

The Daily Mail

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THE HIGHWAY ACT

The famous Hazen Highway Act of 1908, the act which was to place the control of the roads in the hands of the people, to wit the Municipal Councils, has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. Born in iniquity, it has been disowned by its own parents, and has been sentenced to die an ignominious death. Chief Commissioner Morrissey has been appointed lord high executioner and judging by some observations which he made in the Legislature on Friday, the task is to him an agreeable one. It fell to his lot to administer the old act and there is probably not the slightest doubt in his mind as to one thing—it richly deserves the unhappy fate which has befallen it. A few short months ago the Hazen Highway Act might have stood against the world but after the hammering which it received at the hands of the Chief Commissioner on Tuesday last there are now none so poor as to do it reverence. The wonderful performance of straining at a knot and swallowing a camel is knocked into a cocked hat by this latest exhibition of incompetency on the part of the Flemming government. It has swallowed itself completely at one huge gulp. The political annals of the province may be searched in vain for a parallel for this lightning change, now you see it and now you don't performance. Never before did men charged with the responsibility of administering the affairs of the province make such a ludicrous exhibition of themselves.

It will be remembered that when the Highway Act was introduced by Hon. J. D. Hazen in 1908, an effort was made to create the impression that it was the greatest piece of highway legislation ever devised by the mind of man. It was praised by Tories big and little, as the greatest thing that ever happened. The worthy secretary-treasurer of the County of York became so enthused that he addressed to the late Thos. Robison, M.P.P., a number of letters in explanation of the measure. These letters appeared in the public press, and were in due course of time brought to the official notice of the auditor general, who rewarded the author with a substantial check. Tory county councillors and men who had been Liberals under the old regime, hailed the new act as the last thing in highway legislation and rejoiced that the problem of providing the province with good roads had at last been solved.

The members of the Liberal opposition of that day, however, were not infected by the wave of enthusiasm created on behalf of the new born act. They detected many flaws in it and took occasion to point them out to the government, but to no purpose. They pointed out that the act was encumbered by useless machinery, that it provided for the appointment of too many officials, and would never work out in practice. They offered amendments which would have made a better law, but the premier of that day and his servile followers refused to accept them. The act was adopted by the House during the session of 1903, but for some reason it was not put in operation until after the session of 1909, when some amendments were tacked on to it. It has now been in operation four years and we have the spectacle of Chief Commissioner Morrissey, with the full authority of the government, rising in his place in the Legislature and frankly admitting that it had miserably failed to accomplish its purpose. In other words he admitted that the contentment of those who opposed the passage of the act in 1908 was right while the government was wrong. This plain English expresses the situation today.

The government claims to have passed the old act in order to fulfil a pledge to place the control of the highways in the hands of the municipal councils. In that respect the act had merit which does not seem to attach to the measure brought down

in the House by the Chief Commissioner on Friday. The county councillors evidently failed to make good and the principle object of the new act is to take the control of the highways out of their hands. In 1908, according to the oracles of the present government, it was of the utmost importance that the administration of the highways should be as close to the people as possible. Today according to the same high authority it is equally important that the road work should be performed under the supervision of officials appointed by the government and that the county councillors should have absolutely nothing to do with it. If consistency is a jewel, the Flemming government in the matter of highway legislation is a veritable diamond mine.

The local government has decided to increase the fee for resident hunting licenses from two to three dollars. No genuine sportsman will object to the increase, although as an offset the Government might very well have abolished the license fee for hunting deer. In view of the fact that non-residents are required to pay fifty dollars for a license to hunt big game a charge of three dollars cannot be regarded as an excessive tax on a resident for the same privilege. Under the wise laws enacted by the old government and continued by the present administration the big game of the province has become a most valuable asset.

Shortly after the present local government took office legislation was enacted dividing the province into four game districts each under a chief warden. Now we have the admission by the government that the system was a dead failure and is to be done away with. The four chief wardens are to be fired and their duties are to be taken over by one man. This was the system which prevailed under the old government and it worked satisfactorily. If a good, live man is appointed there is no reason why it will not work well under the present government.

When the proposal was made in the legislature at the time the Judicature Act was introduced to create an additional judgeship, Mr. J. D. Hazen, then leader of the opposition, rather threw cold water on the idea. He regarded it as a little scheme to create a soft berth for a lawyer friend of the government. His opinion of the bill introduced in the House last week by Attorney General Grimmer has not yet been recorded.

Black fox ranching having made a hit on Prince Edward Island, the Flemming government has decided that the beaver must have a show as a range proposition. In future permits to trap live beaver may be obtained at the low price of two dollars each. As the government is badly in need of revenue it should claim a royalty on beaver raised in captivity.

If Fredericton is going to expand, provision must be made for it by opening up new streets and by extending the water and sewerage systems. This is a problem which should be earnestly grappled with by the new city council. The parties who own blocks of vacant land within the city limits will no doubt heartily co-operate with the city council in the work of street extension.

Dr. Price, M.P.P. for Moncton, who is a most important member of the Legislature is his own estimation, handed out some bouquets to the I.C.R. board of management in his speech on Friday. As a Tory patronage dispenser the doctor has no doubt had considerable experience with the board and finds it difficult to carry out his pre-election promises.

The Flemming Government is now engaged in the noble task of wiping from the statute books its own bad legislation. The Highway Act is to be killed and the four chief game wardens are to be fired and one man appointed in their places.

Attorney General Grimmer appears to be several laps ahead of Mr. O.S. Crockett, M. P., in the race for the judgeship soon to be created.

Many people would like to hear an explanation from the members of the Flemming government as to why an additional Supreme Court judge is necessary.

The situation at Ottawa is becoming acute, and it looks as if dissolution of Parliament cannot be much longer delayed. The Tories on Saturday made two attempts to apply the gag, but found the Liberals prepared for them. Hon. Dr. Pugsley, one of the ablest parliamentarians in Canada, led the Liberal forces and after a fierce struggle completely frustrated the brazen attempt of the Tories to stifle free speech. Shortly before midnight Premier Borden moved the adjournment of the House.

The absence of an effective opposition in the Legislature has served a good purpose. It has given the Flemming government an opportunity to repeal some of the bad legislation it enacted during its first year in office.

It seems to be generally understood that Attorney General Grimmer will go to the Supreme Court bench and that Hon. George J. Clarke will enter the provincial cabinet as Attorney General.

After marking time for four weeks the government is now railroading some important legislation through the House.

The Leopard cannot change its spots but the Flemming government can change its policy.

LOOKS LIKE FRAME-UP

BY U. S. PAPER MEN

Montreal, March 12—Mr. J.H.A. Acer of the Laurentide Company ridiculed the contentions of the United States paper men that this country had organized pulp and paper companies capitalized at over \$152,000,000 during the past two or three years. Mr. Acer tore the list to pieces.

"One company located in Montreal, and capitalized at \$4,000,000, according to the United States reports is unknown here. Another Montreal company mentioned is not in the pulp and paper business at all, but in the house furnishing business. A Toronto company put on in the list is not in the business at all. The whole thing looks like a 'frame up' on the part of the United States paper men, in an effort to influence legislation."

One New Brunswick mill put down as organized last year has been in business a decade. It's a political trick on the part of the United States paper-men.

The Association of Iron Moulders of Ailao, Scotland, and district, has obtained an advance of 25 cents a week which brings the standard wage up to 18 cents an hour.

1912—Rear Admiral George Melville, famous Arctic explorer, died in Philadelphia. Born in New York, Jan. 10, 1841.

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