

RESTIGOUCHE ROAD ENQUIRY RESUMED ON WEDNESDAY, WHEN SEVERAL WITNESSES WERE HEARD

Questions by Opposition Counsel Based on an Examination of School Registers Were Ruled Out by the Commissioner—Gallery Play Was Not Encouraged.

The enquiry being conducted by Deputy Attorney General Hartley into alleged irregularities in connection with road and bridge expenditures in Restigouche County was resumed at 2.30 yesterday afternoon and continued in the evening. The witnesses examined were Archibald Murchie, bridge superintendent, Alex. C. Hickey, Theophile Desrosier, and Phillip Pelletier. The lone spectator in attendance, apart from counsel, witnesses and press representative, was Andre J. Doucet, M.L.A. of Gloucester. It is said that he has been specially commissioned by Hon. P. J. Veniot to watch the proceedings with a view of picking up some ammunition which might be utilized in case of an early provincial by-election in Gloucester to fill the vacancy in that constituency.

Mr. Hebert, opposition counsel, did his level best during the afternoon and evening to turn the enquiry into a fishing expedition, and in order to keep the enquiry within the scope of his commission, Mr. Hartley found it necessary to rule out several questions by Mr. Hebert which were based on some information which he claims to have gleaned while doing some research work in preparation for the enquiry. Mr. Hebert was promised however that he would have the opportunity to introduce his evidence by way of rebuttal at a later stage.

Mr. Murchie

Archibald Murchie, structural superintendent of Nash's Creek, Restigouche county, and a former municipal councillor, was the first witness called, and was examined by Mr. Hebert. He produced his time book, which was compared with the payroll of the Department and found to correspond in every particular. Mr. Murchie did not prove a satisfactory witness for the opposition. He was questioned regarding different names appearing on the payroll and was able to show that

all of those who had drawn government money had worked for it. He was also questioned in regard to purchases of cedar used in bridge work and gave satisfactory answers. In one case he was able to show that the Louison Lumber Company had allowed him something on a fifty dollar account because of benefits received from repairs to a bridge. An item of \$13.50 for transportation charges for the month of April was questioned, but the witness was able to show that he had easily covered 135 miles in that month in connection with his work. He said that Joseph Lapointe was his foreman on the Hardy bridge job, and he was satisfied that he had put in the time correctly.

Error in a Name

The witnesses' attention was called to the name of David Lapointe which appeared on the payroll. His reply was that the name should have been James Lapointe, but later, on examining the payroll, said that the name should have appeared as Daniel Lapointe. He thought that the error had been made in copying the names, and he recalled that Daniel Lapointe had done the work. In an effort to make political capital, Mr. Hebert questioned the witness as to the number of men who worked on nomination day and also on election day. The witness said that he had returned his time-book to Mr. Lapointe to have corrections made relating to these days. The witness said that he had worked as much as fifteen hours a day, and had therefore had not deemed it necessary to deduct the time which he had spent in visiting Dalhousie on nomination day. After answering some further questions, the witness was stood aside.

Another Witness

Alex. C. Hickey, road supervisor of Nash's Creek, was next called to the stand. He said that he personally kept the time-book for work on the

Dodge road, but that Jimmy Lapointe, Billy McMillan and F. J. Lapointe had assisted him with the other work. He said that the time was not given to him but was put on the payroll by the time-keepers. While he knew that the men actually worked, he did not know what their actual time was as he could read and write very little. The witness was questioned as to how it came that the names of several men had appeared on road payrolls and also on a bridge payroll for the same days, but was not able to give a very satisfactory explanation. The names included those of John J. Hickey, Ralph Dione, Earl Murchie, Irvine Lapointe, William McMillan, Joseph Lapointe, Joseph Gaudet, Frank Lapointe, Romeo Bertin, Stephen Poirier, John O'Brien and Joseph Godin. The witness replied that he had previously known that the names had appeared on two payrolls. While one of the payrolls might be wrong, he maintained that his was right, although he had no knowledge of the number of days the men had actually worked.

Murchie Recalled

Mr. Murchie was then recalled and said that in reference to the bridge payrolls he had obtained the number of days from the time-keeper and believed them to be correct. He denied absolutely that he had promised to send one man a bridge check for \$8 in payment of an amount owing him for potatoes. He gave no man any more time than he was entitled to for work performed.

Mr. Desrosier

Theophile Desrosier, road supervisor for the Parish of Balmoral, was next called and examined through interpreter Doucet. He was shown his payroll for road work and identified it. He admitted having visited Dalhousie on nomination day, and had drawn a full day's pay for five hours work, but claimed that he had a man in his place on the road. Later, he admitted that the substitute was his father, and that he was also on the payroll. He also admitted employing boys to do road work at full pay but claimed that they handled teams better than some of the men. He thought that one of the boys who had worked on the road was thirteen years of age.

