

# FIERCE STORM BROKE FORTH IN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Charges and Recriminatory Charges Hurlled Back and Forth by Supporters of the "Business Like Government"---Kilkenny Cats Put Away in the Shade---Strong Adjectives Were Used.

Mr. Pinder of York Started the Ball Rolling by Criticizing the Public Works Department---Mr. Swim of Northumberland Also Took a Hand---The Hazen Platform Brought Into the Arena---Hon. Mr. Morrissey Comes Back at His Traducers With a Slashing Speech---Defends Secretary Blair and Declares He is Not Guilty of Charges Made Against Him.

The old adage that "whom the Gods destroy they first make mad," was well exemplified in the Legislature last evening, when a big storm which has been brewing for weeks broke forth with all its fury. Gas bombs were used with deadly effect in an attack on the Public Works Department, led by General Pinder and Col. Swim, and Hon. John Morrissey retaliated in kind.

There were only a few spectators in attendance, including a judge, a military man, several engrossing clerks and a few others who had been tipped off. All enjoyed the performance immensely, and unite in saying that it established a new record in the legislative annals of this province. There have been verbal combats in the Legislature before now, but the belligerents were members of opposing parties. Last night's performance differed in this respect from all previous vaudeville stunts, inasmuch as the performers were all of one political family, and apparently a very unhappy family.

Premier Clarke was absent, and Acting Premier Murray was at the helm. The Acting Premier maintained a course of what may be termed benevolent neutrality during the row, and the Attorney General did likewise. In other words they were as dumb as a Buctouche oyster. So was Hon. Dr. Landry, Chief Whip Harry Woods, on the outbreak of hostilities, left his seat and took up a post on a sofa adjacent to an open door. Dr. Price, of Moncton, who was Mr. Woods' colleague on a recent scandal hunting expedition at Ottawa, bravely stood his ground. He even made an effort to break into the fight, but was shut out by the Minister of Public Works. The gallant Capt. Tilley led a fairly successful rear-guard action against the Minister. B. Franklin Smith led a preliminary skirmish but retired to ambush before the heavy artillery was brought into action.

The row started, as most Government rows start nowadays, over matters relating to the Public Works Department. The first gun was fired shortly after nine o'clock, and the battle raged for one and a half hours. At 11.30 p. m. a telephone message to Premier Clarke's headquarters at the Barker House stated that quietness prevailed on both fronts.

## Pinder Started Row.

It was Hon. Mr. Morrissey's "ancient enemy" Mr. Pinder of York, who started the ball rolling, and Mr. Swim, of Northumberland, backed him up.

On the estimate for Public Works Department, Mr. Pinder said he had a few remarks to make. It would be remembered that last session, when the Public Works estimates were before the committee, he took occasion to complain about the large amount of work that appeared to be done by day labor, and it seemed to him that no improvement in affairs had taken place since that time. Not only ordinary bridges, but permanent bridges also, which would be new work, seemed to be done by the day. In the years 1914 and 1915, in Northumberland county alone, no less than \$42,434 was spent in day work for repairs to old bridges and on new ones. Looking over the accounts it could be seen that the prices paid could only be described as most exorbitant, and had the work been done by tender, as it should have been, no such prices whatever would have been paid.

## A Broken Promise.

When the present Government came into office in 1908, one of the principal planks in their platform was that all public works should be put up by tender, and this rule should have been carried out. The Chief Commissioner had no right whatever to depart from it. There could be no doubt in the mind of anyone who took the trouble to look over the accounts that no end of money had been wasted and otherwise lost by the departure from the tender principle, and doing it by day's work instead. No better example could be furnished than the recent repairs to the Fredericton highway bridge, where \$64,000 was spent in repairing one pier. A large part of that money could have been saved if the work had been let by tender. It might, of course, be said that the work was done by contract. That was true, but it was on a percentage basis.

It might be said also that the C. P. R. did some of their work in the same way, but when the C. P. R. had work done on a percentage basis their own men were on the job to supervise it and see that no money was needlessly expended, and the C. P. R. also bought all the supplies. When the Chief Commissioner undertook work on that principle dozens of men were employed who were not needed—they were simply taken on to make the expense bigger. He (Pinder) was not expressing his own opinion only, but that of a good many other men very well qualified to judge, who, like himself, had spent considerable time viewing the work as it progressed.

