Strong Note of Optimism Sounded by Hon. A. J. Leger In His Budget Speech

The Provincial Secretary-Treasurer Announces a Big Cut in Expenditure—Saving by Reduction in Salaries Estimated at $44,000—Two Cents a Gallon Added to Gasoline Tax—Leader Dysart Deprived of a Fishing Expedition .

The Legislature yesterday afternoon by a strict party vote which followed a rather spirited debate, defeated a motion by Mr. Dysart, opposition leader for copies of 1929 and 1930 payrols for road work performed in the Counties of Sunbury, York, Charlotte, Queens, Carleton and Kings. Mr. Dysart spoke at some length in support of the motion, claiming that he had been requested by a number of people to secure the information and that it was in the public interest.

Hon. Mr. Stewart, who followed the opposition leader, said he did not propose to hand out the accounts of the department for fishing expeditions. If specific charges were made he could promise that they would be probed to the bottom and no wrong doer would escape.

Mr. Michaud contended that the members had a right to find out what was in the public documents, and the government should facilitate the investigation.

Premier Richards assured the House that the government had no desire to withhold information to which members of the House were entitled. It was necessary that the House should function under certain rules, and could scarcely deal with public accounts of previous years. The Dominion Parliament did not do that, and the practice was so well understood at Ottawa that accounts of former years were not asked for. The accounts for 1931 would be before the committee and could be thoroughly investigated.

Upon the vote being taken Mr. Dysart's motion was declared lost by a vote of 28 to 14.

Hon. Mr. Leger began his budget speech at 5.20 o'clock and completed it in a little less than an hour. He presented a very interesting and concise statement of provincial finances and was listened to by members on both sides with marked attention. Although his task was not altogether an agreeable one, as he had to announce curtailment of expenditures and some new taxes, a ringing note of optimism illuminated his speech, and he was able to see sunshine beyond the clouds.

Assembly Chamber,
8th. March, 1932.

The House met at 3 p.m.

The following bills were read a third time,— to amend The Factories Act; to amend The Public Service Superannuation Act; to validate assessments or loans for direct unemployment relief; to amend the act respecting the prevention of accidents by fires in hotels; to amend The Summary Convictions Act; to provide for a temporary reduction in sessional indemnities and in salaries of members of the Executive Council; to provide for funding treasury bills due in the month of May, 1932.

These bills were passed by the House.

The folowing bills were read a second time,— to amend The Fire Prevention Act; to authorize the Town of Newcastle to issue debentures; to incorporate Saint John's Presbyterian Church, Dalhousie; to fix the assessment valuation of certain industries in the City of Moncton; to authorize the City of Moncton to sell and convey certain lands; to authorize the City of Moncton to issue debentures; to amend the Act consolidating the several acts incorporating or relating to the Town of Moncton; to make certain bonds issued by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Saint John authorized investments for trustees; to further amend an act authorizing Kent County to make temporary loans; to amend the act authorizing Westmorland County to make temporary loans; to extent the borrowing powers of the Agricultural School and Model Farm at Rogersville; to amend the act incorporating the Roman Catholic Bishop of Chatham; to anthorize an amendment to the valuation of the County of Westmorland; to further amend the Act authorizing Northumberland County to make temporary loans; to regulate the assessment of the poll tax in the Town of Saint Andrews; to authorize the Town of Saint Andrews to sell certain lands; relating to the valuation of property and income in the Town of Edmundston; to authorize the Town of Edmundston to issue debentures; to authorize the County of Gloucester to issue debentures; to authorize the Town of Bathurst to issue debentures.

A Message Read

MR. COCKBURN presented a message from His Honor the Administrator.

MR. SPEAKER thereupon read the message to the House, standing, as follows:

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly:

I thank you for your address, and beg to assure you that I entertain the fullest confidence that in all your deliberations you will be guided by a most earnest desire to promote the happiness and prosperity of the people of this province.

(Sgd. J. D. HAZEN,
Administrator of Government.
Province of New Brunswick.

Notices of Enquiry

MR. NILES gave notice of enquiry regarding motor tractors owned by the province, as to projects under the Unemployment scheme; as to work done on the highway between Andover and Aroostook Junction.

