

Crown Lands of Province To be Taken Out of Politics

Mr. W. E. Foster Explains Opposition Policy in Able Speech at Sunbury Convention--The Public Domain Must be Protected and Conserved for the Benefit of the People---Costly Mistakes of the Past Referred to--Principles of Responsible Government Are Being Violated by Present Rulers.

Following is a summary of the able and trenchant speech delivered at the Opposition Convention at Burton, Sunbury County, on Wednesday by Mr. W. E. Foster, of St. John.

Referring to the present representation of Sunbury county, he said that he had read the legislative records, both official as well as those printed in the newspapers, and he had not observed that the members had made any public protest against the graft and corruption that had been rampant in the Government of New Brunswick. Is it, he asked, because they have axes to grind or are too partizan, that they did not or do not protest against what has been going on? It was because of his protest and because at certain times and places he had put forth the idea publicly that boodling should be abolished that the Standard newspaper had termed him "Abolish the Bag Foster." In this connection he made a reference to the investigations and the exposes that had followed the efforts of Messrs. Carter and Veniot.

The "bag" originated with the government grafters on the North Shore. It had been, as was shown by the evidence, in plain sight in the office of a lumberman and into it were thrown bundles of bank notes, checks and drafts, all of which was traced afterwards to the custody of a personal friend of the premier. The "bag" had crossed the country from the North Shore to Fredericton, and from Fredericton to Woodstock, where a large portion of the contents probably is yet.

The Levy on Liquor Dealers.

In touching upon these boodling transactions, Mr. Foster made a strong reference to the levies upon the liquor dealers of St. John, who in reality had been requested to contribute money under the threat that if they did not do so prohibition would go into effect. That was in the year 1915, while the Legislature was in session. He said he was in a position to prove that statement and would do so if ever given an opportunity.

The Crown Lands.

Mr. Baxter's receipt of \$500 from the president of the Valley Railway Company, while a member of the Legislature, and the return of the money at a later date, also came under review and then Mr. Foster took up the crown land policy of the Opposition and proceeded to explain it at considerable length.

"One of the first considerations before our convention, which met in January," he said, "was the adoption of a crown land policy which, in the opinion of the meeting, was of vast importance to the people of the province, owing to the revelations which had been brought to light regarding the administration of these lands.

"We have only to look over the records of the past to realize that this important matter has too long been under the control of politicians who have made it a matter of a political football. We can refer away back to the time when, previous to the advent of the Blair government to power, 1,647,772 acres of our very best lands were given away to the promoters of the New Brunswick Railway Company,

and in addition at that time 218,000 acres were sold at 80 cents per acre, which upon a basis of valuation of \$5 per acre, would amount to over \$8,000,000—lands which today are producing upwards of 60,000,000 feet of lumber annually, the revenue from which on a basis of \$3 per thousand stumpage, amounts to \$180,000, which annual revenue is today finding its way into the pockets of millionaires residing in Montreal, whilst we in this province are in dire want and necessity for this additional revenue to spend upon our roads and for the development of our natural resources.

Take Crown Lands Out of Politics.

"When these things are considered and thought over carefully by those who are the joint owners of this land and large taxpayers, I believe they will agree with me that it is quite time some steps were taken to protect them for the rightful owners, and at the same time offer protection to the lessees as well. And yet there are some who say: 'Do not take this valuable asset out of the hands of the politicians, because it will be a departure from the principles of responsible government.' But, if we are placed in power, that is what we propose to do. We propose to administer this land by an independent commission comprised of practical men. That resolution I had the honor of moving at our convention—and while the idea was not mine, I am the father of the motion, because when I accepted the nomination for St. John county I made the statement that I would not be satisfied with any policy that did not insure to the people of this province the complete severance of political influence from the administration of that great domain. The objection has been put forward by our opponents that it is not in keeping with the principles of responsible government. Being a Liberal myself, and this being one of the first principles of Liberalism, it is not my desire to depart from these principles, but there are times when a departure from one's principles seems absolutely necessary, and this in my opinion is one case.

