

The Leader Of The Opposition Criticises Provincial Finances

Hon. A. A. Dysart Claimed the Government Had Spent Public Monies Lavishly and Had Not Carried Out Pre-Election Promises.

With the galleries crowded as in the days of old when political battles were fought with valor on both sides of the House, Hon. A. A. Dysart leader of the Opposition made his banner speech of the Session, in length and fighting spirit. Among the spectators on the floors of the House were Mrs. MacLaren, wife of His Honor Lieutenant Governor Murray MacLaren, Miss MacLaren, and Mrs. Tilley, wife of Premier L. P. D. Tilley, and Honourable Mr. Justice A. T. LeBlanc, formerly of the Legislature.

ASSEMBLY CHAMBER, March 19, 1935.

The House met at 3:10 p.m. MR. ATKINSON submitted a report from the Municipalities Committee.

M. ANDERSON gave Notice of Enquiry regarding payments to William J. Swanton.

MR. DYSART gave Notices of Enquiry regarding the conviction of one Babbirk under the Liquor Act; as to monies spent on the Thorne Pond Bridge, the Three Tree Creek Bridge and as to damages to a truck owned by the Farmers Co-operative Dairy Company; also as to slot machines seized by the R. C. M. P. and further as to particulars regarding the returns from potatoes shipped to Egypt and India.

MR. RICHARD (Gloucester) asked if copies of correspondence between the Government and the Departments of Justice and Inland Revenue at Ottawa, regarding the "fall" clause in the timber contracts in Great Britain, would be brought down without the formality of an address.

HON. MR. HARRISON said he would look into any correspondence there might have been and advise his hon. friend just what the Government was free to do in the matter.

HON. MR. TILLEY introduced a bill to provide for the establishment of Housing Commissions. He said that this should be torn down or repaired to make them habitable. The Commission would make arrangements with such municipalities whereby they might secure provincial support and it was hoped that such action might provide for considerable employment.

He also introduced a bill to amend the Forest Operations Commission Act, which, he said, would strengthen it in some directions.

HON. A. A. DYSART

MR. DYSART, continuing the debate on the Budget, said there had been thus far a frank and full discussion of the motion to go into supply, and as he was concluding the debate from the Opposition side, it would fall upon him to reply to some of the speeches made by members of the Government and others on the Government side.

The Provincial Secretary-Treasurer had established a record in delivering his tenth consecutive budget speech and was entitled to congratulations so far as they were merited. The buoyant words of the hon. gentleman, falling like the flakes of the first snow flurry of the season, had dissipated as quickly before unbiased discussion as did the snow when it reached Mother Earth. So his unwarranted optimistic words had not found a happy resting place in the minds of people throughout the province, struggling to make ends meet. The country expected responsible public men to talk of actual conditions. This applied to the Attorney General and some members as well, who had wished to leave the impression with the country that they were confident in the stability of the province and full of hope for its future. The Provincial Secretary-Treasurer had evidently penned many of the paragraphs of his speech some months before the speech was delivered. His enthusiasm over the Premier's trip to England was evidently recorded at the time of his return and he (Dysart) wished to say that people in remote districts, struggling under the handicaps thrown about them, did not look kindly upon these flamboyant and unguarded statements. But a few hours ago the Premier had found it necessary to notify the House and country as to the dire distress under which certain people were living, and there could be no good purpose in falsely coloring the picture in a budget speech.

He (the Provincial Secretary) had stated that Agriculture was in a good and improved condition and all Government speakers had endorsed it. One of them had stressed as an example of good conditions that hay was selling at \$18.00 a ton this year as against \$8. last, but did not say that thousands of cattle were slaughtered because their owners had no hay to feed them. Neither had anything been said about the dire position of farmers in the potato belts.

