

THE DAILY MAIL

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PROVINCIAL FINANCES

The people of New Brunswick will be glad to have it on the authority of Hon. Dr. Landry, provincial secretary treasurer, that the province is in a very healthy condition financially. They will also rejoice to learn that, thanks to the efforts of the heaven-born statesmen now in control of provincial affairs, the great war in which Europe has been plunged has not disturbed business conditions in this province. The great and wise men in the government have averted a business crisis and things are going along even better than before. Some skeptical persons may question Dr. Landry's bona fides as a Napoleon of finance and call for his credentials, but such a proceeding would be unfair to the doctor and unfair to the government of which he is such a distinguished ornament. It may be true that Dr. Landry's experience as a financier before entering the provincial government was limited to the working up of smallpox bills for the province and County of Kent to pay, but that is neither here nor there. Whatever Dr. Landry may have been in the past, he is now provincial secretary-treasurer of the Clarke government and is recognized by the graft press as an authority on provincial finances. With a gross debt of \$8,200,000, with the provincial credit pledged for an amount fully as large, with an annual expenditure of \$1,500,000, with a annual interest charge of \$350,000, we are given to understand by Dr. Landry in optimistic language, that every thing is lovely and that there is not the slightest need for any man to feel any concern in regard to the future of New Brunswick.

What Dr. Landry says may be all true but unfortunately for him, his views on provincial finances do not coincide with those of other eminent financiers of the same political faith, who have been members of the House in days gone by. For purposes of comparison, we invite the gentle reader to go back with us to the palmy days of 1886. The late Hon. A. G. Blair was then premier, while Mr. E. L. Wetmore, an eminent lawyer, who afterwards became chief justice of Saskatchewan, was leader of the opposition. In criticizing the budget of 1886, Mr. Wetmore was sorry to have to admit that step by step the province was approaching direct taxation.

"The indebtedness of \$1,000,652," he said, "imposed a tax this year of \$84,000 for interest."

As a remedy Mr. Wetmore advocated reducing the number of members of the House, dispensing with some of the sessions or shortening the term. In the interests of economy, he thought the portfolios of provincial secretary and chief commissioner of public works might be amalgamated. Mr. Wetmore moved a want of confidence motion declaring for the reforms which he had suggested. He complained of the excessive amounts paid for public printing and we find him reported as saying that "in connection with the amounts paid for printing was \$2,509.10 to Mr. J. H. Crockett, editor of a paper conducted in the interests of the government." No doubt Dr. Landry will recognize the name mentioned by Mr. Wetmore. He is still conducting a paper in the "interests of the government," and the issue of today will contain Dr. Landry's picture and proclaim him as the greatest financier that has been.

Beginning with the session of 1890, the late Dr. A. A. Stockton was financial critic of the then opposition in the House. The government was then spending less than \$700,000 a year and had a net debt of \$1,500,000, yet we find Dr. Stockton declaring that the province was "face to face with direct taxation" and advocating the strictest economy.

Mr. H. A. Powell, K.C., a gentleman who still holds a high place in the counsels of the Tory party, succeeded Dr. Stockton as financial critic of the opposition. In one of his speeches in reply to the budget we find him declaring that only the most drastic economy can save the province from bankruptcy. He strongly advocated biennial sessions of the Legislature, a reduction in the membership

and the amalgamation of portfolios. Mr. Powell at that time knew at least as much about provincial finances as Dr. Landry knows today.

Coming down to the year 1898, we find that our old friend, Mr. John Black, then M.P.P. for York, but now of the Yukon, was the financial critic of the opposition. Mr. Black's opinion on provincial finances should carry weight with every member of the present House and also with the official reporter. Speaking on the budget in 1898 we find Mr. Black complaining of a net debt of \$2,488,577 and an increase during the year of \$144,507. He said:

"That is an alarming increase. This sort of thing means something more serious to the farmers, something more prejudicial to their interests than can be offset by any temporary benefit to be derived from the wheat policy of the government. IT MEANS THAT THE DAY IS NOT FAR DISTANT WHEN THE FARMERS AND OTHER PEOPLE OF THIS PROVINCE WILL BE FACE TO FACE WITH DIRECT TAXATION. The legislation of this government," continued Mr. Black, "showed that they were driving home the wedge of taxation and laying their hands on everything available."

