

Advanced Highway Legislation Passed in the House

Bill to Provide for Permanent Roads Provoked a Spirited Debate---Opposition Indulged in a Lot of Talk But in the End Fell Into Line and Supported the Bill---Unbusiness Like Methods of Old Administration Exposed by Hon. Mr. Veniot In a Slashing Speech.

The most spirited debate which the Legislature has witnessed for many years was pulled off yesterday on the government's bill to aid in the establishment of permanent highways. The bill was brought down by Hon. Mr. Veniot early in the afternoon, and the debate which ensued lasted until 10:30 o'clock in the evening. Those who participated on the government side were Hon. Mr. Veniot, who had charge of the bill, Hon. Mr. Tweeddale, Hon. Mr. Robinson, Hon. Mr. Foster and Mr. Melanson, while the spokesmen on the opposition side included Mr. Smith of Carleton, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Murray, Mr. Tilley and the irrepressible Mr. Potts. The opposition speakers indulged in a lot of talk, but failed to come to the front with an amendment, and in the end allowed the bill to pass without division. The passage of this message through the House was a great triumph for the government, and as Premier Foster expressed it, was a good beginning in carrying out the promises made to the people by his party during the recent election.

Hon. Mr. Veniot.
Hon. Mr. Veniot piloted the bill through the House with great skill, and was warmly complimented by his colleagues. He not only replied effectively to opposition criticisms of the measure, but carried the war into Africa by his crushing exposure of the unbusinesslike methods which had prevailed in his department under the ministrations of his immediate predecessor, Mr. B. Frank Smith.

Replying to opposition criticism of the bill, Mr. Veniot said that he had not intended speaking a second time, but owing to the question which had been asked, if he remained silent it might give rise to suspicion that something underhand was being done.

Owing to the fact that the department was only now organizing for the work, he did not know just then to what extent they would be able to go. The engineers were out making plans and profiles to ascertain how the money might be expended to the best advantage. He could not possibly say what kind of bonds would be issued, as the matter was at present under the consideration of the Executive Council and their decision would depend largely upon the report of the engineers as to whether serial or term bonds would be issued. That was as much as he could say at present, but he expected the reports of the engineers in about three weeks from the time they started out.

Permanent Highways.
Some members had criticised somewhat severely the use of the term "permanent highways," as though they themselves did not know and did not think that he knew what the term meant. On referring to the statutes of 1913, he found that the late government passed an act by which they proposed to take every year out of the consolidated revenue fund \$100,000 to be used for the construction of permanent roads, according to plans and profiles to be prepared by the engineer, yet they say it was nonsense for him to expect to be able to construct permanent roads on any modern scale with so small a sum as half a million dollars, when in 1913 they themselves were proposing to follow out the same policy with just one-fifth of that sum. They could not possibly have been serious when they expected to make permanent roads on such a trifling amount as that.

The Old System
One of the conditions they laid down in their road policy was that permanent roads should only be classed as such on the certificate of the engineer, YET WHEN HE (VENIOT) CAME INTO THE BOARD OF WORKS OFFICE AND BEGAN TO LOOK INTO MATTERS, HE FOUND THAT THESE PERMANENT ROADS HAD BEEN CLASSIFIED BY MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE IN MANY CASES. HOW COULD THE EX-MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS JUSTIFY THE ACT?

Mr. Smith (Carleton) said that the provincial engineer was away for some little time and in his absence the road superintendent had in some cases been asked to classify what roads were permanent and what roads were not.

Hon. Mr. Veniot said he held in his hand then a certificate signed by the ex-Minister himself showing that he himself had been doing the classification, and now he stated that the road supervisors had been asked to do it.

Some Hot Shot.
He had noticed that the discussion on the bill had taken rather a political turn and since it had done so he felt himself at liberty to make a few remarks which he otherwise perhaps would not have made. The leader of the opposition had taken the liberty to accuse the Government of making dismissals wholesale, and thus give the idea that they were taking the roads out of politics. IF THE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN MORE ACTIVE IN THIS REGARD THAN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE HON. GENTLEMEN OPPOSITE, WHICH CAME

INTO POWER IN 1908, HE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHERE IT WAS. After that government which came in in 1908 had been in power for three months there was hardly a road supervisor left that had been appointed by the previous government, except in the county of Northumberland, and there they were simply left because the Hon. John Morrissey, the only Liberal member of the government, was allowed to have his own way. The leader of the Opposition had read a letter from Mr. A. M. Coughlan, but the government were not taking the roads out of politics simply because Mr. Coughlan was not re-appointed. When he (Veniot) took charge of the Board of Works he found an account sent in by that gentleman for road work done in December and January. That was why he was put out of office, not for political purposes. A MAN WHO WOULD WORK ON THE ROADS IN DECEMBER AND JANUARY WAS NO FIT MAN FOR A SUPERVISOR'S JOB.