Potato Situation

In respect to the potato situation, he felt the Government had missed an opportunity to present the unanimous feeling of the House regarding relief that should justly be given from Ottawa. Had the Minister of Agriculture gone to Ottawa armed with the support of all the people of the province and impressed upon the authorities there that in common fairness our people were entitled in some measure to the same consideration as had been given the people of Western Canada, he could have made such a forceful presentation as would merit attention. No matter what the Government

might say, the lumber market at present was very unsatisfactory and he did not believe that it could be improved until the market of the United States were opened up to this product. In this connection he might state that it would be a happy day for the people of N. B. when arrangements could be made to enable the selling of our primary products in the country to the south. The United States was our natural market and it was the duty of any and all Governments to hasten to the demand of N. B. citizens as well as to those of the great industrial centres of Central Canada. These latter had dictated fiscal policies of Canada for too long; they were careless of the needs of the people in outlying sections, and he sincerely hoped that under the proposed treaty with United States, that the natural products of this province would have a chance. Looking at trade statistics he had been amazed to see that the Maritime Provinces, with one-tenth of the population of Canada, instead of getting 10 per cent of the trade of the country as might be expected under a fair division, had obtained less than 2 per cent.

A regional tariff arrangement had been proposed and the Premier of British Columbia had lately made some very strong statements on the question. While no doubt there were difficulties in the way of such a policy, nevertheless he felt that either that policy or something equivalent to it must be brought about. The suggestion that manufacturers should make sales prices the same throughout Canada, no matter where the factories were located, might, if adopted, help out very considerably. In all these matters of inter-provincial and federal concern, he felt that a provincial department of Federal Affairs might do much to help. Government speakers had criticized the suggestion as an extravagant one, but he did not think in view of their financing and budgeting in recent years that they were competent to criticize. If they were competent, how did they explain their unjustifiable deficits and by what virtue did the President of the Council draw down a salary? True, he was ornamental, but was that sufficient excuse? The policy of the Opposition was to do away with ornaments and get down to business. He could assure the House that the Opposition would not budget in the same way as had the present Government. A new deal and a square deal was due the citizens of this province, and they would not at least boost up the salaries of front benchers to the deprivation of needy citizens.

Reverting to the Agricultural situation, he quoted the potato market report from Hartland to show that the market was at a standstill. There were no wire enquiries and only two carloads had been shipped during the past week.

Finances

The Premier, in his announcement of Governmental achievements and policies, had stated that the interest of the province would be paramount. Yet, for purely partisan purposes, he had prevented a united provincial demand for justice from Ottawa in connection with the potato situation. During the ten years of its existence, the Government had been building on the quicksands of uncertainty, getting deeper and deeper each year, until now they were in up to the ears. An instance was the presentation made by the Provincial Secretary-Treasurer as to the net debt. He had claimed that the hydro indebtedness had been removed from the net liabilities of the province because the auditors said so, but he did not explain that the auditors had so acted because of Government dictation. If the argument advanced that because the bonds for the hydro commission had an earning power was why they were taken from direct liabilities, why not then were the bonds on account of Public Works taken out, because of the earning power of the gasoline and motor vehicle taxes. He claimed that no transposition of figure could rob the province of its liability for the bonds which it issued.

During its term of office this Government had spent approximately 95 million dollars and what had the people received in return? Every hour during that period 26 thousand dollars had gone out and there was not a break in sight. The Provincial Secretary-Treasurer had said that at least the sinking funds were safe. Yet last year that sanctity had been invaded by manipulating bonds so as to give a supporter a profit. It was claimed that because of the immense expenditure the roads of the province were wider and straighter, yet he could tell the Government that the condition of the roads was so badly warped that 5 million dollars would be necessary to straighten them out, if it were based on the cost of travelling 50 miles two years ago when the expenditure thereon was 192 thousand dollars. There were stretches of road that had seen no gravel for years, yet power scrapers were going over them throwing up dust that was blown over the field. Then the hard-surfaced road policy, which would entail a cost by contract of 14 thousand dollars per mile, with an expenditure to get the road bed in shape of \$3,500 per mile, together with engineering cost would make the actual cost well up to 20 thousand dollars per mile. The Gov-

ernment road policy as outlined would cost between 25 and 30 millions of dollars, bringing the debt up to 100 million. Just where, he asked, would the province land.

