

Minister of Public Works Replies to O. S. Crockett

A Crushing Rejoinder to the Insinuations Thrown Out by the Windy Member for York--The Real Facts in Connection with the "Saw-dust" Wharf Transaction--Government Received Value for Every Dollar Expended--Mr. O'Leary as a Letter Writer.

In the House of Commons on April 1, after Mr. Carvell finished his speech and J. D. Reid, Mr. Carvell Dr. Pugsley, Dr. Sproule, Mr. Talbot and others had indulged in some cross-firing on the subject in hand, the Richibucto wharf, Dr. Pugsley spoke on the Crockett amendment, as follows:

(Hansard.)

Mr. Pugsley--As the amendment moved by the hon. member for York (Mr. Crockett) not only seeks to attack the judgment of the engineering branch of my department in connection with the purchase of this wharf at Richibucto, but also goes further, and asks this House to declare that that was a corrupt and fraudulent transaction, I think it becomes advisable that I should address some observations to the house before hon. gentlemen are called upon to vote upon this motion of want of confidence in the government. Now I desire to say, first of all, that if any hon. gentleman will take the trouble to read carefully the evidence which was given before the committee on public accounts he cannot help being struck with the evident desire and determination upon the part of the hon. member for York to give this house only a part of the case, and to withhold evidence which was, and which is of a most material character. I desire just for a moment to call attention to one striking fact in the remarks of the hon. gentleman, which afford a key to his whole conduct in the discussion of this question. The hon. gentleman stated that when an application was presented to my department by the Kent Northern Railway Company in the month of May, 1908, for additional wharf accommodation at Richibucto, immediately on receipt of that request I sent an order to the chief engineer of the department that an examination and report should be made without delay. Those are the words of the hon. gentleman, that "an examination and report should be made without delay," thus seeking to convey the impression to this house that I lost not a moment in having this report made, that I was particular to give the unusual direction to the chief engineer to have report made without delay. Now, in order that there may be no mistake in that regard I will call the attention of the house to the language of the hon. gentleman. It will be found on page 7780 of the Hansard:

"No mention then of the report of the 10th of March, what it seems to me would necessarily have been cognizant of the plans of Geo. W. Robertson and Thos. O. Murray. On that very day he issues an instruction to the chief engineer to have a report procured upon the matter of this letter without delay."

CROCKETT'S MISREPRESENTATION.

And the hon. gentleman emphasizes that. Now, when I call your attention to the fact that the order which I gave to the chief engineer was the order which is usually given the order which is almost universally given for making a report, simply instructing the engineer to have an examination and report made upon the property, not using at all the words "without delay," giving no directions to the chief engineer as to when he should have the report made giving no directions that an unusual hurry should be exercised, when you find that the hon. gentleman has used these words, supposing, I presume, they would escape the notice of the House, when they are not contained in the order. I think you will be able to form some idea of the desire which the hon. gentleman has had with reference to the information which he should give to this house to enable the house to determine how they should vote upon this question. In addition to making that erroneous statement, the hon. gentleman all through his remarks is careful only to give a portion of the evidence that was submitted to the committee. For instance, I happen to have in mind one striking fact. The hon. gentleman in referring to the negotiations which had taken place during the present year with the Messrs. Loggie for the purchase of this property, and to the proposition submitted by my department offering to them a portion of the property, they declined, he says that Mr. Loggie stated that if we sold to him all the property except 200 feet, it would entirely defeat the plan which the department had in view for establishing terminal facilities at the port of Richibucto. The hon. gentleman was careful not to refer to a further part of Mr. Loggie's evidence in which, although he said that he was acting on business principles, not having regard to the interest of the department, but rather to the interest of his firm

a little later on, and the hon. gentleman must have been aware of this when the question was put to Mr. Loggie he stated that he could not say that it would at all interfere with the plans of the department because, reserving as they did 200 feet, it would give them a large frontage on the Richibucto river in connection with the railway terminals of the Kent Northern Railway. I might go on and call attention to other portions of the evidence in which the hon. gentleman has, I will not say wilfully, Mr. Speaker, I would rather be charitable, and I would say with an ignorance of the duty which the hon. gentleman owes to the members of this house to give them full information, the hon. gentleman has failed to discharge that duty which, as a representative, he owes to the members of this house and to the people of this country.