If provincial affairs were in the bad state pictured by Mr. Black in 1898, it is rather fortunate for the government that he is not the financial critic of the opposition today.

Mr. Black was succeeded as opposition critic by Mr. J. D. Hazen, now minister of marine and fisheries. In the budget debate of 1899 Mr. Hazen complained of an increase of \$144,000 in the public debt. He said:

"Now, sir, for a province whose revenue is circumscribed, in fact, is almost limited, it is not a pleasant thing to contemplate that year after year, although no great public expenditure is going on, we are adding to the bonded debt of the country a sum which averages \$100,000 a year."

Without desiring to question the sincerity of Mr. Hazen, it would be interesting to know what he thinks of an addition of \$700,000 to the public debt in one year by the present government and an average increase of \$300,000 a year.

Mr. Hazen was succeeded as financial critic of the opposition by one J. K. Flemming, a sanctimonious gentleman who, judging from the similarity of names, was a relative, perhaps a remote ancestor, of the arch hypocrite who was lately kicked out of the government because of his intimate connection with certain hoodluming transactions. Mr. Flemming held the job of financial critic from 1901 down to 1908, when the present government came into power. Session after session he pointed out that the province was on the verge of bankruptcy and direct taxation was inevitable. He repeated the old song year after year and finally the people, carried away by their lavish promises of retrenchment and reform, placed Mr. Hazen and his colleagues in control of affairs. They have been in office since 1908, a period of seven years. The solemn promises they made when in opposition were forgotten immediately after they were sworn in and are still forgotten. Instead of practising economy they have added \$600,000 a year to the controllable expenditure and increased the public debt by over two million dollars. The government has not only been reckless in its ex-

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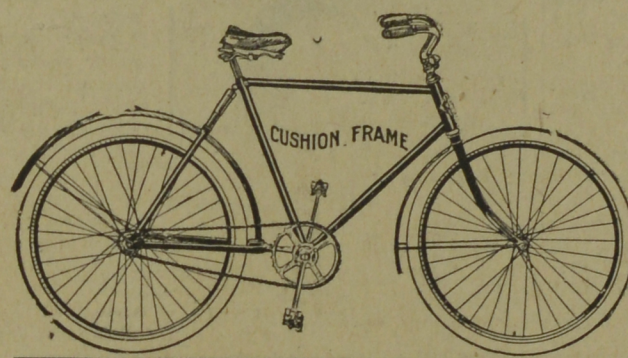
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Mr. A. H. Hannington, K.C., of St. John, is at the Barker.

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Big Delegation from St. John

(Continued from page eight.)

Tighe, F. Hyatt, James L. Shugrue, J. Kemp, H. Beck, H. Baynton, A. P. Saunders, John Breen, John O'Brien, A. V. Reid, M. J. Burns, H. H. Rouse, Chas. McGowan, H. Campbell, J. Toole, John Kemp, C. H. Stevens Jr., Fred Scurrah, John Willis, John Williamson, J. Sharpe, F. W. Daley, J. J. Davidson, F. Johnston, F. McFarlane, C. Gus Langbein, M. P. Donivan, A. N. Mercier, A. Ellison, J. Powers, W. Howard, George Kierstead, G. Montague, B. McLean, J. McGillivray, Walter Campbell.

This delegation wore white badges.

THE SPEAKERS.

Commissioner Potts was the chief speaker in support of the bill, taking the ground that the existing assessment act was unfair to the labouring man. Others who spoke in favor of the bill were Commissioner Russell, Commissioner Wigmore, C. H. Stevens, Colin Camp, Edward Hyatt, J. L. Sugrue, J. E. Tighe and Hugh Beck.

President J. A. Lively of the Board of Trade, spoke strongly against the bill, which, he said, would cause an annual deficit of \$80,000 in St. John if enacted. Mayor Frink, A. H. Hannington, K.C., and James Pender also spoke against the bill.