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MASTERLY SPEECH BY HON. MR. VENIOT YESTERDAY

(Continued from Page Two.)

engineer prepare plans for improvement. Dangerous hills were eliminated, narrow roads were widened and today they had more roads with rock foundations than there were macadamized roads in the State of Maine. He would make bold to say that the standard of the work performed in New Brunswick was ahead of that laid down by the Government of the United States under which aid was granted to the States of the Union. He would like hon. members opposite to take note of the fact that the work done on the secondary and bye roads last year were similar to that on which the United States had expended \$69,000,000. Of the roads constructed under the United States Government Aid 30.9 were of earth, 30.3 were of gravel and 14.7 were standard clay roads. The United States paid on the basis of fifty fifty on sand roads while New Brunswick was to obtain forty per cent from the Federal Government on gravel roads. The

macadam roads totaled 462 miles and the permanent roads in the project out of 10,000 miles was 4.7 per cent.

The hon. member for Carleton had offered some comment on his visit to Boston a few months ago. He would say that he had been invited there by the Canadian Club which was composed largely of maritime province people. If the hon. member had intended his remarks as a reflection he would say that he had not gone to Boston for personal aggrandizement but in the interest of the Province. He had felt it his duty to address the members of the Canadian Club and endeavor to persuade them to visit their old homes more frequently. He did have a magnificent reception and he believed that some good had been accomplished on behalf of the province. He felt sure that the information which he gave out would bring about an increased number of tourists. He had a good time and if it was any satisfaction to the hon. mem-

ber he would say that he had paid his expenses out of his own pocket. He would point out for the information of the hon. members that the State of Maine had 1353 miles of secondary and trunk roads as compared with the 3,300 in New Brunswick. That state had 23,537 of rural roads to New Brunswick's 13,000 and only 3,420 were surfaced with gravel. The State of Massachusetts out of a total of 18,681 had 9,031 miles of road surfaced with gravel against 3,300 in New Brunswick out of a total of 13,000. He had shown that the percentage of gravel surfaced roads in New Brunswick was greater in proportion to the mileage than in either Maine or Massachusetts.

Critics Answered

Since he had become the head of the Department of Public Works, it had been the habit of the press supporting the opposition to charge repeatedly that the Minister was devoting more attention to the northern counties of the Province than to the St. John River counties. One newspaper went so far as to state that the reason for this was that Veniot was a Frenchman. He did not relish the idea of having to refer to his nationality on the floors of the House, and wished the matter could be left aside by the opposition. He could say, however, that he was not ashamed of his nationality. He was proud of his race and his religion and was pleased that in the Province of New Brunswick those of both enjoyed so great a share of the confidence and respect of those who differ from them in blood and faith. There was absolutely no foundation for the statement that more money had been spent by his department in the northern counties than in those in the south. Records showed that approximately \$200,000 more had been spent in the seven counties on the St. John River than in the rest of the province. If criticisms were made that more money was spent in one county than another he could say that every foot of highway in the province has had his personal inspection and consideration, and what expenditures he had recommended had been irrespective of party or politics. Any time that any of the hon. gentlemen opposite had suggested to him that attention should be given to certain work, or that a supervisor might perform his duties in a more efficient manner, he had accepted the suggestion for he wanted results. He knew that his hon.

