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The Store where every purchase must be right, or money back.

Hon. Mr Veniot

(Continued from page 2.)

the then Opposition had adopted prior to the last election and on which they were returned to power by the people. Speaking for himself and colleagues he wished to say that they were perfectly willing to accept any suggestions of hon. members opposite put forward with the view of making the Act more perfect. He regarded the Road Act as one of the most important pieces of legislation that could come before the House. Although he had been in office only a short time, he had managed during the last year to visit nearly every section of the province. He had travelled 9,800 miles in automobiles and had an experience with all kinds of roads, so he might claim to be more familiar with the roads than many hon. members of the House. Acting upon the knowledge that he had gathered during his travels, he had endeavored to place in the bill certain sections to meet the conditions as he saw them. One section of the bill proposes to divide the roads into two classes, trunk roads and branch roads. This division was to be made by the Minister of Public Works, and before acting it was his intention to discuss the matter fully with his colleagues on the Government side, as well as with the hon. members opposite. Having adopted the principle of Road Divisions, it was only fair that those familiar with conditions in different sections of the province should be consulted and their views obtained. While he differed in politics from the hon. members opposite, he did not propose to allow that fact to interfere with his accepting any suggestions they might have to offer, with the view of making the Act more workable. In 1916 the then Opposition had adopted the principle that to make highway legislation successful, it was necessary to get as close to the people as possible. They had also taken the ground that road supervisors should be elected as school trustees are now elected. Therefore to carry out this principle Section 6 of the bill provided for the election of road supervisors for branch roads at a public meeting of the ratepayers called for the purpose. With regard to great roads the supervisors would be named by the Minister of Public Works. It might be asked why a distinction should be made? In reply he might say that the Government had adopted a policy for the construction of permanent roads and it was provided that the work should be done under the supervision of the Minister of Public Works and the road officials named by him.

Accounts Made Public.

Section 6 of the bill provides for the publication annually of the accounts of supervisors. Under that section he is required to post his accounts in public places throughout the district and to submit a copy to a meeting of ratepayers. The same principle would apply to any supervisor who is spending money on the trunk roads of the province, and in addition to posting his accounts he must forward a copy to the Public Works Department.

Statute labor will be made optional under the new Act, differing in this respect from the present law. At a meeting of the ratepayers to be held in the month of April, they shall decide the matter by a majority vote on a resolution, a copy of which is attached to the bill. If they vote to adopt statute labor, it will be carried on the same as under the old Act. If they vote against statute labor, there will be none performed in that particular district. Provision is also made for the adoption of statute labor with respect to trunk roads. A meeting may be called on the petition of fifteen ratepayers and the matter decided by a majority vote of those present.

Road Taxation.

Section 16 of the bill deals with the matter of road taxation. Under the existing law the road tax on property is 20 cents on the \$100; the new Act proposes to increase this to the extent of one-quarter of one per cent, or 5 cents on the \$100. The poll tax is now \$1.50, but the new Act will increase it to \$2.00. It was scarcely necessary to give in detail reasons for the increase. The cost of labor was much higher now than was formerly the case. A few years ago they could hire men to work on the road for \$1.75 a day, but last year they paid \$2.25 and \$2.50—and in some cases as high as \$3.00. Where men on the roads get increased pay, it would only be reasonable that there would be an in-

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creased tax to provide for the upkeep of the highways. While the road tax had been increased, it was proposed to increase the allowance to those who performed statute labor. The bill allowed 20 cents per hour for labor; 30 cents for a man with a horse and 30 cents for a man with a team. The bill also changed the method of collecting the road taxes. Under the existing law the collecting was done by the supervisor and paid over to the men who performed the work. In his travels through the province last year he had studied this method and arrived at the conclusion that a different plan would be adopted. In many cases under the existing Act there was a duplication of accounts, and whether it was intentional or not, he was not in a position to say. The supervisor sent in accounts, chargeable to the Municipal Fund, which were paid by the secretary-treasurer. Frequently accounts for the same work were charged to the Provincial Fund, which meant that province and municipality paid for the same work. Although he had acted with great care in separating these accounts in his Department, he felt that the law should be changed.

Collection of Taxes.

The bill provides that the collecting should be done by the collectors or rates, who after receiving the money would place the same in the hands of the Secretary-Treasurer, who would deposit it to the credit of the province. He was hopeful that under the change in the system the delinquent taxation list would be done away with. At the present time he was safe in saying that the sum of \$50,000 was outstanding in delinquent road taxes. He thought that the ex-Minister of Public Works would bear him out in the statement that a change in the system of collecting was essential. It was proposed under the new system to have the Supervisor report monthly to the Department of Public Works, and he wished to add that money collected in a particular district would be expended for the improvement of the road in that district.

The Patrol System.

In regard to Section 79 of the bill, he said it gave authority to the Minister of Public Works to inaugurate a patrol system. This would probably cause his hon. friend from Carleton to smile, but he wished to say that it made no difference to him from which side of the House the idea had originated, as it was undoubtedly a good one. He had given it a trial in a small way last season, and had got the best results. That factor determined him to ask the Legislature to adopt the system similar to that prevailing in Maine and other States. He had visited Maine last summer and he had travelled over 500 or 600 miles of roads in order to investigate the patrol system. He had also asked his road engineer to go there and study it. It had taken four years to perfect the system in Maine, but he was hopeful of having one in this province equally as good at the end of two years.

Rule of the Road.

An agitation had been going on in this province for several years, with the object of changing the rule of the road. In the Maritime Provinces, as was well known, the rule was to turn to the left, while in Ontario and in Quebec they turn to the right. He had got in touch with Hon. Mr. Armstrong, Minister of Public Works and Mines of Nova Scotia, on the subject and was informed by that gentleman that there was also an agitation on in that province to change the rule, but that no definite decision had yet been reached. The matter will come before the Nova Scotia Legislature this session, and Mr. Armstrong had promised to promptly advise him (Veniot) of the decision reached. It was an important matter and he did not feel that he should take it upon himself to make the change without taking the opinion of the Legislature.

A New Feature. There were other provisions in the Act to which he would like to direct the attention of hon. members. He had noticed when travelling through the coal districts of the province that mine operators, when carrying on excavations, did not give much concern to the roads which might be injured by their work. The bill proposed to hold coal companies responsible for any injury resulting to the roads, and if they declined to make repairs, in order to do so the Public Works Department could have the work done and made a charge against the companies. A similar plan would be adopted with respect to railways. It was proposed to have the railways give more attention to the condition of the roads at level crossings, and a clause had been inserted in the bill dealing with the matter. He had noticed also that when railways, in changing the grades of lines running parallel with highways, were inclined to disregard the effect such changes would have on the roads. He had inserted a clause in the bill which he hoped would bring

about an improvement in regard to this important matter.

Careless Matters.

While the people of the province were clamoring for good roads, it might not be out of place for some of those who have occasion to use them to exercise a little more care. There were some manufacturers of lumber, who take no heed of the damage that might result to roads early in the spring, so long as they can haul heavy loads over them. A clause would be inserted in the bill to meet this condition of affairs. He regretted that some automobile owners did not have the regard for the roads they should have. Some owners of heavy cars seemed to take delight in driving over the country roads early in the spring, when the frost is coming out of the ground. He hoped, with the aid of his colleagues and the hon. gentlemen opposite, to be able to find some means to give better protection to the roads of the province.

In conclusion, the Minister said he

(Continued on page 1.)

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