

LAST ITEM OF ESTIMATES DISPOSED OF AT AN EARLY HOUR THIS MORNING

(Continued from page two)

counts of his department. Some of the items, including five thousand dollars for printing, should be checked up, and it should be known whether or not he had called for tenders for that work.

Can Be Examined

HON. MR. RICHARDS said that there was nothing to keep the accounts of the Publicity Bureau from being examined along with those of other departments. The very fact that the appropriation had been reduced was indicative of a desire on the part of the Minister in charge of the Bureau to keep the cost of the service within reasonable limits. To his mind there was no question as to the value to the province of the service being given, and he believed that that was recognized by his hon. friends opposite.

MR. DOUCET moved, seconded by Mr. Niles, that the item "Other Expenses, \$15,887" in connection with the Tourist and Information Bureau, be reduced to five thousand dollars, and a division being taken, the motion was declared lost by a vote of twenty eight to thirteen.

School Books

MR. DYSART wanted to know if the distribution of free school books was to be discontinued. Why was there such a large appropriation in the estimates for that service.

HON. MR. RICHARDS explained that it was necessary to maintain the department for the distribution of school books to the vendors, and it would be some time before there would be an adjustment to meet the changed conditions. He said that the order for a supply of school books had already been placed with the publishers.

MR. DYSART wanted to know what quantity of books the department had on hand.

HON. MR. LEGER said the books had to be ordered early and payment would be made within the year. The department would eventually provide revenue which would permit of a reduction in expenses.

MR. MICHAUD wanted to know if it would be necessary for the department to expend sixty nine thousand dollars on school books.

HON. MR. LEGER said the same quantity of books had been ordered as in previous years, and it had been necessary to place the order six or seven months ahead of requirements.

MR. MICHAUD said that perhaps he had not made himself clear but he saw no reason for the government expending sixty-nine thousand dollars on school books during the fiscal year.

HON. MR. LEGER said that in 1925 the estimated expenditure on school books was forty two thousand dollars, but at that time they were supplied only to inferior grades. He could assure his hon. friend that the government would derive revenue from school books during the present year.

MR. MICHAUD wanted to know if the sixty nine thousand dollars to be appropriated was to pay for new books or for books purchased last year.

HON. MR. LEGER said that the amount was for new books to be used during the present fiscal year.

MR. TAYLOR said that as he understood it, the appropriation was for commitments already made for school books, and that the department would be reimbursed for part of the outlay by receipts from the sale of books.

Unforeseen Expenses

MR. PIRIE, on the item of "Unforeseen Expenses" wanted to know why the amount was seven thousand dollars as against three thousand last year.

HON. MR. LEGER said that it was impossible to estimate what the expenditure would be under the item of unforeseen expenses. It might be double the amount to be appropriated and it might be nothing at all.

MR. PIRIE said that he noticed that last year the sum of \$2,396, the price of a McLaughlin-Buick was charged up to the Department of the Provincial Secretary-Treasurer as unforeseen expenses.

HON. MR. RICHARDS said that as he had already explained to the House he took full responsibility for the expenditure to which his hon. friend from Victoria had referred. He had already made an explanation of the matter, and it was not necessary to repeat it.

MR. PIRIE referring to the expenditure for a new car for the Premier, said he did not see this unprecedented outlay in the same light as the Premier. If that was the Premier's idea of economy, it was not his. To turn down the request for a grant to the blind and then buy a luxurious car was not fitting to these times.

Fully Explained

HON. MR. RICHARDS said he thought he had fully explained this matter and would abide by the judgment of the House and the country.

MR. DYSART said he had not heard the Premier's previous remarks, but he thought the purchase of the car in question was a most unfortunate occurrence under the starving conditions of many people in the province. Such an expenditure might well have been deferred. This was not a personal reflection, but one of cold dollars and cents. He could not only conclude that economy from the mouths of the present government was an idle plea. The Minister of Lands and Mines had also stepped out and got a new car. He further criticized the way the purchase of the Premier's car was placed in the Public Accounts so that it would be overlooked. This car was

now the talk everywhere in the province and he believed if a secret ballot among members supporting the government was taken the government would not be in power ten minutes.