friend from York (Young) would bear him out in that. He also could say that on one occasion the hon. leader of the opposition had come to him in company with the supervisor and had suggested that a certain dangerous spot in the highway be cleared. His suggestion had been accepted and the work done in six weeks. Other hon. members of the opposition had come to him in a similar manner and he could say that all had been received courteously. It was his opinion that every section of the province should receive attention. In the County of Queens, represented by the Hon. Mr. Speaker a large expenditure had been made. Every road there was a farmers' road. A change had been made in regard to the payment of the Dominion grant for highway construction and forty per cent of the cost would be met out of the Federal Grant for main, secondary main and principal farm roads. What had he found in Queens when he had taken office? It had been necessary to push the alders away with both hands to keep from being blinded and on many of the roads in the county the tops of cars could not be put up so overgrown were they. In fact through the neglect of the old administration some of the roads could not be used. The condition of the highways could be judged by the fact that in the district of one supervisor forty miles of skirting had to be done. He had spent time and money in that county and it was no wonder that an hon. member of the opposition at a previous session of the House had stated that a road almost as good as concrete had been built to the very door of Hon. Mr. Speaker's residence. That hon. member had endeavored to leave the impression that partiality had been shown, but it was a fact that the road leading to the residence of Hon. Mr. Speaker and miles beyond was one of the best in the Province, and when the present administration took office it was one of the worst. Queens was a County one-half clay and one-half gravel. The old Government had had the same winter time that the present administration had put into practice. The hon. leader of the opposition sometime before, had expressed the suspicion that the present administration was doing what the former government had done holding bills over, because winter expenditures were shown. He could inform the hon. gentlemen that three-quarters of the material used on the roads was hauled in the winter when it was cheapest. The roads to Rothesay and Gondola Point, the roads in Rothesay Parish and the roads in Sunbury County where both highway and farm-frontage had to be protected from the St. John River, had had thousands of tons of material placed on them which had been hauled during the winter. As far as partizanship was concerned he could say that if he had acted in the spirit which had actuated the old Government he would have given little to Kings, nothing to Carleton, and much less than he had to York and Albert, for those four counties had displayed the most determined opposition to the Government. He could see no reason why there should not be expenditure in such counties, or why a Minister should act as did the hon. ex-Minister of Public Works in 1917 when out of the huge expenditure he gave \$84 to the little county of Madawaska. The hon. member for York (Hunter) had stood in his place and attempted to belittle the work done on the roads of the Parish of Manners Sutton, and the supervisor under whom the work had been done. Was that because the hon. member and the principle for which he stood had been beaten in the last municipal election in which the roads were an issue?

MR. HUNTER "I was not a candidate for Councillor in the last election."

HON. MR. VENIOT continuing, said the hon. member had not given him a chance to finish what he was saying. Ex-Coun. Thompson, who had represented the Parish of Manners Sutton for years, had been backed by the hon. member who had put four or five autos on the roads during the election and had ordered the people to turn out and vote for him, because he was opposed to the methods of doing road work. The people had said "we don't take your view, we will vote against your candidate." The latter had been beaten and it boded ill for the hon. member at the next election he would run.

MR. HUNTER "The roads were not an issue in that election. The issues were the Dog Tax and the Municipal Home."

HON. MR. VENIOT said that the hon. member had mentioned dogs. His cause had gone to the dogs, but as he had referred to the matter he Veniot would say that the Dog Tax was an issue raised in York County by the hon. member and his colleagues against the Hon. Minister of Agriculture. That tax had been imposed after repeated requests by the farming interests of the province, and the hon. member after voting for the measure in the House went to the Parish of Manners-Sutton and attempted to make an issue of it. If any man had a right to be proud of his record in York it was their humble servant. Taking the office of the Minister of Public Works, he had come to York County an entire stranger and from the people of that county had received a welcome as hearty as any one could wish. Through their accredited representatives elected to the Municipal Council the people of the county had accorded him a signal honor. At a banquet organized by members of that Council he had been the guest of honor, it being stated that they wished to give official recognition of the work done upon the highways by the Department of Public Works. In face of such an honor what need he care for the criticism of the hon. member from Manners-Sutton? He had recognition from the representatives of the people and not from a man actuated by partizan motives. He wished it understood that those most pronounced in their congratulations at that banquet had been Conservatives and not Liberals. One had been Harry Smith, of the Smith Foundry Co., Fredericton, whose politics was well known and who he believed was a

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close relative of the Hon. ex-Minister of Public Works, and a man he hoped as good if not better. Another had been C. D. Richards, County Solicitor, a man closely identified with the Conservative organization. In face of these facts he felt he was going too much into detail in connection with his work in York.

Hon. members of the opposition had made much the fact that there had been an over-expenditure of \$327,000 in ordinary work during the past year. He did not feel that he was called upon to make any excuses for that over-expenditure. The Departmental records showed that bridges all over the province had been tumbling down by hundreds as a result of the neglect of the former Government. Public safety had been ignored by that administration and over-expenditure on his part needed no excuse. When estimates had been prepared it had not been known that cost of material and labor would make the enormous advances which they had. Since June 25th increases of cost had been in the neighborhood of forty-five to fifty-five per cent. Conditions were abnormal and it was no wonder that an over-expenditure had occurred. There was a worse feature. Allowance had been made for the rebuilding of some bridges, but the number found to be in condition of collapse was far in excess for what had been anticipated. He would give a comparison. In 1915, under the old regime bridges reconstructed and repaired numbered 583, and in 1916 they numbered 492. In 1918, under the present Government they had numbered 671 and in the year following 925. This was in addition to structures built by contract. There was an instance of this in the County of the Hon. ex-Minister. When

