

THE DAILY MAIL

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THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 1919

AN IMPORTANT REFORM.

Hon. C. W. Robinson contributed an able speech to the budget debate in the Legislature yesterday, and incidentally cleared up a few misconceptions which members of the opposition seem to have formed in regard to the Audit Act and the new system of accounting. He pointed out that the provincial accounts for the last fiscal year were audited not by officials of the government, but by Price, Waterhouse & Co., chartered accountants, and that the published statement in the Comptroller General's report was their statement and not that of the government. He explained that the system adopted by the government was that employed by all large corporations, and was the only method of securing for the people an absolutely correct statement of the financial standing of the province. Under this system only the receipts and expenditures which actually belong to the fiscal year are included in the statement for that year, and it is the only method by which it can be ascertained whether or not the ordinary revenue is sufficient to meet the ordinary expenditure. As Hon. Mr. Robinson pointed out, when the public becomes familiar with the working of the new system the financial standing of the province at the close of the fiscal year will no longer be a matter of doubt, or a subject of controversy between political parties. The reform inaugurated by the government is a very important one and will undoubtedly meet with the cordial approval of the people of the province. Under the new system it will no longer be possible to juggle accounts at the close of the fiscal year, as has been done in the past, in order to create a fictitious surplus.

Toronto Globe: The Minister of Finance should take occasion at the earliest possible moment, to consult with and secure the approval of the people's representatives in parliament for his plans to finance Canada's export trade with continental Europe by the use of the national credit. The statement is made publicly that Sir Thos. White told Mr. Lloyd Harris, head of the Canadian Trade Mission to Europe, before he left the Dominion, that the Canadian government could purchase Canadian natural and manufactured products to that amount.

Supporters of the government in the Legislature are determined that if there is any fun in putting in enquiries for the ministers to answer the opposition members are not going to have a monopoly of it. On Tuesday a government member expressed a desire for information as to what had happened to the registrar of Kings county, and yesterday another one came to the front with a request for information as to what had become of the check for \$2,400 which Mr. B. F. Smith in a public address alleged he had sent to the Agricultural Department to make good the shortage on his patriotic potato shipments.

Mr. Murray, the opposition leader, opened the debate on the budget in the Legislature in a two hour speech. He was in his old time form, and while naturally he indulged in some criticism of the policy of the government, his speech was moderate in tone and was closely followed by the members on both sides of the House. The opposition leader in his speech on the address at the opening of the House, promised to turn things upside down in the Public Works Department, but so far he has not been able to deliver the goods.

Mr. Tilley, who aspires to the leadership of the local opposition, delivered a very good speech in the House last evening and took occasion to lay down something in the nature of a platform for his party. Mr. Tilley devotes careful attention to matters which come before the House, but he

is altogether too thin skinned to make a successful politician.

Philadelphia Record: If the two great English-speaking nations are now to dominate the world, as a German paper mourns, it is because they are by temperament and habit committed to freedom and peace, and the war has knitted the two nations together with innumerable ties.

It will be generally conceded that the opposition in the Legislature has not covered itself with glory so far this session. The present opposition seems to catch it not only while the House is in session, but during recess as well.

C. W. ROBINSON EXPLAINS THE NEW SYSTEM

(Continued from page three.) item of Crown Land receipts. The consolidated revenue statement showed receipts of \$791,027.68. In going over that item the firm had found that \$9,339.14 received on a sale of crown lands belonged to the year 1919, so they reduced the total by deducting that amount to \$781,688.54. They then examined the accounts receivable and found an item of timber land sales amounting to \$13,630.60 and another item of wild land receipts of \$8,354.12. They also found an item of \$14,600.80 and another of \$4,999.95 due from royalty, making a total of \$31,585.53. Those items had brought the total revenue from Crown lands up to \$813,274.70. The auditor then found that \$13,616.70 belonged to the year 1917 and that was accordingly deducted, leaving the total at \$799,657.37. The statement as published showed the true earnings of the Crown Land Department for the year 1918, but not the actual receipts. That was perhaps one reason why his hon. friend opposite had not understood the statement as published. The same story which he had related in regard to the Crown lands applied to all the other accounts.

Accounts are Correct
The same rule had been applied to the accounts of the Public Works Department. The consolidated revenue statement showed an expenditure of \$523,782.73. It had been found by the auditor that \$30,042.73 belonged to the previous year and he had deducted that amount leaving the total at \$493,740. Coming to the end of the year the auditor found a number of accounts unpaid and adding those he brought the total up to \$574,430.18. He had then deducted an item of \$2,524.72 represented unexpired insurance which made the total \$571,905.86 which was the total given in the published statement.

He could assure the hon. leader of the opposition that he would find no errors in the accounts which he had criticised. It represented a true statement of the financial condition of the Province and he could say that there had been no attempt to conceal accounts in order to show a surplus at the close of the fiscal year. He held that was an honest way of dealing with public affairs. The government had left the matter in the hands of an independent body and had submitted its findings to the public. In due time the public would learn to rely on the accuracy of those reports and they would no longer be a matter for political controversy. It was the intention of every member of the Government to deal frankly and fairly with the public business without any attempt on their part to deceive the people.

Mr. Campbell's Query
MR. CAMPBELL wanted to know if there was anything in the financial statement as published to show that it had emanated from the chartered accountants.