Accepts Responsibility

HON. MR. RICHARDS said he took the responsibility for having the car charged to the Contingent Account, but the officers responsible for making up the Public Accounts were responsible for the way the item appeared. Personally, he would have preferred to have it set out in the account for what it was. The opposition had from time to time referred to the expense account of cabinet ministers giving an idea of lack of economy. Reports of such remarks were no doubt interesting reading for those who wished to find fault, but it was unfair to give the idea that expense accounts at present were more excessive than in other provinces or under previous administrations in this province. Cabinet minister in this province had salaries of \$3,500 per year, whereas in Nova Scotia they received \$6,000. He (Richards) had been accused of extravagance and he would refer them to the accounts of 1932 where they would see that his expenses under the Department of Attorney General for services within the province amounted to \$229.43, and his expenses as Premier under Executive Council accounts were \$338.53, a total of \$617.96. In 1923 the expenses of then Premier for nine months only were classified under Executive Council as \$862 and as Minister of Public Works at \$1,200. It was true that \$206. were for trips outside the province, but that left \$656 as comparable with his expenses of \$388. If in 1923 the expenses of the Attorney General for nine months of \$664 were added to the expenses of the Premier \$656 received \$1,320 for nine months against the total expenditure last year by himself (Richards) of \$617.96. He claimed that the fair minded people of the province did not think that the Ministers of the Crown were overpaid.

Getting Petty

HON. MR. TILLEY thought that the opposition were getting a bit petty in their criticisms. His hon. friend (Dysart) said he had been Minister of Lands and Mines and there was no car at his disposal at that time. As a matter of fact he knew or should have known the Minister of that day had a car at his disposal. If the hon. gentleman (Dysart) was so keen in regard to economy he might set an example and waive the bonus of a thousand dollars a year that the House had voted him as leader of the Opposition in 1927.

MR. DYSART said he saw now in the light of the hon. gentleman's remark in what spirit the extra allowance to the leader of the opposition had been given, but he did not propose to be throttled in his utterances by any such petty amount. He did not think the Premier's comparison between the expenses of 1932 and 1923 were fair as in the latter year the Premier resided at Bathurst and the Attorney General at Moncton and their expenses were made up on a mileage allowance.

HON. MR. RICHARDS said he scrutinized the accounts in question and they were not made up by mileage but on a per diem allowance of eight dollars per day.

HON. MR. STEWART said when assuming office in 1925 he had been requested to furnish a car to convey the Lieutenant-Governor to an official occasion at Campbellton. He found that there were then no closed cars owned by the Department of Public Works, but was informed by the manager of the garage that there was one in the Department of Lands and Mines and who he asked, would have had a better right to that car than the Minister of the Department.

Sinking Fund

MR. NILES enquired for details as to the placing of Province of New Brunswick bonds in the sinking fund.

HON. MR. LEGER explained that, the usual practice was when a considerable amount of cash had accumulated for sinking fund purposes to take some bonds from an issue that might be made and pay for them with sinking fund money at 4 1-2 per cent. If the bonds were bought in the open market they would, of course, cost more than that.

MR. RICHARD (Gloucester), on the item of \$1500 for road signs, said this seemed a large expenditure for the collection of only \$5,000 of tax.

HON. MR. LEGER said the collection of these fees involved a great deal of travelling and the revenue was not large because since the imposition of the tax on signs most of them had been removed to within the limit of towns and cities. The real object of the tax, as it was in Quebec and Nova Scotia, was not so much one of revenue as to prevent the landscape being covered with unsightly boards and if the revenue exceeded the expense the object of the tax was at least partially attained.

MR. RICHARD (Gloucester) thought the tax was improper and undesirable. At 6.30 p.m. the Committee took recess till 8 p.m.

Evening Sitting

The Committee resumed at 8 p.m. MR. ANDERSON, on the item Workmen's Compensation Claims, \$30,000, said it had been brought to his attention that an Order-in-Council had established a minimum payroll under which claims could be put in of \$400. He thought that this would bear heavily upon the small operators.

HON. MR. RICHARDS said all those matters were within the jurisdiction of the Workmen's Compensation Board. There were certain regulations which

the Board submitted to the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council for approval. It was necessary that there should be a minimum payroll for every employer and the amount suggested to the government by the Compensation Board was \$800 and the government had suggested that that be cut in two. It had been a principle that there should be a minimum payroll to have general application.