Mr. Murray (Kings) said he did not give the reason of Mr. Coughlan's dismissal because he was an ardent supporter of the old government. Mr. Smith (Carleton) asked if there was not a petition received by the department signed by some two hundred people asking for Mr. Coughlan's reinstatement.

Mr. Pinder's Evidence.
Hon. Mr. Veniot said he did not care if the petition had five hundred names when he found a man sending in accounts for work done on the road in December and January, he was not going to keep that man in his employ. The late Government used to talk about their road policies. HE WOULD ONLY ASK THE SENIOR MEMBER FOR YORK (PINDER) TO REPEAT THE SPEECH HE MADE IN THAT CHAMBER DURING THE SESSION OF LAST YEAR WHEN HE SAID THAT THE ROADS OF THE PROVINCE HAD NEVER BEEN IN A MORE DISGRACEFUL STATE TO HIS KNOWLEDGE THAN THEY WERE AT THAT TIME. He might also make reference to some remarks made by Mr. Swim, one of the late members from Northumberland, who had also condemned the roads in the strongest possible terms. It might perhaps be said for him that he was not a supporter of the government, but was independent; but notwithstanding his independence, at the late election the government was willing enough to place him on their ticket.

Money Was Wanted.
It was no use saying very much further about the system followed by the late government, but he wanted to refer to the plan followed by the late ex-minister: In his own country the way it had been handled there by that gentleman had proved the best canvasser he (Veniot) could possibly have had. When he saw how the money was being wasted, he said to himself he had better let it go on. As an instance, no less than \$1,030 was spent in so called repairs to a portage road 7 miles long. That was not spent in skirting, but trench work, and before the winter was over the whole of it had been swept away. Then again take the Houlton road, about which

the hon. member for Carleton was so concerned when he asked if the department intended to complete the repairs which the late government had begun. He might as well be anxious to get it repaired, for some sections of it nobody could pass over.

Special Expenditures.
Further, the ex-minister had classified \$159,000 as having been expended as special expenditures. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE MONEY HAD BEEN SPENT WITH NO AUTHORITY AT ALL, AND WHEN IT WAS FOUND OUT THAT THERE WOULD BE A DEFICIT THE AMOUNTS WERE TAKEN OUT OF THE ORDINARY LIST AND PUT INTO A SPECIAL EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT AND FOR NO OTHER REASON. YET THE EX-MINISTER WOULD HAVE HAD THE PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT THAT MONEY WAS TAKEN OUT OF ORDINARY REVENUE AND IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE ACCOUNTS CAME TO BE PUBLISHED THAT HE FOUND OUT THE HOLE HE WAS LETTING HIMSELF INTO SO HE TRANSFERRED IT TO A SPECIAL ACCOUNT.

The hon. ex-Minister of Public Works accused the government of having stolen his road policy. As far as he could see, the late government did not have any policy that was of any value or that lasted for any length of time. THEY SAID THEY HAD HAD ONE FOR YEARS, AND WHEN THEY CAME INTO POWER IN 1908 THEY BROUGHT ONE FORWARD, BUT WERE SO ASHAMED OF IT THAT THEY HAD TO HIDE IT AWAY FOR FOUR YEARS TILL THE PEOPLE GOT USED TO IT. IN 1913 THEY GOT SO ASHAMED OF IT THAT THEY PUT IT AWAY AND TRIED A NEW ONE, AND THAT LASTED TILL THE HON. MEMBER FOR CARLETON CAME IN IN 1917, WHEN ON THE EVE OF THE ELECTION HE TOLD THE PEOPLE HE HAD GOT ANOTHER NEW POLICY AND IT WAS SO IMPORTANT THAT HE ISSUED A MANIFESTO ON HIS OWN ACCOUNT, SETTING IT FORTH. IT DID NOT MATTER THAT THE LEADER OF THE THEN GOVERNMENT HAD ISSUED A MANIFESTO, THE EX-MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS WOULD NO BE SATISFIED UNTIL HE HAD ISSUED ONE HIMSELF SO AS TO BE ON A PAR WITH HIS LEADER. THIS MANIFESTO HE ISSUED AS A CAMPAIGN DOCUMENT AND THE PEOPLE WERE CHARGED WITH THE COST OF IT.

Public Money Used.
Mr. Smith (Carleton)—"You have been mighty glad to have it go by."

Hon. Mr. Veniot said he had been mighty glad to have it to show the business principles upon which the late government proceeded, AND TO SHOW ALSO THAT THEY NEVER HESITATED TO USE PUBLIC MONIES TO FURTHER THEIR OWN AGGRANDIZEMENT. When the ex-Minister of Public Works was speaking the other afternoon, he (Veniot) happened to smile at some remark his hon. friend made, whereupon the latter remarked that he (Veniot) did not take his responsibility seriously. He wished to say that he did accept his position with a full knowledge of the responsibility it entailed, or he would not have accepted it; but he might add that he did not know how deep that responsibility was going to be until after he had got into office and found out how things had been run by the hon. gentleman opposite.