HON. MR. ROBINSON said that the question was an appropriate one and he would deal with it at a later stage in his remarks. Continuing he said that reference had been made to a statement of Valley Railway earnings as published in the report. The total was \$99,272.19 but the auditor had eliminated a portion of the amount which belonged to previous years. The amount thus eliminated was \$74,804.06 which deducted from the total left only \$24,468.13 but the same rule had worked in the other direction and the sum of \$15,082.10 earned by the road, but not paid over in the year to which it belonged had been added, bringing the total up to \$39,550.14. That was the explanation of the item shown in the statement which seemed to have confused the hon. leader of the opposition.

Accounts Reliable
He believed that his explanation had shown that the accounts were correct and reliable in every particular. The certificate of Price, Waterhouse & Co. would be produced. Reference had been made on the opposite side of the House to the fact that that certificate did not appear in the report. The criticism was justified, but the certificate would be produced before the House. The annual financial statement had shown a surplus of some \$30,000 but the report of the

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chartered accountants who went over the books of the province brought home the unpleasant fact that there was a deficit of \$134,000 on the year. This deficit was produced by including the Valley Railway charges, the chartered accountants insisting that those charges must be shown. Excluding those charges there was a remarkable balance between the two sides in the account, in an aggregate of \$2,300,000. The situation regarding the Valley Railway must be faced. The ex-Attorney General had placed himself on record as stating that it was good business not to include interest charges on that railway in the year's account because the railway was incomplete and still under construction. That hon. gentleman had hoped that at some time money would be forthcoming from the Dominion, but until that came about interest should be charged to capital account. That was the suggestion of the ex-Attorney General. In fact many good suggestions came from the gentleman opposite.

Opposition Suggestions
MR. TILLEY—"The trouble is you don't take them."

HON. MR. ROBINSON—"Well I think we will take that one. Bring along all you have. With such a galaxy of brainy men in opposition no doubt there will be many suggestions which will assist in keeping the government in power."

Continuing, the speaker said that even with a St. John connection for the Valley Railway the situation would be bad although better than the present. The original promise had been that the railway would be a through line and carry its share of overseas traffic. The opposition of which he had been a member, had proposed safeguards at the time of the beginning of construction but the government of the day had bowed them out. That government then proceeded to destroy the business possibilities of the province by entering into all kinds of agreements and contracts. The result was that the railway was still-born. He was not an opponent of the St. John Valley Railway. Coming from a district well served by railways he had believed that the magnificent St. John Valley should have adequate railway facilities. When the line was completed the situation would be better, in fact a former engineer of the line had forecasted that with its share of Transcontinental traffic the railway would be self-sustaining. The Dominion Government had taken over the Canadian Northern Railway but to his mind the St. John Valley Railway had much better claim to be taken over. Recent Dominion Railway developments had caused anxiety to certain people. The City of Moncton had been pleased to learn that its interests had the support of all sections of the province. In fact the time had come when the people of the Maritime provinces must stand together for their rights. The hon. member for Albert (Peck) had referred to certain railway changes and had intimated that he (Robinson) had been asleep. He did not object to the reference for he liked to be roused occasionally. At the time of the last general election he had been sufficiently awake to be returned to the House. He did not believe that it was the intention of those responsible for changes under the Canadian National Railway organization, to injure the Maritime Provinces. And at this point he wished to state that criticism frequently levelled at the management of the Canadian Government Railways was not justified, for that railway had been as well managed as any other. The fact that it had not contributed to the revenues of the Dominion was not against its management. The ability of some of its officials had been recognized and he had been pleased to see several prominent citizens of Moncton promoted to or onto where they took position under the C. N. R. Board.

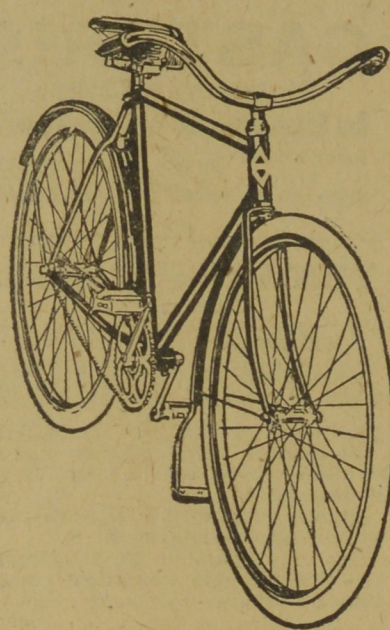
Increase of Debt
The present government was charged by hon. members opposite with being responsible for a large increase in the debt of the province during the past two years. The question was how much responsibility for that increase rested upon the Government and how much on the opposition. Momentum was an important influence, financially and otherwise. Under the late government there was a marked tendency to increase expenditure to an alarming extent, and no administration could end that tendency at once. The present government took office with the absolute assurance that its first year would have a deficit. It was necessary to look around the province for means

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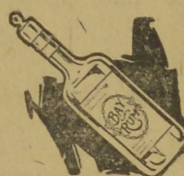
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of increasing the revenue. Excluding the Valley Railway charges the government had been able to raise from various sources, sufficient money to meet the expenditures and as a humble forecast member of the government he must congratulate the ministers. The largest spending Department was that of Public Works and he must say that on his travels throughout this province and Nova Scotia he frequently had encountered the expression of the people that there had been wonderful improvement in the highways of New Brunswick. That improvement cost money, in fact more money than ever before, but there had been good returns for the expenditure. It was too soon for his hon. friends opposite to accuse the government of increasing the debt. They should wait till the government was in power ten years when they would be able to make a fair comparison. However, care must be exercised and every precaution taken to avoid increasing the debt. There had been two good

(Continued on page five)

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