

PUGSLEY RIDDLES CROCKET'S CHARGES

Has no Difficulty Whatever in Showing the Absurdity of Mr. Crocket's Criticism Regarding the Purchase of Richibucto Wharf.

(Continued.)

The following is the concluding portion of Hon. Dr. Pugsley's slashing criticism of Mr. O. S. Crocket's little efforts to teach him the way he should carry out the duties of minister of Public Works.

"The hon. gentleman has omitted one important fact, and that is that I had no knowledge and the evidence does not show that I had any knowledge, and I affirm before this house that Mr. Murray had bought this property from Richard O'Leary. I had no knowledge whatever upon the subject, there was nothing in the report, there was nothing in anything that had taken place, to indicate but that Mr. Murray had been for a considerable time the owner of this property. Therefore when I saw this report making no mention of any recent transfer, I took it for granted that Mr. Murray had been the owner of the property for a number of years

THAT TELEGRAM.

Now upon these reports being submitted to me, the recommendation was made to council that this property should be purchased, the chief engineer stating that in his opinion the price was a fair and reasonable price. It appears that some time in September, Mr. Murray sent a telegram to Mr. Valiquet. Mr. Valiquet was not the chief engineer. It may be that Mr. Lafleur was away at that time, I think possibly he was ill during the summer of 1908. However, Mr. Murray sent a telegram to Mr. Valiquet asking as to closing up the property, and saying it was important for Leblanc, meaning the gentleman who was running in the county of Kent in the interest of the government.

POSERS FOR CROCKET

Now the hon. gentleman seems to think that telegram material, because he says that telegram forges the last link in the chain of evidence which connects the Minister of Public Works with this transaction; with all the dramatic effect which my hon. friend can show he declares that this is forging the last link in that chain. Well Mr. Speaker, in considering whether that is so or not, is it not important to ascertain whether I ever saw that telegram? It is not important to know whether it was ever brought to my notice? The evidence does not show that it was, and I declare that it was not. I never knew that Mr. Murray had sent that telegram to Mr. Valiquet. Mr. Valiquet does not appear to have thought it his duty to bring it to my notice. Business was going on in the usual way, it was not brought to my notice, and I never knew, and I do not suppose the deputy minister of my department knew, of that telegram until in the usual way we returned it to the committee of public accounts with a record of this whole transaction, because we had nothing whatever to conceal with regard to it, and we wished the committee to have all the facts as quickly as possible. But the hon. gentleman says that shows that Mr. Murray wanted this money for campaign purposes in order to assist Mr. Leblanc; and I suppose he would go further and intimate that Mr. Murray wanted Mr. Valiquet to know that he needed the money for campaign purposes. Is not that the inference to be drawn from the language of the hon. gentleman? Now, does he think that Mr. Murray wanted that money for campaign purposes, and I, as minister of the department was willing to assist him in getting that money for campaign purposes does he not think that Mr. Murray would have wired me or seen me instead of wiring an official of my department? What does the hon. gentleman think of that?

Mr. Crocket—No, I do not think so. Mr. Pugsley—No? The hon. gentleman think that Mr. Murray, wanting this matter put through, wanting to get the money for campaign purposes wanting to help Mr. Leblanc, would send a telegram to an official of my department and convey to him that meaning, that he wanted this money for campaign purposes, and that he would not communicate at all with the minister and try and get him to hurry the matter along? Well, I thank the hon. gentleman for his suggestion that Mr. Murray would not dare to send such a telegram to me, but that he would send it to one of the prominent officials of my department. Now is that not open to this other interpretation, that in view of the election coming on, it would be of interest to the people of Richibucto to know that they would be likely to get in the near future the improved terminal facilities which the purchase of this wharf would afford? Hon. gentlemen know that when votes are taken for public buildings they are anxious that as soon as reasonably, the sites of those buildings may be acquired, and why? In order that people may know that their expecta-

tions with regard to public improvements are likely to be fulfilled in the not distant future. And so it may well be that in that telegram which Mr. Murray sent to Mr. Valiquet, he wants him to understand that the people of Richibucto were anxious to know as to whether the government was bona fide going on with the purchase of this property for which provision had been made in the estimates in the year 1907-8. That, I think, is a fair and reasonable inference to be drawn from the telegram which Mr. Murray sent to Mr. Valiquet, am not very extraordinary inference which the hon. gentleman sought to draw from that telegram. At all events, it is important to bear in mind that there is no evidence whatever given before the committee which would tend to show that I ever had any knowledge of the sending of that telegram from Mr. Murray to Mr. Valiquet.