"They talk and object to the violation of the principles of responsible government when they transact most of their business behind closed doors, away from the people in caucus. They have violated these principles by allowing a member to occupy a seat in the House after it has been shown that he accepted a retaining fee of \$500 from a large corporation doing business with the government, and which was having the largest individual financial transaction with the government that had ever taken place in the history of the province.

"They are casting these principles themselves to the winds, these objectors, by retaining in office—the office of Minister of Public Works—the largest spending department of the government, a man rejected by the people of Westmorland, without even a seat in the House, and responsible to no one.

Big Men Enough.

"The other objection put forward by those opposed to our policy is that we will be unable to obtain the right sort of man to act as chairman of this independent commission. Surely in this province there is to be found some one big enough, strong enough and broad enough to cope with problem. In fact I know there is, and I will produce him whenever the opportunity offers. I promise he will be one that will give attention and proper management to this great domain and at the same time broad enough to grant justice and right to those engaged in that great industry, which means so much to us all.

"In seeking to place the control of this land in the hands of a commission it is not our intention that it should be a means whereby to club the lumbermen. We realize the vast importance of this industry, because it employs more labor, distributes more money, consumes more supplies and produces more wealth than any other provincial industry. Statistics tell us that there are 493 lumbering establishments in this province. They pay wages annually to the amount of \$3,000,000 and employ 10,000 persons. Every dollar received for lumber exported is divided into many parts; everyone gets a share of it—the farmer, the fisherman, the laborer, the wholesaler—and yet we have not moved forward with an up-to-date policy for the perpetuation of this business.

"What do they think of us outside? The Toronto Saturday Night says: 'The spirit of conservation which is awakening through western Canada still lies dormant or dead in so far as New Brunswick is concerned.' 'Read the evidence of T. G. Loggie before the royal commission. He says something has always been going to be done. The lumber is being cut away and our saw logs are getting smaller year by year.

The Opposition Aim.

"Our aim in advancing this policy is to make it impossible for a member of the Legislature to recommend the appointment of the scaler who will be blind to that member's friends' logging operations; to make it impossible for the lessees of these lands to be called upon for campaign funds extorted from them in the fear that if they do not comply they will not get the same justice as others who are doing so; to make it impossible that officials can enrich themselves at your expense and mine; and on the other hand to make it possible for the settler who desires to take out a grant of land that he will get the tract of land that will be most suitable for agricultural purposes, so that he will be successful at his vocation and become a happy and contented citizen; to make it possible for those not fav-

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orable to the government of the day to at least get fair play, and to make it possible that the smaller lumbermen will also be properly and fairly dealt with, so that all these lands shall not be granted to any special or favored class.

"These are some of the reasons which in my opinion make it of the utmost importance and justify us in taking such drastic steps in the administration of this land. And lastly, let me point out that should ever this source of revenue fail, what is there that stands between us and direct taxation? It is the only barrier between us, and practically the only thing we have to pay the interest on our ever-increasing debt.

"It is because we have extraordinary conditions that I advocate this policy, which I believe will be acquiesced in by the vast majority of people when they have sufficient time to think it well over."

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- 53 Corner Union and Church
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- 56 Lansdowne and Waterloo Row.

HOLIDAY Announcement

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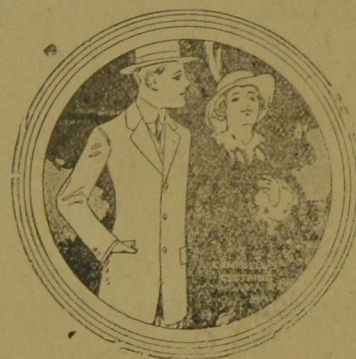
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This picture shows Tommy Atkins sending his "best wishes" to the German army, a common practice among the British soldiers at the front. It was taken on the Somme front, where fighting is now in progress.