MR. TWEEDIE gave notice of enquiry as to money paid for broadcasting by the province; as to cost of concrete pavement in the Town of Newcastle; as to the amount of gasoline, oil, tires and repair parts purchased for all road machinery used in the province during 1931; as to gasoline and oil purchased from New Brunswick Gas and Oilfields, Limited.

MR. DOUCET gave notice of enquiry as to bonuses for clearing land and to land open for settlement purposes.

MR. COLPITTS gave notice of enquiry.

MR. PIRIE gave notice of equiry.

MR. DOWNEY gave notice of enquiry.

Motor Trucks

MR. DYSART gave notice of enquiry as to motor trucks purchased by the province, tractors, gravel loading machines, automobiles, unemployment camps; as to insurance carried by the Government; as to the cost to date of the road from Lower Jemsey to Gagetown Ferry; the cost of the Covered Bridge over the Kouchibougouac River in the County of Westmorland; as to the road expenditures made by Frank Graham, Ashland, and Murray Ellis, Upper Brighton.

Petition Presented

MR. SIDDALL on behalf of Mr. Wood presented a petition for a bill to enable the Town of Sackville to provide for license fees on non-resident mechanics.

MR. WHITE presented a petition for a bill to amend an Act respecting debentures for the building of a High School in Saint John; also a petition for a bill to further empower the City of Saint John to impose license fees.

HON. MR. LEGER submitted the lists of receipts and expenditures of the Province from November 1st., 1931 to March 1st., 1932.

MR. TWEEDIE presented a petition for a bill to amend the Rates and Taxes Act relating to the Town of Chatham.

MR. SCOTT presented a petition for a bill to incorporate Farmers' Cooperative Dairy Company.

MR. NILES presented a petition for a bill to authorize the County of Victoria to make temporary loans; also for a bill to authorize the Municipal Home Commissioners to issue debentures. Also a bill to amend the Act relating to the Maine and New Brunswick Electric Power Company, Limited.

MR. AGAR presented a petition for a bill to amend the Act Relating to Sewerage in the City of Saint John. Also for a bill to incorporate the Catholic Sailors' Club.

HON. MR. STEWART presented a petition for a bill relating to the Town of Campbellton.

More Petitions

HON. MR. RICHARDS presented a petition for a bill to consolidate and amend Acts relating to the Town of Marysville.

HON. MR. HARRISON presented a petition for a bill to amend the Act incorporating the Saint John Law Society.

MR. SMITH (Saint John) presented a petition for a bill to further amend the Act uniting the Cities of Saint John and Portland.

Also for a bill to fix the valuation of T. S. Simms & Company, Limited.

Also for a bill to provide funds for relief of unemployment.

HON. MR. STEWART presented a petition for a bill respecting the Municipality of Restigouche.

MR. McALLISTER presented a petition for a bill to fix the valuation of New Brunswick Breweries Limited; also for a bill to amend the Act relating to permanent sidewalks and highways in Lancaster; also for a bill to amend the Act enabling the Municipality of Saint John to issue debentures.

Also for a bill to fix the assessment for taxes of the Saint John and Dry Dock and Ship Building Company.

HON. MR. LEGER submitted the report of the Comptroller General on Public Accounts.

MR. MICHAUD presented a petition for a bill to amend the Town Incorporation Act relating to the Town of Edmundston.

HON. MR. LEGER moved that the Public Accounts and the report thereon be referred to the Committee on Public Accounts.

