

Splendid Speech Of Hon. J. B. McNair In Legislature Yesterday

At this late stage in the proceedings of this Session one cannot fail to realize that he may be driven to repeating what has already been said by the speakers who have participated in this and the earlier debate. Those who have spoken from this side of the House have very fully discussed the various policies of the present Government and the administration of those policies by the several Departments; and have as well discharged the much lighter task of disposing of the criticism directed against those policies and methods by the Opposition.

I am reconciled however to the situation through the knowledge that it does not lie in the mouths of any of our Honourable friends opposite to accuse anyone of repetition. As they followed each other in the debates until their full complement was exhausted, it was borne in upon me that we had heard all their professions, protestations and pronouncements before, even to the inaudible utterances at times of some of them who, reflecting the strength of their Party in the country, were unable to muster sufficient power to impel their observations across the floor of this Chamber.

However, no one can justly accuse the Leader of the Opposition of any such fault. As he spoke we could hear him quite distinctly on this side of the House; and I am sure that the people in all parts of the country were equally privileged.

Since we last met changes have taken place in the Tory party in this Province. At the remnant sale held in this City a few months ago, and advertised as a Tory convention, the mantle of leadership which nobody else, not even his right bower in this House, was willing to take, found a resting place on the self-sacrificing shoulders of our Honourable friend, the Leader of the Opposition.

Perhaps he deserved the new title that was conferred on him. He certainly worked hard enough for it. But his efforts to win the much coveted promotion carried him to strange places and into unusual doings. I recall particularly his forays into the Miramichi and Minto areas last year at a time when labor troubles were brewing.

Labor Disputes

Industrial disputes are serious matters. If they develop into a lockout or strike the whole country may easily become affected. At certain stages feeling runs high and those who have had experience in such matters realize how delicate the situation becomes at times and the tact and discretion that is exacted of those who, by virtue of their position, are called upon to lend their efforts to mediate between the parties and effect a reconciliation.

The exhibitions put on by the Leader of the Opposition in the districts mentioned at the precise moment when matters were at a critical stage constituted something new in the political history of this Province. So far as I am aware, no political leader, in order to embarrass a Government and bring into disrepute the machinery that had been set up under laws passed by this Legislature to control and settle industrial disputes, had ever before openly lent his efforts to foment or encourage a strike. For the good of our Province it is to be hoped the spectacle will never be witnessed again.

The Miramichi strike came at a most inopportune time. For two years my Honourable Colleague, the Minister of Lands and Mines, had been negotiating with certain industrial interests to induce them to erect a pulp mill or two on the Miramichi. Those of us who are close to him are aware of the effort he had put into the matter. While the companies concerned appeared reluctant to embark upon the ventures, it did appear that the efforts of my colleague would bear fruit. Then the strike came and the whole outlook was changed. The parties referred to, backed away from the proposition claiming that, with the unsettled industrial conditions on the Miramichi, it was no longer possible to interest investors.

They may have desired a way out. If so, the Leader of the Opposition certainly gave them timely assistance.

I think I voice the views of all Honourable members of this House when I say that, with his new found dignity resting upon him, we were expecting something new from our Honourable friend, the Leader of the Opposition, this Session.

The dearth of new ideas in his speeches, as well as the absence of new methods, testifies to the lack of inspiration which accompanies the chieftainship of a moribund political party.

It is true that he did carry his observations on some matters a trifle further than on former occasions. At the moment I recall that when speaking of the efforts of this Government to obtain new markets for our primary producers, he advanced the view that the new outlet that had been obtained for New Brunswick seed potatoes in South America, entitled

the Department of Agriculture and the Government to little, if any, credit.

In this he was flatly contradicted by the Junior member for Carleton who, in testifying to the value of those markets during the present season, showed that he at least knew something of farming and the potato business.

Even the assistant Leader of the Opposition gave a grudging approval to what had been accomplished when he sought to take credit from the Minister of Agriculture in order to bestow it on Mr. Cunningham, thereby gaining some lustre for the former administration under whom Mr. Cunningham had been appointed to the service. I am sure that no one will more readily testify to the ability and efficiency of Mr. Cunningham than the Minister of Agriculture; I am equally certain that no one on this side of the House will deny that his appointment was the outstanding achievement of the late Tory Government.

