

# SIR THOMAS WHITE'S BUDGET NOT MUCH OF A VOTE CATCHER

Portly Men With Gold Watch Chains Visit Ottawa to  
Enter a Protest Against the New  
Taxation Scheme.

NEW TAXES WILL PROVIDE MORE MONEY  
THAN GOVERNMENT RECKONS TO SPEND

Plenty of Opportunities For Retrenchment Are Offered--The Free Wheat Resolution Was Slaughtered in the House of Commons.

(By H. F. Gadsby.)  
Ottawa, March 13.—Finance Minister White's budget is now in the committee stage, where numerous holes are being picked in it. The Finance Minister's proposals fail to meet the Opposition criticism that wealth escapes while at the same time they encounter the resentment of legitimate business, which considers itself overtaxed in proportion to the war profiteers. These considerations naturally keep Sir Thomas busy hopping out of the frying pan into the fire and back again. Already both his ears are burned from overhearing angry remarks.  
"Seeing Tom" appears to be a considerable pastime in Canada just now. Every train brings to Ottawa large, portly men with big gold watch chains who are bent on convincing the Finance Minister that any sound system of taxation is based on intelligent exceptions. "Don't do it to me" is their cry, and truth to tell Sir Thomas is not deaf to these appeals from his friends. Signs multiply that he is relenting and that the wind will be appreciably tempered to the short ram before the budget resolutions take their final shape. With everybody trying to use him for his own purposes the Finance Minister feels as promiscuous as a sleeping car tumbler.

#### Built to Catch Votes.

No doubt Sir Thomas wonders what is the matter with his budget. He built it to catch votes and it succeeds only in catching hell. He went on the principle that where there's flypaper there are flies, but the flies don't seem to behave according to programme.  
He proposed to cut his garment according to his cloth, and then overdid it by saying that he would do it for next to nothing and never press for the bill—posterity was the word he used. Almost in the same breath he announced that he was budgeting for perhaps twenty-two millions more than the Government reckoned to spend because—well, to suggest his real reason—because the taxing was good and a Conservative government always likes to feel that it has money to blow.

This is the budget of the Prodigal Son whose story I never read without thinking of the poor little calf which was sacrificed to give him a good feed, thinking of the poor little calf which Dominion of Canada. So far as the common people are concerned, this is a false, pickle-hearted budget. It is really an attempt to feed the poor without giving them anything to eat. It's worse than that—it's Christian Science trying to cure a Manx cat's caudal deficiencies by absent treatment. It does as little as it can for the people with as much noise as possible.

If the Government really wants to help the farmer, why doesn't it, as Mr. Oliver points out, give the prairie provinces the boon of free wheat instead of letting the grain rot on the ground sooner than see it get away from a highly protected little band of Canadian millers? As a matter of fact it would help the manufacturers of the east if the farmers of the west had more money to buy their products, but this is a government which does not see that far. For reply we have a gas attack from Arthur Meighen, who

apprehends that the wheat would lose its idealism south of the line. As if the wheat cared! Do Canadian fish, when they swim over the border, refuse to accept the price they bring in the American market simply because the money looks different?

#### Questions Unanswered.

So far Mr. Oliver's questions have not been answered—why does this government persist in the policy of high taxation and restricted trade which nearly sent Canada to the dogs previous to 1896? Why does it slaughter the free wheat resolution by three-quarters of its working majority?

Why does it overtax when it says it does not need the money? Why has it increased the taxation burden on the Canadian people by seventy-five million dollars in four years—said Canadian people being less numerous than they were in 1911 and the country proportionately less productive?

Why does it go on overtaxing instead of cutting out waste and extravagance? Why doesn't it retrench? Why, to instance just one sample case mentioned by Mr. Lemieux, does it have two hundred and fifty post office employees in Quebec City, when seventy-five were enough in 1911 to do far more business? How long will the citizens of Canada stay and pay when egress to the United States is so easy?

Canada is not like Australia, a marooned island in the southern ocean, or like South Africa, six thousand miles from nowhere. When things become too hard in Canada it is easy enough to get out. The answer to all these questions is found in the famous remark of Nicholson, M.P., a hearty supporter of the Government—the policy is to "dash along."

Incidentally, Mr. Verville, the labor member from Montreal, presented a point of view which demands attention. Why, he asked, if this government is tender toward the poor man, doesn't it get after the Bread Trust, which puts a monopoly price on the staff of life in the big cities. Flour may go up or down, but the price of bread once raised never takes a tumble. Verville's opinion is that the honest and manly way to meet budget deficits is an income tax, intelligently graded to fall heaviest on those best able to pay. He suggests that the government might make a good beginning by taxing the salaries of the cabinet ministers.

#### The Shine Taken Off.

These and similar criticisms have thrown a gloom over Finance Minister White's budget. It is not the glittering object it was when it started. The Opposition has taken the shine off it and even the Finance Minister can notice the disfigurements.

That he was never any too sure of it was to be seen from his speech, which avoided the first personal pronoun of which he is so fond, and shared the blame with his colleagues.

"We," not "I" was the word. The hard boiled ego which was a noticeable part of his character last session has apparently disappeared from his public utterances.