Dysart Starts Something

MR. Dysart moved for an order of the House to bring down certain papers regarding highway expenditures of which notice had already been given. He said that this motion was prompted on account of the situation which had arisen, which he believed required further investigation into certain public accounts. He could assure the House he was actuated by no petty motives but was seeking to do his duty in common with other members of the opposition. It might be urged that there was lack of precedent for this motion, but as he had requests from a number of prominent people in connection with the investigation that was held last year and on which they wanted further information he was taking this step. He might say that when the House adjourned last year he had two understandings with the Minister of Public Works; first, that certain accounts which could not be taken up during the Session would be



HON. A. J. LEGER
Provincial Secretary-Treasurer

investigated during recess and this understanding had been complied with. The second understanding that he should have the right to obtain copies of payrolls for more extended investigation had not been fully complied with. Some of these accounts could not be procured during last session because it was said that they were in the hands of the Public Accounts Committee. He though the right of the House to investigation should not be taken away because of the Public Accounts Committee. It was silly to stand on that technicality. When the House proroged a good many accounts asked for had not been submitted. Some of these had been sent to him (Dysart) later and then requests for further acounts was refused. He had had an interview with the Minister of Public Works who gave a clear cut unequivical promise that all payrolls he asked for would be forth coming, but on June 22nd. the Minister had written him stating that requests for payrolls had become so numerous and many of them having been before a Public Accounts Committee, that, he, (the Minister), did not think more should be sent out.

Refused Information

In further persuance of information had had personally gone to the Departments with requests for payrolls and had been refused by the officers in charge. That, he submitted, was a situation the like of which never existed heretofore. In times past, when the provincial business was small and accounts comparatively few, it was perhaps possible to give them a thorough investigation during the session, but at the present time it was ridiculous to suppose that all the details of provincial business could be investigated during a few weeks session. He thought the Government should welcome the work of the opposition and assist in cleaning house so that the Treasury should not be exposed to the cunning and dishonest methods of certain road supervisors. Personally he knew nothing of the irregularities mentioned in the letters he had received, but he had before him a letter that a reliable tax-payer had written him whose name he would not at present disclose and which said,—

The Premier's Reply

HON. MR. RICHARDS said his hon. friend was not in order in reading letters to the House before his motion was put.

MR. DYSART said he did not think the point of order was well taken. He had a right, he felt, to explain why the motion was necessary before the Speaker put it to the House and—

HON. MR. RICHARDS—"Mr. Speaker I rise to explain"—

MR. DYSART—"I appeal to you Mr. Speaker for your ruling"

HON. MR. RICHARDS—"I rise to a point of order and it is this, that the proper time to debate this motion is after it has been put to the House"

Speaker's Ruling

HON. MR. SPEAKER said that his ruling was that it was not at this time in order to read letters nor to give contents of letters. The letter the hon. member (Dysart) had read from the Minister of Public Works was in a different category and might be allowable. After the motion was put the hon. gentleman could place his evidence before the House.

MR. DYSART continuing said he would submit to the ruling, but he thought he had a right to substantiate his motion when making it. He had been informed that men on some of the payrolls for unemployment were men of very substantial property and if this were shown to be so he wanted to find out whether such men could take unemployment relief and deprive men who really needed it, of the money and it was absurd to say that the members of the House during the few hours which the Public Accounts Committee sat, perhaps ten or twelve for the whole session, could look into all these accounts.

MR. TAYLOR said that last year the Public Accounts Committee was sitting for a much longer time than stated by the hon. gentleman.

HON. MR. SPEAKER then put the motion to the House.

Hon. Mr. Stewart

HON. MR. STEWART said he wished to refer to the statements of his hon. friend regarding the agreement he mentioned. He (Dysart) had failed to state the conditions under which the agreement was arrived at. Last year there had been a request for 250 payrolls from one county alone, and when these had all been studied for days by the opposition no irregularities of any importance were found. Not one act of dishonesty among all the accounts from that county was prived. From another county it was found that a bottle of liquor had been carried to a road supervisor, but other witnesses had testified they had never seen that man unable to do his work. He therefore felt that the acounts of his department should not be promiscuously handed out for fishing expeditions. If hon. gentleman opposite knew personally of wrong doings and had definite charges to make he could assure them that the charges would be probed to the bottom and no wrong-doer would escape. He had no desire to shield the wrong-doing of any official.

MR. DYSART—"Does the hon. gentleman say, that in the Queens County case investigated last year, there was no wrong-doing?"

