

MR. GUPTILL OF CHARLOTTE TELLS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FISHING INDUSTRY

Following is the official report of the speeches contributed to the budget debate in the Legislature on Wednesday by Mr. Richard of Kent and Mr. Guptill of Charlotte:

MR. RICHARD (Kent), on the House resuming after recess, joined with other members in offering congratulations to the Mover and Second of the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne for the manner in which they had discharged their duties, considering the position in which the Province stood at the present time. It was also a pleasure for him to congratulate the Premier and other hon. members sitting in the front benches to the right of the Speaker for their promotion to high positions, and he hoped that the responsibility concerning their important duties would be performed to the best of their ability. The hon. member for Kings (Smith) had stated that the price of certain products was much higher now than in 1932. He believed, however, the depression was far from being over, and as an evidence of this was the fact that not more than twenty-five per cent to thirty per cent of the taxes had been collected. Municipalities were unable to meet their obligations, and most of them were going into debt at a terrible rate. Taxes were higher on account of the large amount of interest that must be met each year, and the greater part of the people were unable to pay their taxes.

On the North Shore

The hon. member for Kings County (Smith) had referred to conditions in Northumberland, more particularly in regard to the lumber industry. Conditions such as existed in the Miramichi district not only affected the people of that county but also of the surrounding counties, especially Kent, as the greater part of the men in Kent working in the woods had worked in Northumberland County. At the present time these men who had earned sufficient to support their families were now practically starving, and a great many of them were on the relief list. He would suggest that the Government look into the situation very carefully and give this matter the consideration it deserved.

Opposed to it

The Speech from the Throne made reference to hard surface roads. He was certainly not against any system of roads that would improve our present highways, but he was against spending money by the million on a few miles of roads and neglecting other roads, especially secondary and by-roads. If more of our money expended on roads was better distributed, it would no doubt be an improvement not only from a road construction standpoint but also to encourage new settlers to establish in those areas where at the present time roads were in very bad condition. He understood that the Government had already been approached in regard to having the money for hard-surface roads expended between Saint John and St. Stephen. That might be all right for the people in that section of the Province, but what about the people in other parts of the Province. In order to relieve unemployment and to give equal treatment, the expenditure proposed for hard-surface roads should not be expended in one particular part of the Province, but also in other sections where it was mostly needed.

Motor Licenses

The Speech from the Throne made reference to the reduction of the Motor Vehicle Licenses this year. He thought this should have been done long before this. He claimed that the tax of seven cents per gallon on gasoline was too high, and should be reduced to five cents. He believed that five cents per gallon tax on gasoline would bring in nearly as much revenue as the seven cent tax, because there would be a great deal more used than at the present time. During the Session of 1932 a Bill had been passed to amend the gasoline tax. Before that, there was no tax on gasoline used for manufacturing purposes. The regulation relating to exemption on gasoline used for manufacturing purposes was repealed, with the result that some of the small industries had gone out of business because they could not operate and pay such a tax on gasoline. The House had been told at that time that no industries would be injuriously affected, but he declared, those using gasoline for manufacturing purposes had to pay the tax and no refund was made. He would repeat what he had said before—that no tax should be placed on gasoline except that being used for motor vehicles used on the public highways.

The Municipalities

The Premier the other day had stated that the various municipalities in the province were on the whole much better off financially than in some other provinces. He did not think the Premier had all the information required when he made that statement. He had stated that Kent County with an assessed valuation of \$1,723,955, had a bonded debt of \$28,000, less \$15,885, but he did not mention that the county had an overdraft at the bank to the amount of \$40,000, and also a floating debt of over \$20,000.

Game Laws

With regard to the Game Laws existing in the Province, he noted that the expenditure for salaries and expenses paid to game wardens amounted to \$52,497, while the revenue for game licenses, fines, etc. amounted to \$53,322.15. That left a very small net revenue, when it was considered that the revenue from the Game Laws should be a valuable asset. It seemed to him that the Game Laws in this Province were of no benefit to anyone as a resident in this province was not allowed to sell moosemeat at any price. He contended that residents of the province after they had paid for Saint John carried more heavy traffic

and contributed the largest amount in gasoline taxes. Therefore he hoped that the Hon. Minister of Public Works when the time arrived would give careful consideration to the representation submitted by the delegation.

Kent Looked After

The Hon. Member for Kent (Richard) while fair in his criticism had complained that his county had not received a fair proportion of road expenditure, and when asked by the Hon. Premier if he had included bridges he made no reply. He (Guptill) could assure him that the county of Kent had been well treated in regard to both roads and bridges. In 1933 the Government had expended in Kent on ordinary roads, ordinary bridges and permanent bridges the sum of \$82,041.99, which did not indicate that the county had been unfairly treated in comparison with other counties. It was a fair expenditure and showed that no advantage was taken of Kent because it was represented on the Opposition side of the House. So far as he could see there had been a fair distribution of road and bridge monies throughout the Province.

The Bonded Debt

Regarding the bonded indebtedness of the Province, he believed it was becoming a problem which was being felt by the citizens. He noticed that the hon. member for Gloucester (Richard) had given the net debt as sixty-two million dollars.

MR. RICHARD (Gloucester)—Oh no. MR. GUPTILL continuing, said he got that impression from the hon. member's remarks, but apparently he was now ready to modify his statement. The actual net debt of the Province in round figures was forty-seven million dollars.

MR. RICHARD (Gloucester)—You have measured and under measured.