At the same time the Finance Minister

yields none of the essentials of supreme authority. "We" may divide the responsibility of the budget, but "I" exercises its full powers. In other words the Finance Minister is the final arbiter in any adjustment that may be made from time to time. Sir Thomas has an eye to the future. There are higher peaks to climb, notably one peak occupied at present by Premier Borden. Meanwhile Sir Thomas is determined not to lose any of his old friends, no matter how many new ones he may make. There has been a great deal of water lately on Parliament Hill—fire and water—also a great deal of water in the prohibition movement, so it is quite natural that he should listen sympathetically to those who plead that a little water should be left in stocks. It will never do, so they urge, to drain off the whole visible supply. Let the people do what they like, but capital has no wish to go "dry."

Besides, as they point out, it isn't really water that saturates stocks. It's only left long enough it thickens and becomes—gravy. Whereupon Sir Thomas nods his head wisely—he has been brought up on high finance and understands its desires.

#### Sir George's Sentiments.

There have been no real arguments in favor of the budget, but many distractions. One of these was Sir George Foster's rose-colored sentiments in re-

gard to patronage. Seeing that his is not a spending department, he wants patronage abolished. Apparently he is in no hurry. After the war will do—that is to say, after patronage has done its best for the profiteers. Meanwhile he has a beautiful abstract passion for fair play which he airs on every occasion. Sometimes it looks like virtue and sometimes like revenge on his red-handed associates who side-tracked him in the Department of Trade and Commerce. Perhaps it is a little of both. At all events, Sir George is the Gallo of his party because he cares for none of these things—likewise the nestor, because he is past committing them, a neat combination of old age and philosophy which puts him above mortal frailty. Judge Mackenzie, who is a cynic from Nova Scotia, took a crack at this stained glass attitude of Sir George's by reminding the House that Sir George was an advocate of conscription in Canada and the tawniest old Bourbon of the lot. It sounds reasonable.

Some of Sir George's own friends admit that this top-lofty indifference to human error gets their goat. They express the hope that after this war is over and the good old hostilities are resumed in the Green Chamber, they will have from Sir George less philosophy and more party support. This world is no place for halos.

## Opposition Platform

The following platform was adopted at the Opposition Convention held in St. John recently:  
In the event of the Opposition being returned to power, we pledge ourselves:—

#### NO PARTIZAN CONTROL OF CROWN LANDS.

1. We pledge ourselves to completely reorganize the Crown Lands Department, so that its administration shall be entirely severed from politics and administered on sound business principles under systematic plans by a non-partizan commission specially appointed for that purpose, responsible to the Legislature and working in co-operation with the Dominion Commission of Conservation.

#### TAKE THE HIGHWAYS OUT OF POLITICS.

2. We pledge ourselves to take the highways out of politics, giving the expenditure of the money collected from the people and the control of the labor, together with the Government appropriations, into the hands of supervisors, chosen by the people of each parish, to whom a detailed and audited account must be rendered every year at the annual meeting, and a duplicate thereof forwarded to the Department of Public Works, the work of the supervisors to be under the inspection of a competent provincial engineer.

We also pledge ourselves to set aside the money collected from the licenses upon automobiles and other motor vehicles, together with an equal appropriation from the revenues of the Province each year, to pay the interest upon the bonds to provide for permanent roads, which shall be constructed as rapidly as possible.

#### PROHIBITION PROVINCE WIDE.

3. We pledge ourselves at the first session of the Legislature to pass a law prohibiting the sale of intoxicating liquors within the Province to the fullest extent allowed by the Constitution, and within three months after the passage of said Act to submit the same by referendum to the electors of the Province, and should the majority of votes cast be in favor of the said law, then to bring the same into force by proclamation within one year thereafter.

#### ELECTION LAW.

4. (a) To amend the electoral law so as to make it impossible for members of the Legislature to traffic with the Government and still retain their seats.

(b) To make it possible for young men, when they reach the age of 21 years, to register their names and be placed forthwith upon the voters' lists, instead of waiting for the tedious machinery of revision as it now exists.

(c) To divide the counties into electoral districts which shall each be represented by one member.

(d) We will also consider amendments to the election law to make bribery in municipal as well as provincial elections impossible.

#### PROVINCIAL FINANCES.

5. To obtain at once a correct statement of the financial condition of the Province in order that the people may have definite knowledge of the vastly increased public debt and the enormous obligations of guaranteed bonds they will be called upon to pay; and to so reduce the cost of the administration of affairs and the number of useless officials as to avoid the necessity for direct taxation now confronting us.

#### AGRICULTURE.

6. To give the farmers all the practical assistance that the resources of the Province will permit, to improve agricultural methods and the quality and quantity of the stock upon the farm; to reduce the enormous salary list in the department, and to spend the educational grant received from the Federal Government without regard for political patronage.

#### VALLEY RAILWAY.

7. To complete the Valley Railway from a point on the Transcontinental Railway at or near Grand Falls, to St. John, and insist upon the Dominion Government carrying out the terms of the original legislation and allow the Province forty per cent. of the gross earnings thereof.

#### EDUCATION.

8. To always maintain and improve the educational service of the Province and to co-operate with the Federal Government in carrying out the recommendations of the commission upon technical education.

#### IMMIGRATION.

9. The inauguration of a vigorous immigration policy to properly place before intending immigrants, whose number will be large after termination of the war, the advantages of the agricultural possibilities of New Brunswick.

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