

# Hon. Mr. Leger Reviews Government's Record

The Issues of the Campaign Ably Presented by the Provincial Secretary-Treasurer-Some "Hot Shot" for Mr. Dysart and His Party of Deficits and Promises — Public Interests Safeguarded By the Present Administration.

A fighting speech by Hon. Antoine J. Leger, Provincial Secretary-Treasurer of New Brunswick for the past ten years, was delivered over the radio on a provincial-wide hookup a few days ago. He not only treated his listeners to an able defence of the government's administration record but on scathing terms how the affairs of the province had been grossly mismanaged by the party of the present opposition, when they held the reins of power from 1917 until 1925. Hon. Mr. Leger spoke in part as follows:

Some of our opponents in their addresses, have dealt with the finances of the provinces. Their utterances show that either they do not understand the consolidated balance sheet, contained in the public accounts at page A42 and page A43 of the comptroller-general's report for the year ending the 31st day of October, 1934, certified correct by the firm of P. S. Ross & Sons, provincial auditors or else, they are deliberately trying to mislead the public.

For their benefit, if they are not beyond reconciliation, we will once more state the figures.

In 1917, when the late Liberal administration took the reins of power, the net debt stood at \$15,808,855. Eight years afterwards, the same, now boisterous opposition, had increased the net debt to \$32,197,029; or, a net increase in eight years of \$16,388,174.

The net debt, now, as certified by the firm of P. S. Ross and Sons, and not the irresponsible sayings of some ambitious and disappointed politicians, stands at the sum of \$48,411,380.

**Absurd and Inconsistent**  
Our opponents, of course, place it at a much higher figure, but their divers assertions are so absurd and inconsistent, that one would stultify

himself in trying to follow them. In fact, we have not heard any two of them who do agree on the same figures. But, of course, if they harp on a provincial-wide hookup a few days ago. He not only treated his listeners to an able defence of the government's administration record but on scathing terms how the affairs of the province had been grossly mismanaged by the party of the present opposition, when they held the reins of power from 1917 until 1925. Hon. Mr. Leger spoke in part as follows:

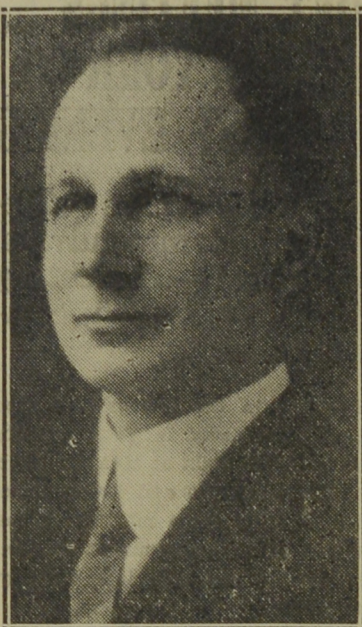
But, ladies and gentlemen, the opposition, or the remnants of the opposition were once in power and when turned out by your votes, they left a story which is not yet forgotten.

They also left a floating debt by way of an overdraft of \$1,841,470.24; they left unattended and unfounded their deficits of the year 1924 of \$587,859.04, including deficit of Valley Railway. They left the deficit of 1925, amounting to the sum of \$812,094.61, or a total deficit during the last two years of the Liberal administration of \$1,399,953.

And these are the gentlemen who now say that if given a chance, they will balance the budget. They never could when they were in power before; for, in eight years of their administration, they had deficits totalling \$3,249,550 and never a surplus.

During the last year of their administration, these grit political penitents increased the net debt by \$3,022,591.56 or three times as much as we had last year—our net increase being \$997,986.70.

**Pledged Auto License Fees**  
But, this is not all. The now potential wizards of finance had pledged the automobile license fees for a year and a half in advance, so that these revenues were not available to us for the year 1926. They now claim that they can do better. Would you believe them? Have they since shown signs of improvement? Their wild, unqualified utterances on the hustings do not give much inspiration in



HON. A. J. LEGER  
Provincial Secretary-Treasurer, Who Gave an Account of his Stewardship

that regard. If other proofs of incompetency of administration were required, the Lancaster highway construction of \$105,000 and the Jourmaine Island expenditure of \$40,000 would furnish vivid examples.