THE FACTS AGAINST CROCKETT

Now what further? The hon. gentleman said that if so and so is the case, if it is true that Mr. Murray and Mr. Robertson came to Ottawa and consulted with me with regard to the purchase of this property the minister of public works will be implicated as the originator of this transaction. But, Sir, unfortunately for the hon. gentleman, there is such evidence as that; unfortunately for the position taken and the charges made by the hon. gentleman, there is no evidence that either Mr. Murray or Mr. Robertson spoke to me one single word with respect to this Richibucto wharf when they visited Ottawa. On the contrary, there is the sworn testimony of Mr. Murray, the hon. gentleman did not choose to ask the committee to send for Mr. Robertson. He may say that Mr. Robertson is in a distant part of the country, but if he had applied to the committee the committee would not doubt have ordered his production, here as a witness, the same as the committee ordered the production of every witness whose name was given to the chairman by my hon. friend. But Mr. Thomas Murray swore that when he and Mr. Robertson visited Ottawa, the subject of the purchase of this wharf was never mooted between himself and myself, or between Mr. Robertson and myself in his presence; and yet, although I affirmed it to the committee, and although he knew that a charge of that kind would necessarily involve my honor as a member of this house, as a member of this government and as minister of public works, the hon. gentleman had not the manliness to ask me whether I spoke of this wharf transaction when these gentlemen were in Ottawa. But, Mr. Speaker, in face of his omitting to do what every honorable man would feel it to be his duty to do in the discharge of the fair obligation which one man owes to his fellowman, in face of his neglecting to do that, in face of the positive evidence of Mr. Murray that we said not one word with reference to this wharf transaction when he was in Ottawa, the hon. gentleman asked this house to believe that Mr. Murray and Mr. Robertson came to Ottawa and advised with me, to go back and buy this wharf property for \$700 in the expectation that they would sell it to the government for the sum of \$5,000.

RECKLESS AND VILLAINOUS

Sir, could a more heinous charge be made against a public man than is insinuated by the hon. gentleman--did I say "made"?--no; the hon. gentleman has not the courage to make a charge like that upon the floor of the house. He has been here long enough to know that if he made a charge of that kind and failed to prove it he would be placing in jeopardy his seat in the house, and that would be meted out to him the punishment which should be meted out to every man who without good reasons make a reckless and villainous charge against a fellow member of this parliament.

The hon. gentleman has not had the courage to make a charge which would involve upon him the serious consequences which a member of this should suffer if he makes a charge which he cannot substantiate. Now Sir, I declare to this house that the evidence of Mr. Murray is absolute truth: that when he and Mr. Robertson visited Ottawa the subject of this Richibucto wharf was not mentioned between us, was never referred to in any conversation which we had while they were at Ottawa.

HOT SHOT FOR O'LEARY.

The hon. gentleman (Mr. Crockett) has not ventured to say that he would question any statement would make, but he says that he would not believe the statement of Mr. Murray, and that he would rather

take the evidence of Mr. O'Leary than the evidence of Mr. Murray. Well Mr. O'Leary cannot tell what took place at Ottawa and Mr. Murray would know whether he had a conversation with me or not, and whether he received any advice or instruction or not, and Mr. Murray swore positively that he had no conversation with me on the subject of the purchase of this wharf property. An if it were to become a question as to who was telling the truth as to what took place in Richibucto--in regard to which I am in no way concerned, with regard to which the chief engineer of my department is in no way concerned--with regard to which the deputy minister of my department is in no way concerned--but if I were called upon to determine what has taken place in this case as to which of these two men is entitled to the greatest credence, I would say that I would infinitely prefer--and the members of this house have read the evidence carefully would infinitely prefer--to give credence to the evidence of Thomas O. Murray rather than to the evidence of Mr. Richard O'Leary. And, I will tell you why Mr. Richard O'Leary came here determined if he could to make out a case against my department and against me--I say that advisedly--and he showed a willingness to swear to anything which would tend to the accomplishment of that end. Let me show the house the grounds upon which I make that statement. To begin with, Richard O'Leary swore that I wrote him a letter in the fall of 1908, which I did, and which shall invite the attention of the house to, as the hon. member (Mr. Crockett) has not chosen to do so. Mr. O'Leary swore that he wrote me a reply and he produced what purported to be a copy of the reply he had sent me.