The Government brushed aside the idea of bankruptcy but the public must consider the situation and act accordingly. Elsewhere the dust problem was being met and the road surfaces preserved at a cost much below that proposed for this province. Soft tarmac roads would cost only one-third of the Government's roads and they had stood a traffic of 7,000 cars per day, while no road in N. B. had reached 3,000 per day. Such a policy was followed in N. S. and P. E. I. and would be suitable to N. B.

The Attorney-General was looking for a seat on the wool sack and accordingly did not want to offend the friends who could give it to him. He (Dysart) had no doubt he would discharge judicial duties acceptably, but he thought in the meantime that he should give a true statement of facts. In dealing with the exports of pulpwood, he had claimed that 230 thousand cords had been exported although it had been shown that 41 thousand was the figure. In regard to pulpwood the Government should fulfill its pledges and have it manufactured in the province. The Attorney-General had said the R. C. M. P. should not be criticized because they had restored law and order. Restored!—yet before they existed a sheriff in each county had carried on reasonably well and expeditiously. Criminals had been apprehended and punished with as much, if not greater, efficiency than today. Restoring law and order!—yet in 1930 this great force, brought from the West at a cost of \$100,000, could not secure the conviction of the men who accordingly to the Deputy Attorney-General had robbed the province of thousands of dollars in connection with highway administration. The Attorney-General, he said, owed an explanation to the people before he went to the wool sack. Recently the Force had been going to make a great clearing up of slot machines, very harmless things in their way. What, he would ask, had become of some of the prosecutions in the County of York? Then, what had he done in regard to the Workmen's Compensation Investigation? Did he bring down a report?—Let the Premier answer.

Dominion Award

He would congratulate the Premier and Attorney General in securing the small award to the Province from the White Commission. But, he would ask, why was N. B. not treated in the same way as the Western Provinces, where a Commission was selected of Western men, while in the case N. B. the majority of the Commission was from the Province of Ontario, that always had been opposed to giving justice to N. B. The people of the province had a right to know why the cards had been stacked against them in the erection of the Commission. The N. B. Government had been sleeping on the job ever since the Duncan Commission reported, until at length, driven by public, the Premier had got a costly legal opinion to show that the province had no legal claims. And then, instead of keeping that opinion quiet, had proceeded to broadcast it throughout the Dominion. No wonder, after such ill-advised publicity, the prejudiced Commission cut down the claim of the province from \$1,800,000 to \$300,000.00.

He claimed that the Government had gone back on its platform and its pledges in regard to Old Age Pensions and Mothers' Allowances. They had taken the money secured in extra subsidy, pledged for Social Service, to incite a further riot of expenditure in Public Works and other departments.

The world today had been shocked by news from Germany that the country had thrown the Treaty of Versailles into the discard. Yet, the Premier, the physical model of Adolf Hitler, had done the same thing, by discarding the pledges given by his predecessors.

He claimed that the Government in connection with the maintenance of the Provincial Hospital, had shirked its responsibilities and added to the burden of the Municipalities to the extent of twenty per cent since 1932. The cost of the institution last year was \$226,416.32, of which the Municipalities had contributed \$169,000.00, and paying patients \$33,584.22. The contributions of the Municipalities was equal to 75.5 per cent, and the Province paid only 9.75 or less than 10 per cent. In spite of the falling off in Government assistance, it was claimed that the Municipalities were being generously treated. The problem was one which the Opposition would deal with on coming into power.

The Government really had no program, but boasted of its thirty-three achievements since taking office. The Opposition did have a program, and anybody viewing dispassionately the eight planks already submitted would say that they were sound and constructive, and he could assure hon. members opposite that members of the Opposition would have no difficulty in squaring their conscience with what had happened since 1925.