In passing from the financial to the economic side of the late Liberal administration, it would be found that the province in 1925, when we came in office, was dying of inanition; agriculture had practically no direction; the fishing industry was dormant; the mineral possibilities were not explored; the sawmills were closing; other industries were starved; investors in industrial concerns were turning away from the province; the settlers were leaving; the highways were inadequate to the demands of the people; the bridges were poor and in immediate need of repairs; the tourists were not coming to the province and the provincial institutions were in want of expansion.

**The Coal Industry**  
The coal industry of the province was not only stagnant, but it had not even the government of New Brunswick for a customer. If, to this, is added the constant increase of provincial taxation from the year 1917 to 1925; the want of confidence in the politics of the then government; the Musquash fiasco later settled by a royal commission; the Grand Falls muddle; the inadequate protection from forest fire hazard; the bootleggers in charge of the province; you ladies and gentlemen, have a slight picture of the legacy left to us by the late Liberal Administration.

**Seeking a Come-back**  
Do you want these conditions restored in the province? Those who were there, then and responsible for that state of things are now knocking at your door. You only have to give them admission, and if they do not show more sagacity than they did, when they were in power, during the years 1917 to 1925, with their newly added planks, they will surely bring on direct taxation or chaos, in finances before you, ladies and gentlemen electors, have a chance to again turn them out.

But look around yourselves; other governments have changed within the last few years; and, whilst we do not want to bring them into our discussion, may we be permitted to ask these questions: Are they better today than they were before the change? Are their deficits less?

Coming again to our administration, as we said before the debt was \$32,197,029 in 1925; it is now \$48,411,380, or an increase in ten years of \$16,214,351. But, included in that increase are obligations of former governments assumed by us, or, a total of \$52,104 of such former obligations which are not ours and when subtracted from the sum of \$16,214,351 leave a net increase under our ten-year regime of \$15,652,247 which is substantially less than the increase of \$16,388,174.00 under eight years of Liberal administration. And still, they have the audacity to speak of increased debt!

And yet, they were in power in normal times, whilst we, during the

last four years, had to face the worst economic depression the world has ever seen. But, even in spite of the depression, we can favorably compare our record with theirs.

**Was Precarious**  
If the 1925, the financial position of the province was precarious, it was not so much on account of the amount of the capital debt, but the way by which it was yearly being increased. When, in 1925, we asked the late Liberal administration, on the hustings, to account for their \$16,388,174 of increased debt, all that could be found were bridges that did not stand the increased traffic some of them were blown down by the wind or carried away by the tides; they had constructed few stretches of main roads that had to be reconstructed by us almost immediately upon our coming into power; they had built an inadequate hydro electric plant at Musquash and, lest we forget, they had bought the Queen Hotel.

**Always Deficit**  
Turning to the ordinary expenditure account, as we said before, we found that the late Liberal administration, during their entire term in office, never had a surplus, always huge deficit.

The deficit that we, ourselves faced in 1926, was over \$650,000; but, by good, business-like administration, we were able to reduce it to \$61,000. In the normal years of 1927, 1928 and 1929, we produced surpluses, the only New Brunswick government that, strictly speaking, ever had a surplus to its credit. And, had we not had to face these abnormal times, we would have continued on the surplus side of the ledger year after year.

With the depression, we deemed it our duty to spend money to relieve distress; but even in spite of that, our statements of provincial finance stands not only as well in comparison than as any other provinces in Canada, but a great deal better than the statements of the late Liberal administration.

One thing is certain, unlike the other provinces, and unlike the late Liberal administration, when more revenues were needed, we proceeded otherwise than by adding or increasing taxation.

**Inland Fisheries**  
The organization of our inland fisheries, under an able minister, produced more than nine times what they were under the late administration.

We repealed the prohibitory laws and enacted instead a system of government control of liquor traffic which has proven a good method of controlling liquor and a fair revenue producer.

**Helped The Farmers**  
We doubled the grants to agriculture; appointed agricultural representatives for all sections of the province; organized agriculture into co-operative buying and selling societies and stock raising clubs; constructed a large mass of public works; built excellent roads; reputed the best in Eastern America; erected permanent bridges that are a credit to the province, and inaugurated a hard surface road policy to the greatest satisfaction of the public.