Now, then, the purchase is completed. The hon. gentleman says there another strong link, and it is that the minister of public works recommended that W. D. Carter should be appointed agent to the justice department, and what is the suggestion of the hon. gentleman with regard to that? So that he would know when the cheque came forward, and I suppose he would be able to get his hands on the money and use it for campaign purposes. Well, in determining as to the weight which should be given to that insinuation of the hon. gentleman, it is important to bear one thing in mind. They had Mr. Carter on the witness stand and they had an opportunity of examining him, brought here by themselves a their witness, but he does not appear to have handled a single dollar or the proceeds of the cheque which was sent in payment of this property.

CROCKET'S DISTORTED IMAGINATION.

There is another thing that I think you might very well bear in mind and that is that Mr. Carter is one of the most prominent lawyers Richibucto. He is, and has been for years the friend of the government and he is the one man to be found in that place who would naturally selected for the purpose of completing the transfer of this property. He acts as the agent of the justice department, and was not he, of all men the one person who would properly be selected for the purpose of seeing that the title was all right and that the government was getting what it was paying for? Yet, sir, the hon. gentleman, with his distorted imagination, with—if, I were outside of this house I would say—his inexcusable desire to do wrong and injustice to a political opponent, seek to put away all that circumstance and seeks to show that if Mr. Carter was selected as agent of the minister of justice to perform the legal business in connection with this case it was done from some motive in order that Mr. Carter might get a part of the proceeds of this cheque, and use these proceeds for the purpose of assisting his friend, Mr. Leblanc, the election. The hon. gentleman makes that insinuation without a shadow of evidence to sustain him in so doing. I am no more surprised at that act on the part of the hon. gentleman than I am at the greater portion of his conduct all through this inquiry and all through his participation in this case now before this house. As I say, the transaction was completed by the justice department. The evidence shows that I had nothing to do with it, that after I had sent my recommendation to council I had nothing further to do with it that I did not know how the transaction was completed or how this money was paid. But later on, I think in the month of December, I wrote a letter to Mr. O'Leary, the letter which my hon. friend has referred to. I wrote to Mr. O'Leary because my hon. friend the member for Kent, New Brunswick, came to me and told me that he had heard some criticism of the payment which had been made for this property, and felt it to be my duty, in consequence of the representations made to me, to look into the matter. Who was the first man to whom I ought to apply? It was Mr. Richard O'Leary the man, who I had been informed had owned this property. I wrote to Mr. O'Leary a letter. It had been marked "confidential" but when before public accounts committee, he said he had received a confidential letter from me to which he had sent, not the reply which he produced before the committee containing this false statement to which I have already invited your attention, but the reply which you will find upon the page to which I have alluded. I wrote Mr. O'Leary a confidential letter, and I said at once that I had no objection

to the letter going in evidence. Although it was confidential, I felt it was right that the committee should have the benefit of it, and it was read at my request. It is as follows, and it appears at page 44 of the evidence:

"Office of the Minister of Public Works of Canada:

Ottawa, 2nd Dec., 1908.

"Confidential.

"Dear O'Leary: My department has recently purchased from Mr. Thomas Murray a wharf property at Richibucto known as the "Sawdust wharf." It contains a frontage of 570 feet, and joins the municipal wharf. I purchased this with a view of making necessary improvements for the accommodation of vessels at Richibucto, and did it upon the report of Mr. Stead, the resident engineer, who stated that the price asked, namely \$5,000, was fair and reasonable, and that the wharf could not be built now for several times the amount asked; also that it contains about a million cubic feet of cribwork, slabs and mill refuse, ballast and gravel. He says 'classing this all as filling,' new cribwork faces being required—it would cost about 1½ cents per cubic foot or \$15,000—three times the price asked for the property.