Wants Cut Made

MR. MELVILLE, on the item Lieutenant-Governor's Contingencies (under the heading of Executive Council) \$2,000, thought where the government were cutting down the estimate this Department seemed to be one to which they had not paid sufficient attention. He felt there was no reason why this Department should not be cut the same as others. There was \$9,000 from Ottawa and \$2,500 interest on Government House and he would suggest that when a new official was appointed that the government then make known that expenses in connection with this Department would be reduced the same as in other departments.

School Items

HON. MR. RICHARDS, on the item Manual Training Equipment and Travel, Department of Education \$700, said this item covered the travelling expenses of the Director and equipment purchased by school trustees.

HON. MR. RICHARDS, on the item school houses poor districts, \$1,000, said this provided for school house grants to the poorer districts. It had been the custom to aid poor districts in building school houses. He enumerated the different places throughout the province where such grants had been given, showing the total amount of \$725 paid under recommendation of the school inspector.

Need Assistance

MR. MICHAUD called the attention of the government to conditions in isolated parts of the province where it was impossible to organize schools. He referred to districts between Edmundston and Moncton along the N. T. R. where families were compelled to live in connection with railway work. In some of these districts there were children of school age, but no school could be organized at these places as the few residents were unable to maintain schools. He contended that special assistance should be granted in such cases and the same applied to some newly settled districts. He thought it would be doing a good service to place a few hundred dollars in the hands of the Department of Education to provide for these special cases.

MR. TAYLOR (Sunbury) called attention to the fact that there was a special grant already provided for in the case of poor districts such as had been mentioned by the member from Madawaska. In addition to that, the government gave a grant to the teacher. In doing away with the minimum salary for teachers it had been made possible now for districts to get teachers where they were unable to do so before. The province, he said, was now paying 75 per cent in such cases as had been mentioned and he felt that any district needing a school should be able to provide the other 25 per cent.

MR. MICHAUD said it was not so much the salary of the teacher in these poor districts as it was to provide school buildings. He would urge the government to make special provision beyond what the law already allowed.

Poor Districts

HON. MR. RICHARDS said the very provision referred to in this item provided a certain grant for poor districts, but it might be necessary to give some special assistance in such cases as had been referred to. He would bring the matter to the attention of the Board of Education.

MR. DOUCET said no action had yet been taken by the government on the report of the Educational Commission which had made a favourable impression on the public. Legislative action along the line of the report would be beneficial to the province, but he would not say that all the recommendations could be put into effect during the present period of depression. However, he would be glad to know what the government intended to do with the report.

Would Mean a Change

HON. MR. RICHARDS said the report had been before the government for the past year. Those who had read it, however, would realize that to put into effect the recommendations would necessarily make a great change in the framework of our educational system, especially in reference to financial features. It would not seem that it could be done at the present time. It would mean a substantial increase in our expenditures and also impose increased financial burdens on the various counties of the province. In view of that fact it had not seemed advisable to the government to carry out the report just now and he could not say definitely when it could be done. A question also arose in regard to finding a system that would provide more equitable assessment for school purposes in the different counties.

Public Works

The Committee next took the estimates of the Department of Public Works.

MR. DOUCET, on the item Minister's travel expenses, said if they wanted to practice economy they should start at the head. If they wanted to satisfy the public they must bring about more equitable conditions. Industries, he said, were being operated today for 50 per cent less than a few years ago and salaries and earning power of the people had been greatly reduced. The salaries and travelling expenses of the government, however, he said, were practically the same as a few years ago. Last year the travelling expenses of the Minister of Public Works were \$2,700 and he thought that too much. The present Minister had claimed when in opposition that the Public Works Department was too heavy and if that was true then it was also true today. The situation in the Department of Public Works, he said, was reflected through all other Departments and he believed the Minister of Public Works should set the exam-

ple and ask his colleagues to assist in reducing expenses.

An Explanation

HON. MR. STEWART thought the hon. member for Gloucester (Doucet) had entirely overlooked the fact that during the years prior to 1925 there had been no such work done in the fall of the year as was being done now. It had been his duty as head of the Department to visit the work done at all times of the year and he did not think the right thinking people of the House or country would criticize the actual expenses incurred by the Minister while he was attending entirely to the business of his Department. He had made visits to Ottawa a great many times in connection with the work of his Department and he felt that he had accomplished something for the interests of the people. He would assure the House that there had been no graft or padding of accounts and all his expenses had been actually incurred in connection with his duties. In the amount of \$2,700, mentioned by the member for Gloucester as his expenses of last year, there was included his expenses during the several trips he had made to Ottawa. He would say that there had not been constructed a bridge costing \$3,000 that he had not seen and inspected during the course of its construction. It was only fair to say that during the last two years there had been a great deal of work done by the Department of Public Works that no previous Minister had done, but he would say that he could not have given more time to the Department as he (Stewart) had given all his time to the service of the province.