The Veniot Method

HON. MR. STEWART—"The evidence and the finding in that case is over in the files of the department where it can be found, unlike the evidence abstracted by Hon. P. J. Veniot after an investigation was held while he was Minister of Public Works." The condition upon which he entered into agreement with his hon. friend to furnish payrols for his inspection was that there should be reasonable grounds for an investigation and when he began to call for such numbers as to look as if to duplicate the Albert County fishing trip He thought ti was time to call a halt. His hon. friend opposite had prefaced his remarks by talking about unemployment and yet his motion was for production of payrolls for the year 1929 long before unemployment was thought of. As to his complaint that he (Dysart) could not obtain accounts from the department surely he knew that it was not regular to obtain accounts before they were submitted to the House.

MR. DYSART—"We wanted to see them, not to take them out."

HON. MR. STEWART—" When I was in opposition and wanted to get information to substantiate real charges I got no accomodation from the hon. gentleman's government. I got no quarter and so far as I am concerned I will give no quarter except under the rules of the House."

Mr. Michaud Heard

MR. MICHAUD said it was regrettable that the time of the House should be taken up in this way and he thought the Government was unwise in taking the attitude they were now taking. Last year the Minister of Public Works had complained that charges of irregularities were not brought in until the last days of the session, although even then he had had notification that charges were to be made. The opposition did not expect to give advance notice of what they would find before they saw the accounts. He held that members of the House were here on behalf of the tax-payers and were entitled to all information on public expenditure. If their investigation were facilitated many irregularities might be eliminated and loss to the province saved. In the past it had not been the practice to follow the rules too closely an easier way had been provided and it had been salutary. It was a move in the wrong direction to withhold information and compel the strict observance of the rules of the House. If everything had to be investigated before the Public Accounts Committee there would be no end to the session and great increase of expense to the country. They were not looking for information in order to make charges and he submitted the members had a right to find out what was in public documents and it was the duty of the Government to facilitate their investigation.

Falacious Argument

HON. MR. RICHARDS said the notice of motion called for the production of certain payrolls for the years 1929 and 1930 as they related to certain districts and to certain counties. The motion was relative to those two years only and had no relation to the accounts of 1931 which had just been tabled and referred to the Public Accounts Committee. The hon. leader of the opposition and the members from Madawaska had made quite an interesting presentation of a perfectly falacious argument trying to assume a place in the eyes of the people as the guardians of political life in this country. They asked the House to believe that they had no party bias in the matter and were entirely altruistic. He wished it to be clearly understood that the Government had no desire to withhold any information from members of the House to which they are entitled. And they would reveal as fully as possible, but in a regular way all accounts. This or any legislature could only function under certain rules and principles. Hon. gentlemen opposite would recognize and concede that point. It was beyond of all the scope of reason to think that this House should have brought before it the Public Accounts of all preceding years. The legislature had no doubt the right, if it saw fit to do so, but it was not the accepted parliamentary practice that such should be done. The rules provided that the accounts for the preceding year were the ones to be considered and passed on. The Dominion Parliament did not go back of the immediately preceding year and this practice is so well understood there that previous accounts are not called for. It was only consonant with common sense that the Legisalture could not go back and back for years or when would its work end. Regarding the understanding between the Minister of Public Works and his hon. friend (Dysart) he was prepared to stand behind the decision of the Minister in refusing to send public accounts promiscuously throughout the province and to provide a continuous examination of such accounts. In regard to the present motion before the House, as Premier he would take the responsibility of asking the House to vote it down. All the accounts of 1931 would be before the Public Accounts Committee and it was the duty of the members of the House to see that they were investigated thoroughly and completely.

MR. RICHARD (Gloucester) thought the Government was taking an unwise position in applying gag rule. When he asked could members of the House see the accounts. Under the rules they could not see them before they were submitted to the House and they could not see them after they were submitted to the Public Accounts Committee. Surely the Government was not in earnest in position it was taking.