DELIBERATE

I cannot but think that Mr. O'Leary deliberately intended to make the committee believe that he had sent a copy of that letter to me. It was a confidential letter. He supposed I had not kept a copy of it, and he came here before that committee intending to make the committee believe that Mr. Murray represented himself as being an agent of the department. Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, I had the letter which I had received from O'Leary, and I produced it and you will find it on page 46 of the evidence, but you will find no statement in it that Mr. Murray represented that he was acting as agent of the department. That letter which I received is a letter entirely different in character from the letter Mr. O'Leary said he sent me so far as that most important fact is concerned. I say, Sir, that that incident stamps Mr. O'Leary as being a man upon whose evidence but little reliance can be placed. But what further is the position which Mr. O'Leary occupied as a witness?

When seeking to depreciate the value not only of this property but of all property in the town of Richibucto he went so far as to declare that the wharf property occupied by himself and which had cost him \$1,580 was only worth \$2,000. Before the committee he pledged his solemn oath that he was willing to take \$2,000 for that property. And, the hon. member for York said: Oh, could any one for a moment think he would think he was willing to sell it for \$2,000? Well, I would say probably not in the light of the other testimony we had from Mr. O'Leary. But assuming that Mr. O'Leary was a truthful man upon whose evidence reliance could be placed one had a right to believe he would sell that property for \$2,000. Well, Messrs. Loggie saw in the newspapers that he had made that sworn statement before the committee and they being willing, nay, they being anxious to secure a good property at a low price they at once telegraphed to Mr. Carvell asking him to offer Mr. O'Leary, if necessary, \$2,500 for the property which he swore he would sell for \$2,000.

WENT BACK ON HIS OATH

But when Mr. O'Leary found that there were people who were willing to buy, he at once went back on his oath and said he was not willing to sell the property for either \$2,000 or \$2,500. Mr. O'Leary, in order to influence the committee in respect to the value of the property which the department had bought, deliberately swears that a property which the evidence showed to be well worth \$8,000 is worth only some \$2,000; and yet although he had sworn he would do so, when a purchaser presents himself, he would not consent to sell it for that amount or even for \$2,500. What further have we as tending to discredit the evidence of Mr. O'Leary?

He went further and said; "This property is absolutely without value; I held it for years, it was of no value to me, and I offered the whole property to Mr. Waterbury, the agent of the department, a few years ago for the sum of \$1,000."

If we had not the documents to disprove Mr. O'Leary's statement, we would have been placed in this position, that the department had bought at a larger price a property which a few years ago had been offered to it for the sum of \$1,000. In the face of what I am going to tell this house we cannot believe that Mr. O'Leary had forgotten what had taken place. We cannot believe that he, having offered only a small part of this property for \$1,000 was telling what he believed to be true when he said that he had offered the whole property for \$1,000.

But that was the statement he deliberately made in the committee evidently believing that the other had not been put in writing, and that we would not be able to produce any documentary evidence to show that he made a statement to the committee which he knew to be untrue. After that statement was made, I sent for Mr. Waterbury who is the superintendent of buildings in New Brunswick for the department of public works, a man who is very careful in the way he looks after the business of the government and asked him if he had not some document to show what had taken place between him and Mr. O'Leary at that time.

AN IMPORTANT LETTER.

Although it was four or five years ago, he was able to produce a letter written by Mr. O'Leary at that time. His evidence was that Mr. O'Leary having told him what he would sell a portion of this property for, he had asked Mr. O'Leary to put the proposition in writing, and he produced a letter containing Mr. O'Leary's proposition, which he said was the only proposition Mr. O'Leary had made to him.

O'LEARY NAILED

He made a second offer of another small piece for \$500, which was based on a valuation of \$10,000 for the entire property; and he made a third offer of a smaller piece still, which was based on a valuation of \$20,000 for the entire property.