In the case of the Northumberland county bridges, deception had been

practised in regard to every one of them. It was said that the bridges were being repaired when all the while a good part of the work done on them was new work. The figures for the so-called repairs on Northumberland bridges were as follows:

Bartibogue bridge in 1914-15	\$ 9,639.00
Pond bridge, same years	6,036.00
Bushy Hill bridge in 1912-13	
14-15	11,141.00
Gill bridge, 1914-15	5,380.00
O'Donnell bridge, 1914-15	5,612.00
New Jersey bridge, 1914-15	6,497.00

Total cost of six bridges.. \$44,307.00

Another thing that ought to be considered in voting money for bridges was that the House should know how the money was going to be spent. In past years when money was asked for for permanent bridges the bridges were always named. Nowadays the amount was voted and no one knew where it was going to be spent. The consequence was that the Chief Commissioner could take the money and use it where he liked, and nobody be any the wiser. He diverted it to whatever purpose he felt inclined. It was very strange that the Chief Commissioner should do all that work on new bridges in his own county and then call it repairs, considering the tightness of the money market at the present time, it was very unreasonable to go on in the way he was doing, getting money voted and spending it right and left just as he felt inclined.

## Charged Stealing.

Then again there would be the painting of the bridges which was done by the concrete constructions Company, also on a percentage basis. This matter was discussed in caucus last year and as a result it was recommended that the contract be cancelled. They saw that steals were going on, though they couldn't just put their finger on the exact spot; but some of these steals developed so strongly that they couldn't be kept dark any longer, and it was very apparent that somebody was getting a pretty good rake-off. THERE WAS NO DOUBT IN HIS MIND THAT THERE WERE LOTS OF OTHER JOBS OF THE SAME KIND WHERE EQUALLY BIG STEALS WERE GOING ON, AND THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS WAS UNDOUBTEDLY RESPONSIBLE FOR IT. THE TIME HAD COME WHEN SOME ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN TO STOP IT.

## The Assembly Carpet.

Another matter which had never been satisfactorily explained was the purchase of the carpet on the floor of the Legislative Chamber. Last year the Chief Commissioner informed the Committee that through his position in the trade he had been able to save

ten per cent. of the actual cost. He (Pinder) had taken the trouble to make some inquiries as to the value of a carpet of the kind and had been in communication with two of the largest carpet firms in Toronto to whom he had sent specimen pieces of the carpet. One firm had quoted him \$1.75 per yard and another \$1.78 per yard for precisely similar carpet, and they had offered to do the sewing for five cents a yard. At the price quoted, \$258 could have been saved on what the Province was actually charged, and yet the Chief Commissioner told them that he was able to get it at wholesale rates. OF COURSE WHEN ONE SAW THINGS GOING CROOKED ONE WAY, BY CHASING THE MATTER UP OTHER CROOKED THINGS WOULD DEVELOP. The responsibility for it all was on the Chief Commissioner.

## Rake-offs Everywhere.

Then there was the work which had been done about the Legislative Buildings during the last few months in the way of painting and other repairs. Also at the gatehouse of Old Government House. White lead was charged for at the rate of \$13.50, whereas \$10.85 was the quotation which he had been giving as the real market price. The same was true of oil and other materials used. THE MEN WERE ALL CHARGED AT \$3.00 A DAY, WHEREAS SOME OF THE MEN TOLD HIM THEY WERE PAID \$2.25 WHILE OTHERS SAID THEY WERE PAID \$2.50, AND THE LATTER WAS THE HIGHEST WAGES HE HAD BEEN ABLE TO FIND HAD BEEN PAID. There was another rake-off, and that was what it was all through the department. On top of all these excessive charges on the repair and renovating work an additional ten per cent. was charged as well as profits.