Inconsistent

I observed that again this Session the assistant Leader of the Opposi-



HON. J. B. MCNAIR

tion advocated a lesser use of manuscript by speakers in delivering their addresses in this House. Apparently this is to be one of the major planks in the platform of the Opposition Party at the next election. Certainly my Honourable friend takes full advantage of the freedom that the other method affords, even though it requires him to eat one day the words he uttered the day before. This is not difficult for him for his Tory training has made him an adept at back-tracking. However, we on this side of the House have a certain fondness for the Honourable gentleman and will always be prepared to accept his excuse that he got his hands tangled in his notes, became feverish and did not know what he was saying. The last proposition is very easy to believe. At earlier Sessions of this Legislature he professed during his speeches to wander fancy-free; but on reading the newspaper reports, I invariably found that he had achieved the remarkable advantage of delivering one speech to the House and another to the Country.

The Honourable gentleman to whom I have just referred is apparently slated for the post of Minister of Fisheries should his Party ever again attain office. He is the angler of the Party. Again this Session he endeavored to practice his wiles upon the Honourable member for Moncton and even went so far as to try and induce the Honourable member from Black's Harbor, representing Charlotte, to join the Tory fold. My Honourable friend should not throw out so great a temptation; for surely he must realize what a temptation there is for all of us to flock to join the group opposite. They need help so badly.

During the course of one of his addresses the Junior member for Carleton advocated that when the electoral laws are being revised, consideration be given to the adoption of a system of compulsory voting and even suggested that he and I should confer on the matter. Apparently in the phantom Tory Government of the future, which exists only in the fevered imagination of our Honourable friends opposite, he is slated for the post of Attorney-General. However, his colleague on his immediate right has declared himself opposed to compulsory voting. Obviously, my friends have a long way to go to reach unanimity and for the time being I am prepared to leave it to them to wrestle over the matter mentioned.

Some reference has been made by our Honourable friends opposite to the question of elections.

In the first place they attempt to insinuate that there is something novel in the existence of two vacancies in this Legislature. May I remind them that during the period when

they sat on this side of the House there were many vacancies. History does not record any protest from them over that situation.

Vacancies

For nearly three years prior to the 1930 election York County had only three members in this Legislature. In 1933 there was a vacancy in Madawaska and a second in York which continued until 1935. In 1934 a number of supporters of the Tilley Government, hearing the approach of the avenging angel, took to cover; and during the 1935 Session no less than four additional members supporting that Government did not return to this House. Only my extreme kindness of heart prevents me reminding my Honourable friends opposite of the number that did not return after the election of 1935.

But as is usual in those who practice the cult of Toryism my Honourable friends blow hot and cold. In one breath they demand by-elections while in the next they literally beg that there be no general election this year. I believe that if the truth were known, they would gladly accept any arrangement which would ensure them a life tenure of the seats they now occupy.

Both the assistant Leader of the Opposition and his junior naively declared that elections cost money. They ought to know. The assistant leader stated that it cost \$150.00 to get a hall in Carleton County for a political meeting. What it cost the Tory Party to elect our three friends from Carleton County and the other Tory candidates in the elections of 1930 and 1935 I have no means of learning. But I do know, that in 1930 it cost the people of New Brunswick eight and one-half millions of dollars. That was the amount paid for work on roads and bridges during the hectic election months of that year.

Contact Men

In this connection I am reminded that when speaking in this debate the Junior member for Carleton complained of a practice adopted by this Government of using contact men on the various road construction operations. Although such had been employed before 1935. He claimed that they were unnecessary and declared that in the old days "we were the contact men; we gave every man a pick and shovel."

He should have added that at election time, they armed in similar fashion school boys and old women.

The reason this Government has

insisted on having departmental employees to supervise the employment on public works projects, has been and is to make sure that those who most need it get the work. The intention is that those who have, or can get, other work should do so.

In fact where the Dominion contributes to such projects, the Federal Government insists that this principle be followed.

Now it might be well to compare the efficacy of our methods with those practised under the old administration when the Tory members and candidates served as contact men. There were 48 of them on the job during the election year of 1930. I have already observed that our road and bridge bill that year was eight and one-half millions of dollars. But what did the old system cost us in Carleton County that year where our three friends opposite were acting as contact men? The amount spent was exactly \$654,785.57.

The Junior member for Carleton the other day threw out an invitation to a member on this side to cross the floor and take a front seat opposite, observing that in his experience a back-bencher, to use his term, never knew what the Government he supported was doing with the public monies. I do not doubt that this is true with Tory Governments. I believe it is equally true with Tory Governments that when election road-work is going on, the Government does not know what its back-benchers are doing with the public monies. Furthermore, the history of this Province proves that such a Government does not care.