Mr. Siddall Heard

MR. SIDDALL said the Minister of Public Works should not take very seriously the criticism of the Opposition with regard to his expense account. The present Minister had given good service and had given more attention to his work than any previous Minister. Hon. Mr. Stewart, he said, could not be charged with travelling around too much. Every member, he felt, was only too glad to have him come into his county and so long as he looked after his work as he had been doing he was always assured of cordial welcome in any county.

Road Policy

Turning to discuss the road policy of the present government and the amount of road machinery purchased for building roads, he said, as a supporter of the government, he took his full share for urging upon the government the policy of purchasing adequate machinery for making good roads. He felt it was a good policy and had paid the province, and he believed it would commend itself to any business man in New Brunswick. For the benefit of members of the committee he would make some comparison of the cost of roads built by the former government with those constructed by the present administration with the aid of modern machinery. He had compiled his figures from the public accounts, and they covered a period of ten years and were absolutely correct. It was not his intention to make it appear that when the roads were built that the province had anything but fair and honest administration on the part of both governments.

Shediac Road

The first road he would refer to was one leading from Shediac to Moncton, and the work extended a distance of eight miles. It had been started in 1920 and finished three years later at a total cost of \$104,691.48, an average cost per mile of \$13,086.31. Traffic on this road became very heavy and in 1928 the present government found it necessary to construct that portion of it from Lewisville to Gilbert's Corner, a distance of thirteen miles. By the end of three weeks the road had been entirely regraded and reopened for traffic, and by the end of September the entire section had been regraded and work completed. The total cost of the thirteen miles was \$19,655.06, an average cost per mile of \$1,511.08. That he thought was a sufficient answer to criticisms made by the hon. leader of the Opposition.

Another Example

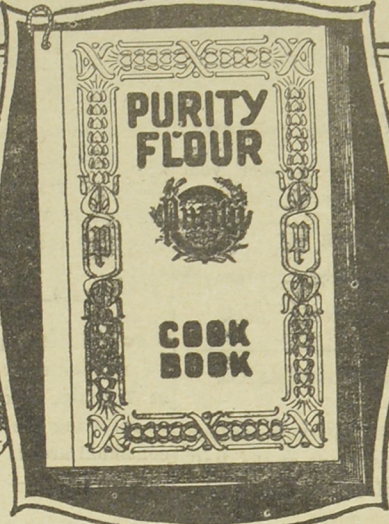
As another example of road construction under the former government, he would cite the main highway from Port Elgin to Hardy Swamp, constructed under the watchful eye of Hon. Fred Magee, a former member of the government. He had no doubt that the work was honestly carried out, but the antiquated methods were responsible for the large expenditure. The total cost of that piece of road was \$35,436.82, an average cost per mile of \$10,124.80. In comparison with that, he would cite the road leading from Moncton to Petitcodiac, a distance of 23.2 miles, which had been reconstructed by the present government in 1929 at a total cost of \$50,265.52, an average cost per mile of \$2,175.23. From the figures he had quoted of the two projects, it was shown that the average construction cost per mile was \$10,124.80, while under the equipment policy of the present government, construction costs had been reduced to \$2,175.13 per mile, a net saving per mile of \$7,949.67. He had no hesitation in saying that the Petitcodiac was one of the best ever constructed constructed in New Brunswick.

In his county there had been constructed by the present government two main trunk standards with a twenty-six roadway surface 121.5 miles of trunk highway, and 155.5 miles of secondary roads, a total of 277 miles. He maintained that based on \$7,949.67 per mile, there had been a saving on the 277 miles constructed, the tidy sum of \$2,202,058.59, or sufficient to pay twice the cost of every garage and piece of equipment in the entire province.

Some Comparison

He would say that for the benefit of the committee, he had prepared a statement showing all roads in the counties of Westmorland and Kent graded by the present government with tractor equipment. In Westmorland County the total of the three kinds of roads was 655.9 miles, and the total for Kent County was 518 (Continued on Page Six)

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- 9.—Your life insurance policy—what company issued it?
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