Closes Debate

MR. DYSART read extracts from the report of the Committee on Public Accounts, signed by Hon. W. H Harrison, in support of his contention that the inquiry into road accounts of two counties during the session of 1931 had been justified, yet in the light of that report the hon. Minister of Public Works had stated that there had been no irregularities. The Committee on Public Accounts, in its report, had recommended that the evidence be submitted to the hon. Attorney General in order that he might take what action he considered necessary. He (Dysart) would say that the hon. Attorney General owed it to the country to state whether or no he considered action was necessary on his part. He (Dysart) did not like the idea of the hon. Premier broadcasting the words intimating that there had been lack of good faith on the part of members of the opposition. The ratepayers of the province were certainly entitled to the information and should have it, regardless of what the rules might be in the Parliament at Ottawa. The hon. Premier had stated that he was amazed that the notice of motion did not call for the accounts for the year 1931.

HON. MR. RICHARDS:—"No, I expressed amazement that it had not called for that information."

MR. DYSART said that the hon. Provincial Secretary-Treasurer had just tabled the accounts for 1931, and had moved that they be referred to the Committee on Pubic Accounts. He (Dysart) had asked for accounts for the years 1930 and 1929, and they had been refused. He differed with the Hon. Premier that it was absurd to carry on an investigation that might be extended during the entire recess. There had been an investigation last year of the accounts of only two counties, yet the Deputy Attorney General was only now preparing his report for submission to the Legislature. Should the accounts for all the counties of the province be placed under investigation it might be necessary for the Deputy Attorney General to increase his staff.

Motion Voted Down

The House divided on the motion as follows:—

Yeas—Messrs. Michaud, Dysart, Niles, Doucet, Bordage, Richard (Gloucester), Richard (Kent), Savoie, Gill, Pirie, Tweedie, Anderson, Colpitts, Downey.—14.

Nays:—Hon. Messrs. Harrison, Leger, Richards, Tilley, Stewart, Smith, Taylor, and Messrs. White Fairweather, Atkinson, Guptill, Siddall, Diotte, Agar, Smith (Saint John), Scott, Dougan, Melville Taylor, Evans, Moore, McAllister, Jewett, Smith (Kings), Cockburn, Perry, Coffyn.—28.

HON. MR. SPEAKER declared the motion lost.

HON. MR. LEGER presented a message from His Honor, the Administrator of the Government, submitting the estimates of receipts and exepnditures for the ensuing year, and moved that such estimates, together with that portion of His Honor's Speech having references to the same, be referred to the Committee of Supply.

Hon. A. J. Leger Spoke Eloquently On The Financial Position Of The Province.

HON. MR. LEGER, on rising to move the House into Committee of Supply, said:—

THE BUDGET SPEECH

Mr. Speaker: The eighteenth administration of New Brunswick accepted office on the twentieth day of May last, when the Hon. J. B. M. Baxter, Prime Minister, retired from a political life full of activities, honors and service, and, by the unanimous vote of the Government members of the Legislature, was succeeded by a man who has the admiration, the confidence and the esteem of his followers, the Honourable C. D. Richards.

The Government is happy to tender a hearty welcome to the newly elected members of the Counties of Saint John and Gloucester. The result obtained in these two by-elections may be considered as a sure indication that the general policy of the government, on questions affecting the welfare of this Province, has the approbation of the majorty of the electors.

His Excellency's Visit

On the twenty-ninth day of September last, we were privileged to greet in person, His Excellency, the Governor General of Canada, Lord Bessborough. The sincere welcome tendered was only a feeble expression of the sentiments which our people have for the representative of the King, whom we delight to honor. His Excellency has shown himself well pleased with our Province and has, with the greatest ease, enlisted the most affectionate regards on account of the sound judgment, the uncommon delicacy and the profound cordiality, which he has always manifested, since he set foot on the Canadian soil. We trust that His Excellency was satisfied, that the down in this Province by the Sea, there is a united people of English, French, Scotch, and Irish decent who glory in the achievements of the Empire, whilst daily becoming better Canadians in spirit and sentiments, devoted to their Province and country confident in the resources which it contains and hopeful of the future.

Financial Statement

Mr. Speaker, for the now seventh successive year, it has been our duty, as well as our prerogative to present to this House the financial statement of the affairs of our Province. During that period we have had our successful years and our balanced budgets. In fact just as the time when we had hoped to reap the benefits of a progressive administration we were seized by a world wide depression which affected our revenues and necessitated premature expenditures of provincial moneys, to meet unemployment conditions engendered by industrial depression.