"I have learned within a few days that this property was formerly owned by you, and have also been informed, whether reliable or not I do not know, that the value placed upon it by Mr. Stead is excessive. Before proceeding to improve the property, I should like to get as full information as possible with regard to its value, and worth, and would be obliged if you, as the former owner, would give me your opinion as to Mr. Stead's valuation.

(Sgd.) WM. PUGSLEY,
'Richard O'Leary, Esq.,
Richibucto, N. B."

Now, is that not important from two standpoints? Is it not important, first, from the standpoint that I, up to that moment, or a few days before, I wrote that letter to Mr. O'Leary, had no knowledge that Mr. Murray had bought this property from him. If I had other people would have known it I had just learned a few days before that he was the former owner of this property and what position would it have placed me in if Mr. O'Leary, a very strong political opponent and the strong political opponent of my hon. friend who so worthily represents the county, had been able to produce evidence that the minister knew that he was the owner of this property and that he had sold it to Mr. Murray? Taking into consideration the fact that he was a political opponent and that only a few days before I wrote that letter to Mr. O'Leary I had no idea whatever that he had been the owner of this property and had sold it to Mr. Murray. I ask you whether you think I would have written that letter to Mr. O'Leary. But, it is important for another reason; it shows that I wanted to get the fullest information upon this subject and I went to the one man who above all others thought would be able to give me accurate information in regard to it. Well, Mr. O'Leary proposed to furnish a copy of a letter which he did not write to me at all.

Mr. R. L. Borden—Would the minister have any objection to stating from whom he had learned that O'Leary owned the property, from whom he had learned that the price was excessive?

LEBLANC'S OPINION

Mr. Pugsley—From Mr. LeBlanc, the member for Kent. Mr. LeBlanc thought it was excessive and told me that he had understood that Mr. O'Leary had bought it for a considerably smaller sum and that his profit was larger than it ought to be. That was the criticism of Kent County as my hon. friend told me. Later on my hon. friend from Kent told me that when he made the statement to me he was under the impression that we had only bought a very small piece of this property, and that he had spoken of the price being excessive because he believed that that was the case. When he learned afterwards that we had bought the whole property he thought that we had given a fair and reasonable price for it.

Now, I may say to you, Mr. Speaker, that I and the chief engineer of my department had relied upon the report of Mr. Stead. I had made up my mind that if Mr. Stead had not acted in good faith, if he had not exercised good judgment, but had acted from any improper motive, and by collusion with the vendor, it would be not only my duty to dismiss him from the department, but it would be my duty to take steps on behalf of the crown to recover back the money which had been paid for this property and to have the transfer of it cancelled and set aside. That is what I had made up my mind to do in the discharge of my public duty and upon the 13th January I wrote Mr. Stead. My hon. friend says that the letter of the 13th January is conclusive evidence that the whole thing is a fraud, and that I was a party to it from the beginning.

STEAD'S POSITION

I would appeal to all fair-minded men on both sides of this House and I would ask if the hon. gentleman is warranted in making that statement? Bear in mind that it was my duty to hear all that he had to say. Surely I would not be acting in the fair discharge of my duty, if I did not give him an opportunity to vindicate himself if he could. Surely I would not, in order to save myself from criticism, in order to prevent

—shall I say a narrow-minded, bigoted and prejudiced man—a man actuated by partizanship, from criticising my action in this matter to do an injustice to a public official.

Would I have been acting the part of a man if I had discharged this official, who for years had so far as I know worthily and honorably, and faithfully discharged his duties as an employee of the public works department under my predecessors and under myself? No, I do not think that would be a manly part for me to take and I determined I would give him an opportunity to justify himself if he could, and to show that he had exercised his best judgment in regard to this property. Accordingly, when he saw me in St. John during the Christmas season, having come there to see his family and expecting to speak to me about different matters connected with the department, seeing me for a second when I could not give him the opportunity of an interview, I told him I would write him—not telling him what the contents of the letter would be—and this is another matter which the hon. gentleman concealed from the House; that Mr. Stead says that although he was surprised at the contents because it was not what he was expecting to receive. In pursuance of what I had said I wrote him on the 13th of January, 1909, as follows:

January 13, 1909.
"Dear Sir—It has recently been brought to my notice that the wharf property at Richibucto purchased by my department for the sum of \$5,000 had been acquired by the then owner for a very much less amount."