Old Age Pensions

To the board of strategy directing the manoeuvres of the thin blue ruin line opposite must go the palm for selecting as the main Tory weapons of offense in the next election the subjects of Old Age Pensions and Government control of liquor. Enough has been said by preceding speakers on this side of the House respecting Old Age Pensions to convince anyone that if the Opposition can ever expect to muster sufficient support to make the next election half interesting, they should take the Tory brain trust and either pickle their bones in alcohol or retire them with an old age pension. Perhaps a blind pension would be more easily obtainable.

Having noticed the attitude now being taken by our friends opposite on these two questions and remembering their conduct in the past, I am

reminded that last Session you, Mr. Speaker, ruled that the use of the words "hypocrite" and "hypocrisy" was unparliamentary. On this occasion I bow to your ruling in advance and withdraw the words before they are uttered.

At the risk of being tedious I cannot refrain from reminding Honourable members of the use made by the Party, to which our Honourable friends opposite cling, of the subject of Old Age Pensions when it was first introduced as a political issue in this Province. It was a use characterized by the most deep-dyed duplicity and deception that has ever stained the political annals of this or any other country.

At the 1930 Session of the Legislature they placed upon the Statute Books the Act which authorized the Provincial Government to enter into an agreement with Ottawa to establish an Old Age Pension system in New Brunswick.

At the same time the Government of the day appointed a Commission, headed by a Judge of the Supreme Court, to circulate all the old people of the Province. The matter was urgent, for the election was imminent.

I have recently seen a copy of the questionnaire that was used. Besides requiring complete information as to residence, marital status and so on, it asked for full details as to property and income and concluded with this paragraph immediately over the signature of the chairman:—

"To be of value or use, this questionnaire should be answered and returned to the Old Age Pension Commission, Room 508, Provincial Building, Saint John, N. B. PLEASE BE PROMPT."

It is not difficult looking at that document to understand the view that then prevailed in the minds of thousands of our old people that having filled in and forwarded the forms to the Provincial Building at Saint John, all that remained to be done to ensure them the pension was to vote for the candidates, supporting the Tory Government of the day.

They did so by thousands and made certain of the return of the Baxter Government to office by, among other things, returning to this House the three gentlemen from Carleton County opposite who for five years sat here, drew their indemnities and never uttered a syllable on behalf of the old men and women whom they had so wantonly deceived and be-

trayed. And now these gentlemen have the temerity to suggest that they intend to make the administration of the Old Age Pension scheme an issue in the next election. Caesar wrote that in his day all Gaul was divided into three parts.

Apparently the noble-hearted champions of the aged who sit opposite propose to prove at the next election that in giving to the old men and women of this Province approximately one and three quarter millions of dollars annually which the Baxter-Tilley-Richards Government for five years cheated them out of, the Dystart Government is attempting to rob these old people.

As I remarked on a former occasion in this House, one would think that our opponents would shun the subject of Old Age Pensions as they would the Devil. Apparently, they will persist in shunning neither.

The Liquor Question

I come now to a consideration of the antics of our Honourable friends opposite in relation to the liquor question. I am immediately reminded of the adroit somersaulting performed by some of them over this question in the early days of the late Government.

Honourable members will recall that the Tory Party came into power in 1925 after having given a certain definite pledge regarding the proper enforcement of the old Prohibition law. Within two years they had brought into operation the present Act providing for government sale of liquor.

Honourable members will also doubtless recall the manoeuvring that took place when that measure was before the Legislature in 1927. Some of the government supporters had been elected from so-called temperance counties. The ancient Tory device of face-saving had to be brought into operation. On that issue my Honourable friend, the present leader of the Opposition, gave as delightful an exhibition of political sword-dancing as was ever witnessed.

The other day the Junior member for Carleton apparently mistaking this place for a revival meeting, gave a testimonial and declared he was not in favor of liquor. I marvelled at his utterance; for I have still very distinct recollections of the scenes that accompanied the 1935 convention in Woodstock when he and his two associates were nominated as the Tory candidates for Carleton. The

conditions that day in Woodstock begged description. Rum flowed like water through the streets of the Town. There was brawling and street fighting. The whole show was manipulated and directed by the Campaign managers of the Tory party who had their headquarters in a certain hotel. It was the biggest public drunk that was ever staged in this Province, even involving boys in their teen age, and was the subject of severe censure in some of the publications of the day.

Remembering such things I am very doubtful whether the white robes of the reformer are going to hang with any grace from the shrinking shoulders of the five horsemen of the Tory eclipse opposite.