Is World Wide

Whilst it does not enter into the confine of this discourse, to give the causes of a world wide depression, much beyond the control of the governments, we may perhaps draw from it the conclusion that, in their economic and political relations, the peoples of the world are intimately associated in everything that tends to increase or decrease the general welfare. It is therefore logical, to find our province suffering from the general disturbed conditions affecting the other provinces. And, although there may be not much comfort in itself, in the intimation that our province has endured the crisis as well as any other province, still, it tends to illustrate the fact that our Government has been alert to the situation, and due its effective administration, the unemployment problems have been realized and fairly well met.

Courage And Confidence

When is this depression likely to end? We will not venture an opinion, for it might be like the prophesies of many others, devoid of the elements calculated to produce ultimate accuracy. Whether or not we are near the end, the people of the province can always count on this Government to face the situation with unabated courage and confidence. This is not the first time that periods of depression attendant with ills of unemployment and hardships have occurred. Though not so severe and not so prolonged, we had them in 1907, in 1914 and 1911. Our province endured them nobly, and prosperity followed. Have we any reason to believe that the present situation will terminate differently than the others? Prosperity will come again; it will be hastened by constant work, courage and determination to win.

Grouchers Not Wanted

Meanwhile there is no room for pessimism nor distrust. There should be room for those who, for political purposes or otherwise, by their discouraging remarks, are creating a spirit of unrest which is not only prejudicial to the best interests of our province, but is as hurtful to those who make them, as to those listen to them, because it hampers the forces which are at work to bring about stability in business and it retards the period of readjustment.

Needs Moral Support

Mr. Speaker, if there ever was a time when Governments needed the moral support of all their people, it is the present time. We are passing through a period of re-adaptation. The long lumber industry, which heretofore made the prosperity of this province, has for a number of years been steadily declining, due, not so much to the destruction of the standing timber or the greater distance of travel to get logs of large size, although, both factors increase the cost of production—but principally to the new competition of British Columbia resultant from the opening of the Panama Canal. There is also the competition, across the Atlantic, of lumber from countries where cheaper labor and other necessities engendered by the present economic conditions make it possible to undersell the products of New Brunswick. This is our situation. The provincial revenues derived from the resources of the forests must be replaced. The people who in the past, have been engaged in all the different activities of this industry, must be provided with work and must adjust themselves to a changed condition. To this relief, the pulp and paper industry will materially assist. May we not also express the hope that, with the persistent efforts of our people and with the affluence of our raw materials, our factories and industries will eventually be improved, thus provided greater employment for our population. But, as these will require time and capital, our attention may be turned towards the development of resources more easily accessible and more economically developed. Hence, to the land, to the culture of the soil, must we turn to find the immediate and permament solution of our difficulties. We have gven millions to parry the economic crisis without settling the unemployment problems.

Land Bonus Policy

A certain amount of relief money spent to help agriculture, to promote colonization, to render possible re-occupation of our abandoned farms, would, we believe, materially reduce the acute unemployment problems. Our Government recognized this principle, when, in addition to the different opportunities for land settlement which it provides, it created a bonus policy for the clearing and culture of land; and, this year at least forty five thousand dollars wll thus be paid to the farmers. In general, our Government has always extended material assistance to agriculture by assisting the farmers in the problems of cultivation and farm management, and by providing expert advice along these lines. For this purpose, active services are maintained to promote livestock, dairy, poultry and seed branch improvement, etc., etc., as well as publicity.

Agricultural Production

In sum, the Department of Agriculture maintains a very active force of officials and of district agricultural representatives and a very effective system of assistance to the farmers in all branches of farming. It is therefore, with gratification that we record, this year, a marked increase in the diversification of our agricultural productions, as well as a steady and continued rise in the yield of the soil, both in quality and quantity. The Canadian Gazette of September last estimated the hay crop at around 1,000,000 tons; the largest ever harvested in this province.

The pasture improvement demonstration programme met with gener-

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