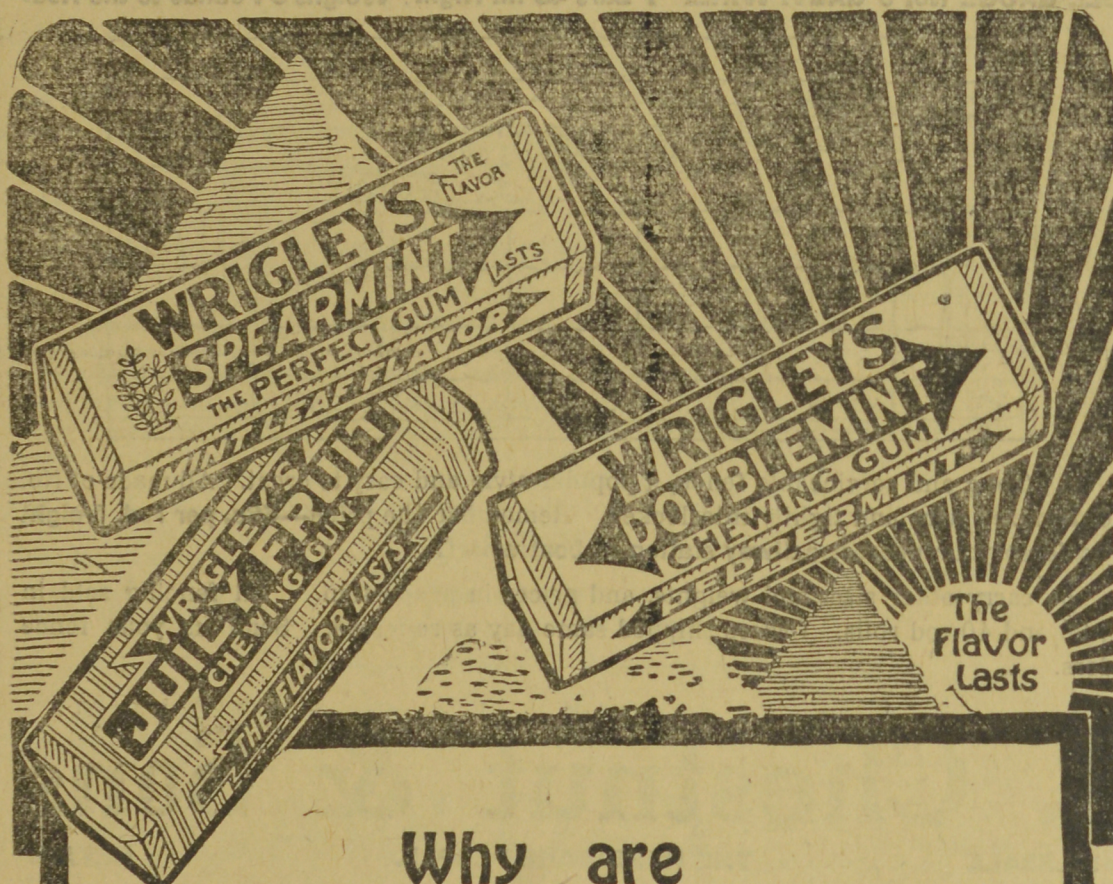
criticized concerning the Hartland Bridge his explanation had been that he had been opposed to the reconstruction of covered wooden spans at a place as important as Hartland. But in 1915 he represented Carleton and in 1916 he was Minister of Public Works. Steel then was reasonable in price, but he continued his neglect of that bridge. When the Chief Engineer made a report that the structure had got in such a condition that the safety of the public was endangered, the Hon. ex-Minister had written across the report in red pencil "stand". That was the legacy which he left the incoming Government which had to deal with the matter.

MR. TILLEY—"It did not stand, did it?"

HON. MR. VENIOT said the bridge did not stand, the forces of nature being too strong. If the advice which he had given in regard to that bridge had been taken it might be that Hartland would not be without a bridge. He wished to announce that as soon as the water should fall accommodation would be provided at Hartland and later Hartland would get the bridge which it should have got previously had the Hon. ex-Minister been alive to his duties.

The Hon. Minister said he regretted that the hon. member from Grand Manan was not in his seat. He had made reference to the increased cost of labor and the hon. member (Gup till) might be interested in the announcement that had just been received from Grand Manan that the people of that island intended to charge \$10. per day for each team hired for road work during the summer. He could say that horses in Grand Manan were neither numerous

(Continued on Page Five.)



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