They have at frequent intervals during the various debates in this House in discussing the liquor business made reference to a certain cartoon that appeared in the election literature published by the Liberal organization during the 1935 campaign. It depicted a tin can and indicated that, when the Liberal party took over the administration of affairs, the lid was to be lifted. Well one of the first things the present Government did was to reduce the membership of the Liquor Control Board from three to one, letting out the Deputy Commissioner who enjoyed an annual salary of \$7500, and the third member whose salary was \$5000 a year. We certainly lifted the lid sufficiently to let those two gentlemen out.

The National Park

Our Honourable friends opposite continue to harp upon the National Park question. They forget that as long ago as 1930 under the Bennett Government, a report on park sites in New Brunswick was prepared for one of the departments at Ottawa. In due course a copy found its way to Fredericton. I do not recall however that during the years that followed, while they were supporting the late Government, any of our friends opposite ever raised a single question in relation to a National Park.

Now, however, they are importunate in their demands for instant action. Their feverish minds, oppressed with party politics vision an opportunity to stir up for party purposes local feeling over this question in various quarters.

They apparently also hope to leave in the minds of the public the impression that the development of a

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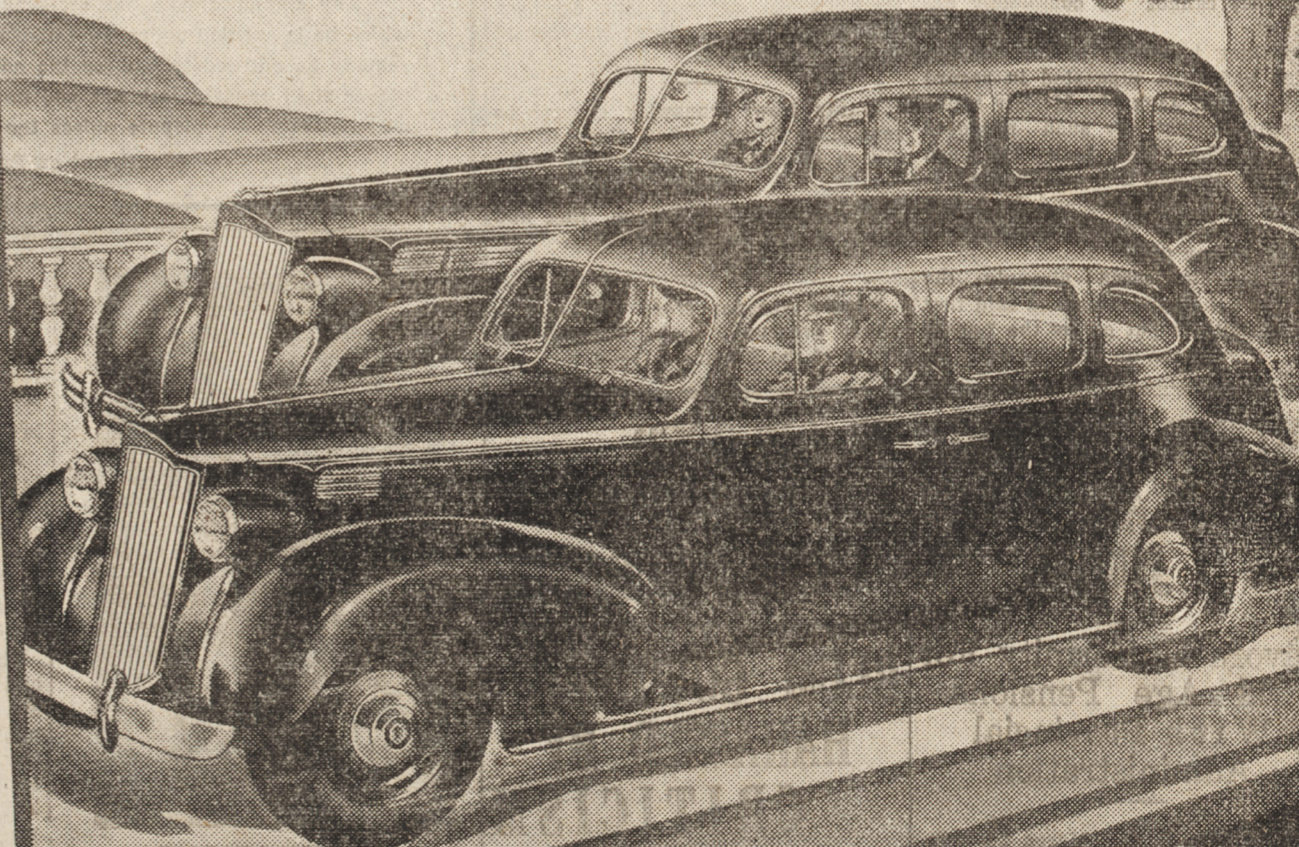
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