of the Executive of the Good Roads Association inspected the Island roads, he said there was more value given for the money here than in any other province in Canada.

The worst offence charged against the Premier was that he was too saving, but he was the right man in the right place at the right time. On the whole, the government has had a splendid record of achievement. From the first, however, it had to contend against a very aggressive and unscrupulous opposition press, which kept up a continued anti-taxation agitation, and a very bitter and abusive campaign. One time it even contended that the provincial poll tax could not legally be collected. It left nothing undone to hinder and embarrass the government.

In the first term the government, after first receiving assurances of Opposition support, increased the sessional indemnity from \$200 to \$500 and also increased the salaries of the portfolio members of the executive. The then leader of the Opposition spoke strongly in favor of the increases, as did also the present leader, and the former Commissioner of Public Works. All the Conservatives in the House voted for the bill. Although this increase had the sanction of both Liberals and Conservatives, and even the Progressives at their convention did not oppose it the Opposition press never ceased shouting about the salary grab, and there is no doubt it had its effect on election day. The Conservative leader, sensing the feeling of the people, put a plank in his platform that he would reduce the sessional indemnity but did not say how much. During the campaign the Conservative candidates tried to shirk the responsibility of the increase. They even claimed that although they did not vote

against it, they did not vote for it, but the fact was that the vote carried unanimously without a division.

The Conservatives executed another scum-sault with regard to the poll tax, though they had inserted it in their educational bill one of the chief planks of their platform being the abolition of such a tax, although it amounted to only \$3.00. This had a good deal to do with the turn-over

(Continued on Page Three.)

Here and There

The total elevator capacity of Port Arthur and Fort William will reach 65,000,000 bushels by September of this year. By the end of 1924 the elevator capacity is expected to reach seventy millions.

Immigration returns of the Canadian Government for the first five months of the present year show a one hundred per cent increase in immigration from the British Isles over the figures for the same period of last year.

The 1923 apple crop of the Okanagan Valley will amount to 4,620 cars according to the estimate of W. T. Hunter, district horticulturist. This is an increase of 20 per cent over last year and a record for the district. The apple crop for Kootenay and boundary districts will approximate 380,000 boxes.

A new high record of production was established by Canadian newsprint mills during May with 110,262 tons, an increase of nearly 10,000 tons over the month of April and 15,750 over May of last year. The daily production in May was 4,084 tons, the highest in the history of the Canadian industry.

Following the opening of the Banff-Windermere Motor Highway, Lieutenant Governor Nichol of British Columbia and Randolph Bruce were honored by the Kootenay Indians who made them an honorary chief and full chieftain of their tribe respectively. The Indian celebrations were held at Invermere in the beautiful Windermere Valley.

Several new air stations are to be opened in Ontario and Quebec in the near future for the purpose of extending the forest area to be patrolled by airplanes. A base is to be established at Ramsay Lake near Sudbury, and from this point all Ontario work will radiate; operations being carried on at Orient Bay, Remi Lake and at least two other substations not yet announced.

If the Canadian pre-war exports of flour are considered as 100, the Dominion's average export total between 1921 and 1923 can be considered as 207. Comparatively, pre-war exports of the United States being rated at 100, its present export is at the rate of 147. This indicates that Canada has more than doubled her export trade in flour while the United States has increased its trade by 47 per cent. Before the war Canada exported 3,832,000 barrels, while at present her exports average 7,885,000 barrels a year.—"Journal of Commerce."

Mr. Georges Delrue, one of the most important personages of France arrived in Montreal by the S.S. "Minnedosa" to take up residence at St. John's, Que. Georges is two and a half years old and has spent most of his life with his grand parents in Tourcoin, a small town on the border line of Belgium and France. The journey from the old homestead, via Antwerp, Georges made alone but never out of sight of the watchful eyes of the officials and servants of the company.

Major General Lord Lovett, a passenger on the Canadian Pacific liner "Montcalm," and delegate to the British Empire Forestry Conference, Ottawa, said in connection with his investigations into Canadian forestry methods and applied science, "England has but a small forest area in comparison to Canada, nevertheless, her forests were depleted two-thirds to meet the emergencies of the War, and now we are determined to recover this loss by practical reforestation. We have been working at this for the last three years and expect to make a completion of our work in another year."

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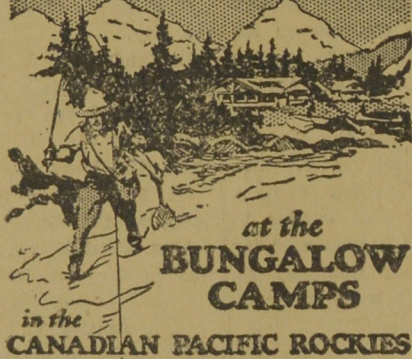
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