Stumpage

Referring to the proposal in the Opposition platform to vary the rate of stumpage, he would like to know if the present plan was right, or was it wrong? A glance at the map of lumber areas would show that many of them were located from fifty to one hundred miles up a stream, and the value of lumber was properly measured by its selling price, and the profit

was affected by the cost of marketing it. Nobody would argue that lumber which had to be moved only six or seven miles could not be marketed at much less cost than lumber driven a distance of fifty or seventy miles. As an example, he would point out that Alberta had large deposits of coal but very little of it was marketed in the Province of Ontario, because of the heavy cost of transportation. In his opinion a flat rate of \$3.00 per thousand was not sound or fair, yet the Hon. Attorney-General claimed that the proposals in the Opposition platform to vary it according to the locality was absurd and unworkable. A check-up, however, on the cost of operations in various localities would prove beyond doubt that he (Dysart's) contention was a sound one. At the same time he would point out that the clean-cutting methods now being pursued by authority of the Hon. Minister of Lands and Mines were continued, the time would soon come, when drastic steps would be necessary to conserve the timber supply of the Province.

An hon. member for Kings (Fairweather) had repeated some of the arguments of his Leader against the Opposition policy of reform, and had even gone back to the pre-Christian era to tell the story of the mountain and the mouse. Had his hon. friend gone back only to the days of Rip Van Winkle, he would have been able to find a better argument against the Opposition policy by citing the case of a man who had been asleep for twenty years. He could tell his hon. friend that the Opposition was moving forward, and in the course of three months hoped to relegate to the background the hon. members sitting on the other side of the House. He could assure his hon. friend that there was no rotten plank in the platform submitted by the Opposition, and it would not be a difficult matter for the party of which he was the Leader to square its conscience. He was surprised that in selecting a metaphor his hon. friend had not chosen Major Hoople or Billy Sunday, instead of disturbing the peace and tranquility of twenty-five hundred years ago.

Regarding the obligations of the Province, surprise had been expressed by an hon. member opposite because of a suggestion from the Opposition side of the House that something should be done to relieve the burdens of the people. True, one of his (Dysart's) supporters had advocated a refunding program, and surely no fault could be found with that, as such a policy had been carried out in England, Australia, Newfoundland, and elsewhere. While those in sym-

pathy with the big interests might raise an objection, it must be remembered that the buying power of the dollar had been lowered, and it was not constructive to say that a refunding policy could not be carried out. The Opposition believed in improving the lot of the people, and would not be influenced by the idle twaddle emanating from the other side of the House. He would suggest that his hon. friends give attention to statements recently made by Premier, Senator Arthur Meighen and Sir Robert Borden, men who have been interested in the country and are not afraid to speak the truth. He would like to know how his hon. friend (Fairweather) squared himself with his conscience and his oath of office when he heard his Leader relegate to the background the pledges and undertakings of his predecessors in office. How did he square himself with regard to Old Age Pensions and Mothers' Allowances promised by the Government in 1930? Free school books had been promised, but the Government went back on its promise as soon as the election was over. The Government had reneged on the subject of Vocational Education after a definite promise had been made to the Municipalities that it would be carried on. He would like to know the character of the balm that would be applied to the action of the Government in increasing the Premier's salary by \$750.00 and the salaries of the other Ministers by \$450.00. He knew that some hon. members opposite had not approved of it, and felt that the Hon. Premier had by increasing salaries committed the greatest political blunder of his short career, and he (Dysart) when the time arrived proposed to call to account before the people of the Province.

(His hon. friend from Sunbury (Atkinson) had not gone as far back as the hon. member from Kings, but contended himself by quoting from Edmund Burke. He knew of no hon. member who had been so clever with regard to self as his hon. friend from Sunbury, who had boasted that he did not intend to seek election in York, but would again offer for Sunbury, where the people appreciated his ability to do things. His hon. friend certainly could do things, and he may develop into a Premier; in fact, it was (continued on page three)

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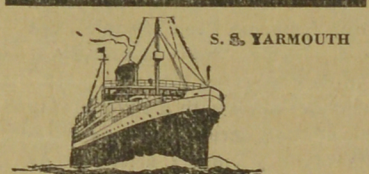
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