Mr. Crockett said he was still anxious to hear from the hon. gentleman whether he was prepared to disavow the statement made in reply to the hon. member for St. John that he might have got some information which the representatives of the people were entitled to have earlier if he had not been so persistent.

Hon. Mr. Veniot said that he must have been misunderstood as he made no such statement.

Mr. Potts—"That is precisely what you said in reply to me."

Hon. Mr. Veniot—"What I said was 'If the hon. gentleman had not been so persistent and spoken so often he would have received the information sooner.'"



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PREMIER FOSTER SPEAKS ON PERMANENT HIGHWAYS

The Highway Bill One Result of a Business Like Administration-- How the Old Government Wasted Public Money on St. John County Roads---When Mr. Baxter Swallowed a Dish of Crow.

Premier Foster delivered a practical and business like speech in the Legislature last evening on the bill to provide for permanent highways. He said he had listened with a great deal of interest to the remarks of the ex-attorney general and as usual he had injected a certain amount of sarcasm into them. The hon. member had told a story about a crow which was probably the same bird served up to him on the night of February 24th. He had made a sarcastic reference to the Government as a business administration. In reply he would say that the present highway bill was the result of business administration and he believed it would have the approval of the people of the province. We had evidence of the unbusinesslike side of the late administration in the expenditure of public moneys upon the Marsh Road in the County of St. John. In all the sum of \$17,000 had been expended in a useless manner. He believed that the machinery used on that occasion had been properly purchased and that the Province paid for it the exact amount that the previous purchaser

the financial situation at the time of issue. He could promise the House that they would not be issued for a longer period than the nature of the work suggests. The bond issue for culverts might be for a longer period than those for the other work. Personally he believed in serial bonds but the Government would have to be guided by the financial situation. The objection raised as to how the roads are to be classified had been well answered by the Hon. Minister of Public Works. He believed the Government's policy would commend itself to the people. He was not going to discuss the road policy of the former Government, but had merely risen to answer objections to the bill and to ask that it be allowed to pass.

Mr. Murray.
Mr. Murray (Kings) said he appreciated the fair explanation given by the Hon. Premier. The bill of 1908 which had been referred to provided for an expenditure of \$20,000 a year on permanent roads. It was then proposed to make a beginning on permanent work by rebuilding sections of the



HON. W. E. FOSTER, Prime Minister of New Brunswick.

had paid. That machinery is now lying in a barn on the Marsh Road and is practically worthless. He did not question the sincerity of the party who purchased the machinery but he must know now that it is unsuitable for the roads of this province.

Hon. members opposite took objection to the word "permanent" as used in the bill. All knew that it is absolutely impossible to get permanent roads and using the term "permanent" the Government had simply followed an Act passed by the old administration. With reference to the bonds, the nature of them would depend on

roads which suffered damage from freshets each spring. It was thought at that time that there would be an annual grant from Ottawa for road purposes but owing to party differences it had not materialized. The passage of the bill would have been greatly facilitated if we had had earlier in the evening, instead of the campaign speech of the Hon. Minister of Public Works, the frank expression of the Hon. Premier. In regard to the bonds he would accept the statement of the Hon. Premier in the same friendly spirit in which it was made.

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COALITION GOVERNMENT MAY BE BROUGHT ABOUT

Demand for Win-the-War Cabinet Appears To be Daily Growing Stronger at the Capital---Conflicting Elements in Both Parties Must be Appeased--The Premier Would Like to Secure the Aid of Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

Ottawa, May 31. — The maxim that delays are dangerous does not apply to the political crisis at the capital—a crisis in which are at stake the welfare of this confederation, the avoidance of political chaos with its consequent instability of government, and united national effort solely devoted to the paramount issue of helping in the most practical way to win the war.

A week ago it looked as if a coalition was impossible under all the circumstances. A general election impended in which parties would be split along racial and class lines, in which the Quebec situation loomed before a Canada like the spectre of the Irish situation in Great Britain, and in which domestic divisions political and otherwise promised to disorganize national war efforts.

Tonight with the leaders on both sides and the moderate and extreme

members of parliament anxious to "get together," abandon for the time being at least all political considerations and reach a compromise which will avoid the threatened dangers and divisions, the situation looks considerably more hopeful.

The prospects for coalition are still in nebulous form, but the prospects are brighter than they were a few days ago. It is safe to say that coalition will come if the conflicting elements behind the two leaders, and particularly behind the leader of the government, upon whom devolves the onus of initiative, the duty of firmness and the need of fairness, are held in check.

Must Reconcile Party.

There is good reason to believe that Sir Robert Borden is anxious to get out of his party and government difficulties by securing the aid and counsel

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