Improper Question

Mr. Hebert attempted to show that one boy who had worked on the roads was only eight years old, and he claimed to have examined the register and found that he was at school during ten of the twelve days that he was paid for road work.

Mr. Richard objected strenuously to this kind of evidence and pointed out that the school register had not been put in evidence and there was no evidence as to the boy's age or whether or not he was at school at the time. He cited an authority to show that the form of questioning indulged in by Mr. Hebert was improper, and said that it was being indulged in merely for publicity purposes.

Commissioner Hartley sustained the objection and told Mr. Hebert that he must confine his questions to facts rather than base them on presumption.

Mr. Hebert retorted that he would offer proof in another way and Mr. Hartley said that he would be given every opportunity to do so.

The witness being further questioned, admitted that his nine-year-old son, Donat, had been paid for working on the road with a double team.

At 5.30 o'clock the enquiry was adjourned until 7.30 p. m.

EVENING SESSION

The enquiry was resumed in the evening, when the witness once more took the stand and his examination resumed by Mr. Hebert. He was further questioned regarding names on the payroll, and Mr. Hebert, armed with a new sheaf of typewritten sheets containing data gathered during his research tour of the Parish of Balmoral, sought to make it appear that some of the names of those who had drawn pay were boys of tender years in attendance at school at the time. "My information," he would declare in asking a question, "was that so-and-so attended school for twelve of the twenty-four days he was supposed to be working on the road and that the school register shows him to have been eight years old in 1930."

Mr. Richard, counsel for the Board of Works, contended this style of interrogating a witness was manifestly unfair, and was in fact nothing more than a political gesture. He contended that the questions should not be based on a private investigation by Mr. Hebert, but on relevant matters. He contended that if Mr. Hebert wished to prove the age of a boy he should take the stand in support of his examination of the school register.

The Deputy Attorney General agreed with Mr. Hartley and said that he would rule out questions of the nature complained of. He promised, however, to allow counsel to prove his statements by rebuttal testimony later on.

Mr. Hebert continued to ask questions based on private information which he had gleaned, but they were not allowed.

A Family Affair

It appeared from the testimony of Mr. Desrosier that he was the owner of one team, but that his three youthful sons all drew pay for working on the roads with a double team. He also had other relatives on the job, which indicates that the family was fairly well looked after. "According to my conscience," said the witness, in answer to a question, "I have not taken a cent more than belonged to me." He added that his little girl kept the time-book but he did not give her a place on the payroll. He explained that he allowed his sons pay for a double team because they used his car on the work without charging for it.

Mr. Pelletier

Phillip Pelletier, another road supervisor for the Parish of Balmoral, next took the stand and told of his activities in an official capacity. He told of having allowed Walter Savoie two days on the payroll because he had assisted as time-keeper, and he cited several similar cases. The witness told the commissioner that he was able to sign his name and that his boy kept time for him.

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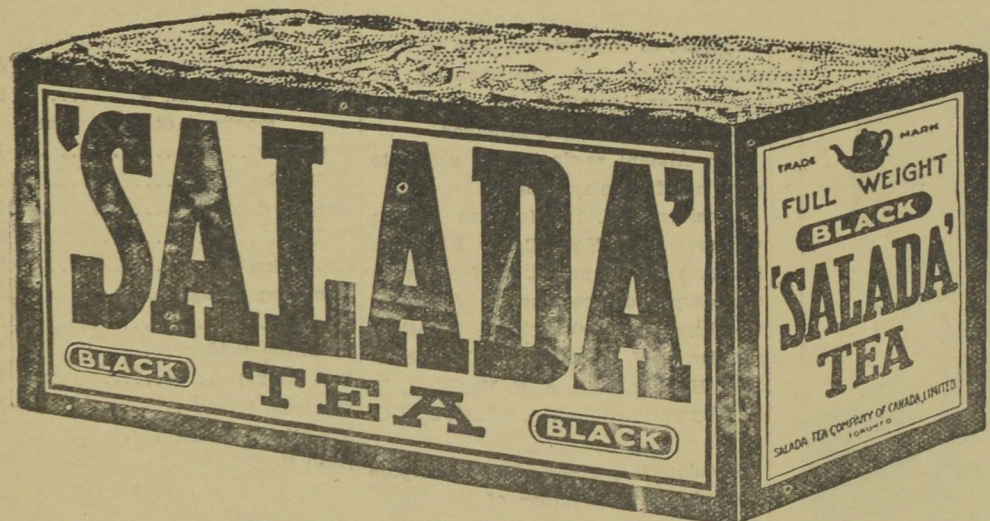
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