At that time I had a letter from Mr. O'Leary in my possession informing me he had sold the property and the price at which he had sold it and I proceeded to say:

"As the price which he paid for the property would under ordinary circumstances be regarded as a fair criterion of its value I should like you to furnish me with all information which you had regarding the property and its value, when you reported that the price of \$5,000 was fair and reasonable.

"I would also remind you that in your report to the department you made no reference to any previous transfers. This is information which should be in the possession of the department, because it might, as you can readily understand, influence the judgment of the officials as well as that of the minister in determining upon the purchase. In the future, you will please keep in mind, and report all previous transfers, together with the consideration, made within two or three years previous to your report, and also all other facts which might in any way afford information to the department as to the reasonableness of the price asked.

"I am yours very truly
(Sgd.) WM. PUGSLEY."

Now Mr. Speaker, I appeal to you and I appeal to the members of this House as to whether, never having known, as I did not know until I had heard it from Mr. LeBlanc in the month of December, and had it confirmed by the letter which Mr. O'Leary wrote, learning that Mr. Murray had bought this property from Mr. O'Leary for a very small sum and that the resident engineer—the man in whose judgment we had to trust because a minister must give trust to his officials throughout this country—knowing that the resident engineer had made a report that this property had a fair value of \$5,000, I ask you, Sir, whether or not it was a reasonable and proper thing that I should write to Mr. Stead that letter of the 13th of January? Is there any man in this House who will say I did anything but what was right and fair and proper and just to an employee of my department in writing that letter?

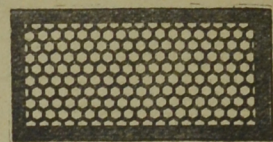
WHY DIDN'T HE READ IT?

If my hon. friend from York had been animated by a desire to give to this House all the facts of this case, would he not have felt it to be his duty to have read the answer which Mr. Stead, by way of vindication, made to my letter of the 13th of January? It seems to me so. What does Mr. Stead say? He gives full information in regard to the area of this property; shows its advantageous situation; speaks particularly of the fact that it immediately adjoins the railway wharf and affords the only opportunity which exists in Richibucto for the extension of the railway along the water front. He also refers to arbitration proceedings, and mentions the case of the Shives property at Campbellton, which had been bought for \$1,700, and afterwards expropriated by the government and an award of \$35,000. I happened in that case to be counsel for Mr. Shives; and this Mr. Day, whose name was mentioned by Mr. O'Leary, who was an appointee of the Conservative government and who told him, as O'Leary swears, that he could not sell his property to the Liberal government, had valued that property at \$5,000, and afterwards in the arbitration proceedings swore that the full value of the property was \$5,000, while the department, on the advice of Mr. Shewen, offered Mr. Shives \$8,000 for the property. I advised Mr. Shives not to take it. I said that the fact that he had bought it for \$1,700 was no criterion of its value, that the judge of the exchequer court would look to the future prospects of business from the wharf, and would fix the valuation accordingly. The matter was referred to the exchequer court and the late Mr. Justice Burbridge appointed as arbitrators: Mr. Wm. H. Thorne, who

(Continued on page three)

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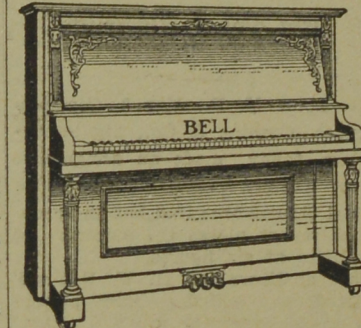
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Together with all and singular the buildings and improvements thereon and the privileges and appurtenances to the said premises belonging, or in any way appertaining, together with the Indenture of Lease relating to the same and all benefit and advantages thereunder. Dated this thirty-first day of March A. D. 1910.
(Signed) E. S. RANNEY MURRAY
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A. J. GREGORY, ESQ.,
Solicitor for Mortgagee.

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