Debt Increase

MR. GUPTILL continuing, said he would frankly admit that the indebtedness was unfortunately too high for the Province. The bulk of the increase had occurred during the last twenty years, and having been a member of the House during that time he was not shirking his share of the responsibility. Hon. members opposite sought to make it appear that the present Government was responsible for the increase in the public debt. As a matter of fact the Government that held office from 1917 until 1925 had increased the debt by \$17,387,274, and the present government had added the sum of \$15,067,484 during the same length of time or two million less than the Foster-Veniot administration. The figures he had quoted showed that responsibility for the increase of debt was attributable to both parties and not to the present Government alone. One reason for the increase was the constant clamour upon the Government to set up services here and there. The advent of the automobile some twenty years ago was no doubt responsible for the large expenditure made upon the roads of the province. The people wanted good roads, both for themselves and as an attraction for tourists with the result that the Government in twenty years had expended beyond their capacity. Not until 1930 was there a real effort put forth to cut down expenditure, but notwithstanding that the Government has not been able to balance the budget. Until the revenue became more buoyant, the Government should make every effort to balance the budget and reduce the bonded indebtedness. There were two classes of expenditure, controllable and uncontrollable, and the controllable expenditure was now fifty per cent less than the revenue, which meant that the Government had to keep up the various services with a limited revenue at their disposal. The salaries of civil servants had been reduced by ten per cent, and he believed there should be a further cut as the taxpayers have had to take more than ten per cent. Expenditures such as interest and sinking fund were beyond control, unless the Government should deem it advisable to refund a portion of the debt at a lower rate of interest. As interest rates were now lower, it might be advisable to consider such a plan in the future.

Saturation Point

Speaking of taxation, it was apparent to him that the Province had reached the saturation point and if industry was to be encouraged it was not advisable to impose additional taxation. He did not think it was possible for the Government to eliminate the present system of work on the roads. The province had a very creditable network of highways which elicited praise from American visitors, but they declare the dust nuisance to be a drawback. He thought the Government was doing right to eliminate the dust nuisance by inaugurating a system of hard-surface roads. He would point out, however, that there were hard-surface roads in Maine which were not altogether satisfactory because of the danger from frost. Still he believed the time had arrived when the Government in co-operation with the Federal authorities was justified in engaging in a program of hard-surface roads.

Per Capita Debt

With regard to the debt of New Brunswick, he believed that on a per capita basis it compared favorably with any other province in the Dominion. His hon. friend from Kent had disagreed with the Hon. Premier's statement that the municipalities of the Province were in first class condition. He (Guptill) would call his attention to the article in the Dominion Post which stated that twenty per cent of the municipalities of Ontario had defaulted on their municipal indebtedness to the extent of one hundred million dollars. That certainly bore out the statement of the Hon. Premier that the New Brunswick municipalities were in good condition.

A Suggestion

He was glad to note that the Government had succeeded in inducing the Federal administration to investigate the claims of the Province as set forth by the Duncan Royal Commission. He did not think that the Province was getting the remuneration it was entitled to under the pact of

Confederation. While the Federal Government was having its difficulties he believed it would deal fairly with the claims of New Brunswick. Should an extra subsidy be received from Ottawa, he would like to see it placed in the sinking fund for the redemption of the public debt. Canada, in common with other countries, had been going through a serious crisis, but he believed that low water mark had been reached and that better conditions were in sight.

Banks Praised

It was possible that during the depression there were many people not as thankful as they should have been of the fact that the banks had come through so safely. The banks were often criticized by those who perhaps were unable to borrow money as freely as they would like, but there had not been a single failure among them during the depression period. That condition of affairs was in striking contrast to the chaos that had occurred across the border.

The Fishing Industry

The prosperity of New Brunswick depended on the profits that could be derived from its four basic industries—fishing, agriculture, lumbering and mining. He had the honor of being the only representative in the House who had a one hundred per cent interest in fishery operations. New Brunswick with its great extent of coast line on the Bay Chaleur, Northumberland Straits and the Bay of Fundy, possessed a great asset in its fisheries. In Charlotte County thirty-five per cent of the population were dependent on the fisheries, a larger percentage than in any other country. On the Grand Manan Islands fishing operations were carried on twelve months in the year, while other counties were ice-bound part of the time. Fishing was a hazardous occupation, particularly during the winter months, and no other occupation was more hazardous. The fishermen of the Province had been hard hit, but had adapted themselves to new conditions and had maintained themselves as well as any other class of people. There was a betterment of conditions now in evidence, particularly at Black's Harbor in his own county. That place and in fact in all small harbors there was a considerable investment in buildings and curing plants, but those investments were not being kept up as they should be. Some people regarded fishing as a kind of sport, but he could assure all the members that there was no sport in fishing when it was carried on for a livelihood. He thought the fishermen of the province were to be commended for the manner in which they had carried on during the depression.

Marketing Legislation

He was interested in the proposed legislation before the House to promote the production and marketing of natural products, as he regarded it as of great importance. He believed that if a Board or Commission composed of outstanding men of actual experience was set up and appointed without regard to political affiliations that good results could be obtained. Much would depend on the character and ability of the men on the Board. While the Board should not be allowed to interfere too much with private business, it would if unhampered by red tape be of advantage to the small producer. At present there was too much spread between what the fisherman received for his commodity and the price the consumer had to pay. It was important that there should be a Board in which the public would have every confidence. Possibly the large exporters might oppose it, as they already have established markets, which they might not want to share with the small producers.

In conclusion, he wished to say that President Roosevelt's visit to Campobello Islands had been a splendid advertisement for New Brunswick. The President was the owner of a summer home on the Island and had spent his boyhood days around the shores of that Island. His visit was a great honor to New Brunswick and the County of Charlotte, and he hoped that the President would continue to come every year.

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