This is not all. We erected a complete system of highway sign markings; extended and maintained the ferry system to a high standard and granted provincial aid to main trunk highways running through incorporated towns.

We revised the Mining Act; increased the grants for mining development; appointed an inspector of mines and a provincial mineralogist; improved the laws affecting the safety of miners; established more game reserves and an efficient forest fire prevention service with the elimination of forest fire waste and the enlargement of many other services for the benefit of the people.

**Grand Falls Power**  
We also rendered possible the development of Grand Falls through private enterprise; and, the establishment and expansion of pulp and paper mills.

We limited in the Crown Land leases, and yearly cut to the yearly growth, thus taking the precaution of placing our forests under sustained yield control; extended the transmission lines of the New Brunswick Electric Power Commission in the farming and rural districts and constructed a steam-power plant in the Grand Lake coal area, there utilizing as well as in other government institutions a large percentage of coal from the Minto mines.

The honorable premier in a recent address told you the benefits of the

New Brunswick Forest Operations Commission and the aid our government was giving to the fishermen.

We have passed much useful and advanced legislation; we have made effectual presentation of our problems at several inter-provincial conferences and at the Imperial Economic Conference without the need of what proposed minister of federal affairs of the opposition.

What more could be expected from a government who has been in office for less than ten years? Where have we failed to respond to the trust, which you, the people, have reposed in us?

**Blue Ruin Apostles**  
Whilst we were working hard in your interests, we had to bear not only the brunt of the depression; but we have been assailed by a blue ruin opposition, who, during their entire term of office, never knew what a surplus was and never affixed its name to anything worth remembering. And yet, they have the audacity to seek your support?

**What Might Have Been**  
But, what would have happened if in 1925 the people of the province had not entrusted the now governing body with the administration of its affairs? We would probably be paying interest on millions of dollars spent in the development of Grand Falls, with no compensation for the investments; the railway contribution in lieu of taxation would be unknown; the awards of the Duncan commission and of the White commission would not exist; the bootleggers would be in control of the province; but the deficits of the Valley Railway, the frail bridges, the crooked, narrow and hilly roads, insufficient and dangerous to the travelling public would still be with us.

**Credit Is Good**  
No better testimonial of sound financial administration could have been procured than the recent sales of both long and short term debentures. In March last, we sold an issue of \$800,000 five years of 3 1-2 per cent. at the price of 102.57, or a net cost to the province of 2.94. Later, in May last, we again sold an issue of \$2,100,000 long-term debentures at a net cost to the province of 3.33, both sales being the best on record in the province, whilst other provinces have

had no such good results. These record prices are not only indicative of the very sound financial position of the province and of the continual increasing confidence which the money investors have in its credit, but also reflects the greatest merit on the administration, who has so managed the provincial affairs, so as to inspire that high degree of assurance.

**Talk of Deficits**  
But our opponents talk of deficits. Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones.

In eight years the late Liberal administration has deficits to the extent of \$3,249,550 and never a surplus.

In ten years we have had deficits to the extent of \$3,012,818.61, or \$236,734 less than they had in eight years. But, during the same period, we also had surpluses amounting to \$223,379.80, or a net deficit in ten years of \$2,789,438.81 which is \$460,113 less than they had in eight years.

But, the story does not end there. We increased the percentage of sinking fund in relation to the debt from 6 per cent to 15 per cent. So, had we provided from current revenue only the same percentage of sinking funds as our opponents set aside when they were in power, for a net debt of \$48,411,380 would require \$3,025,711. But, we have \$7,461,419.56, or a surplus over our predecessors of \$4,435,708.31, thus enough to wipe out all our deficits and still leave \$1,646,272 to the good whilst our opponents had deficits aggregating \$3,249,550. Now, let them talk!

If time permitted we could go on enumerating the benefits that this government has procured to the people; benefits that we trust have been appreciated and that will stand the government in good fortune on the 27th day of June instant.

A golf professional hired by a department store to give golf lessons, was approached by two women. "Do you wish to learn to play golf, madam?" he asked one. "Oh, no," she said. "It's my friend who wants to learn. I learned yesterday."

Lord Ellenborough replied: "Pleasure has been out of the question for a long time, but you may proceed."

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