## The Blair Charges.

He did not know what the report of the Commissioner as the result of the investigation to which he had referred would be, but he was satisfied that it could only be one way, as good reputable men had gone there and sworn to things in support of the affidavit upon which the charges were filed. Things had been allowed to go too far. Last year he had spoken of work on the road at St. Marys and now comes a sewer the cost of which had been \$12,100. No attempt had been made to get the concrete pipe which had been used as cheaply as possible, but it had been bought from a concern whose factory was on the other side of the river from this city. He had found that 440 feet of this sewer had been laid on private property to drain a field, when all that was needed was to go to the side of the road or as far as the ditch. IT LOOKED AS IF THIS WAS DONE TO GET A DRAIN TO A MAN'S HOUSE WHO WAS INTERESTED IN THE DEPARTMENT, AND IT SHOWED THAT THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN SOMEBODY AT THE HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT TO SEE THAT THINGS WERE DONE HONESTLY AT LEAST. There might have been saved between \$1,500 and \$2,000 if this work had been confined to the public highway instead of going on to private property.

## The Road Work.

While travelling on the train recently he noticed that round concrete pipe was being put off at stations apparently for use in culverts on the highway. Anybody who knew anything about such things should know that it would be almost impossible to keep these pipes in place and prevent them from heaving. He didn't know who was looking after the roadwork for the Department, but there should be somebody who knows more than those now in charge. The railways, in using concrete pipes for culverts, and other persons using them and having any knowledge of what should be done, used the V shaped pipes because they

could be kept in place better and were not subject to heaving as the result of the frost. This looked like a clear case of the sole object being to sell the pipe.

## More Extravagance.

Then there had been quantities of gravel hauled in the winter to places along the road and then hauled again in the spring. This might be what the department called economy, but it seemed to him to be the most extravagant proposition the country had ever been up against. The supervisors were apparently instructed to haul the gravel in the winter time, and they kept on hauling till they used up all the available funds. Over in St. Marys there was an example of the success of this work, as roads where gravel had been hauled on this spring were now practically impassable. It was time the Government made some change in the management of the Board of Works. It could not come too soon.

## Denied a Report.

It had been said in one of the newspapers that he was muzzled because certain members of the House whose names were given were on his bond. He wanted to say that this was absolutely untrue, and to state there was nobody in the House that he was under a compliment to because their names were on any notes or bonds, and he wanted to have it understood that he was in the House to speak whenever he thought it was necessary, and he believed he owed it to the Government to point out what he had.

## Mr. Swim's Speech.

Mr. Swim followed Mr. Pinder and sharply criticized the administration of the Department of Public Works. He spoke of an expenditure of \$11,141 on Bushy Hollow bridge, Northumberland, and declared he was ready to build three bridges like it for that money. The Hazen platform had promised to put all public works up to tender. Had this been carried out there would not have been the disgraceful condition of affairs disclosed in Gloucester county by a Royal Commission. He sharply criticized an expenditure of \$1,412 for photographing bridges and held that the money should have been spent to fill in the holes in the roads. He also criticized the expenditure of \$12,000 on a "ditch at St. Marys," 244 rods long. This, he held, was at the rate of \$17,000 per mile, which was equal to the cost of a railroad. Thousands of dollars, he charged, were being paid each year to sharks and shysters who are hanging on to the Public Works Department.

## Steam Navigation.

On the item of \$22,000 for steam navigation, Mr. Slipp took occasion to commend the action of the do-nothing Government for not granting a subsidy for a steamboat service on the St. John river between St. John and Fredericton.

Mr. Tilley deferred with the member for Queens, and expressed regret that the Government had not seen its way clear to grant some assistance.

After a few remarks by Messrs. Swim and Perley, in which they urged the granting of a subsidy to the Hampstead, the item passed.

## Road Grant Cut Down.

On the item of \$285,000 for great roads, Hon. Mr. Morrissey, in reply to a question, stated that the grant had been reduced \$15,000 from last year.

## Hon. Mr. Morrissey.

Mr. Smith, by his mild criticism of the manner in which the road grant is apportioned to the different counties, accomplished what Messrs. Pinder and Swim had failed to do—he brought the Minister of Public Works to his feet.

Hon. Mr. Morrissey started in by saying that he had made a recommendation five years ago that the road money

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