When we had on the stand a glib witness like Mr. O'Leary, who is one of the strongest partisans in the province of New Brunswick, and when we found him deliberately swearing that he had offered the whole of that property to the government for the paltry sum of \$1,000, was it not a fortunate thing that we were able to face him with his own letter, in which he made the proposition to sell a small piece at the rate of \$20,000 for the whole, a larger piece at the rate of \$10,000 for the whole, and a still larger and less valuable piece at the rate of \$3,000 for the whole; Having been able to confront Mr. O'Leary with this documentary evidence, I repeat with all confidence the statement I made a short time ago, that I for one would infinitely prefer to take the evidence of Mr. Thomas O. Murray to the evidence of Mr. Richard O'Leary. I think it is important that Mr. Murray has made this statement--and his evidence was in no way contradicted or discredited--that no communication either verbal or written ever took place between him and myself before the report was made upon this property, and which was made in consequence of an application submitted to my department in the regular way.

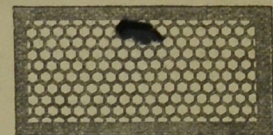
Having made these preliminary observations, let me just state briefly what took place, so far as my department was concerned, and so far as I as minister of public works was concerned. Early in the spring of 1908 I was urged to purchase what was known as the municipal wharf in Richibucto. That matter had been pending before my department for some two or three years. After I became minister, I freely confess, I became impressed with the desirability of doing what would be reasonably necessary in order to give improvements to the harbor of Richibucto, as I had been doing in respect to a great many harbors all over Canada. It is part of my business as minister of public works to encourage the transportation interests of this country so far as they concern our rivers, lakes and harbors. Therefore, I felt it my duty to give respectful attention to the representations made to me on behalf of the very important town of Richibucto.

I decided to do there what I am doing in all other parts of this country, that is, seeking to improve the transportation facilities for the people. Later on in the spring, in the month of May, when it was urged upon me that this municipal wharf which we were buying had only a frontage of 150 feet, certainly not exceeding 200 feet, and that the railway track which was going down the wharf was such that it would be necessary to back a train down in order to get a car near the edge of the wharf, and that the end car would necessarily be at right angles to the face of the wharf, and knowing from my experience in the city of St. John and other places what a great inconvenience a track so located would be, so far as transferring freight from the railway to the vessels, and from the vessels to the railway, was concerned, I made up my mind that it would be desirable to have that wharf extended so that the railway track could be carried along the face of the wharf and made parallel to the vessels as they lay off the wharf.

(Continued on page three)

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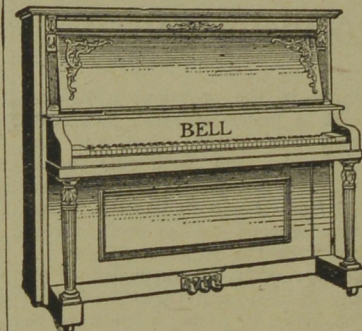
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NOTICE is hereby given that by virtue of a Power of sale contained in certain Indenture of Mortgage bearing date the twenty-sixth day of May in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety-nine, and made between the said Albert E. Everett, of the One Part, and me, the undersigned E. S. Ranney Murray of the City of Saint John in the County and County of Saint John, Millman, of the Other Part, registered in the City of Fredericton, on Saturday the Twenty-eighth day of MAY NEXT at the hour of twelve o'clock noon, the leasehold lands and premises described in the said Indenture of Mortgage as follows:--All that certain lot, piece or parcel of land situate, lying and being in Block Number Seventeen in the Town of Fredericton, and bounded as follows:--Beginning at the point of intersection of the South Western side of Brunswick Street with the North Western side of Westmorland Street in the City of Fredericton, thence from the said point running South Westerly along the North Western side of Westmorland Street aforesaid one hundred and thirteen (113) feet, thence at right angles North Westerly and parallel to Brunswick Street aforesaid one hundred and sixty-four (164) feet three (3) inches, thence North Easterly at right angles and parallel to Westmorland Street aforesaid one hundred and thirteen (113) feet to the South Western side of Brunswick Street aforesaid, and thence along the same South Easterly one hundred and sixty-four (164) feet three (3) inches to the place of beginning, containing one rood and twenty-seven perches more or less, and being part of Lots Number 263, 265 and 267 in said Block Seventeen Town of Fredericton (except as therein excepted).

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 of Mortgagee.

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By Order, NAPOLEON TESSIER, Secretary.

Department of Public Works, Ottawa, April 23rd, 1910.