

THE DAILY MAIL

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Fredericton, N. B., April 27, 1915

THE POTATO SCANDAL

The more the local government's patriotic potato deal is probed into the worse it gets. There is not the slightest doubt in the world that this transaction could be thoroughly investigated by an impartial tribunal, the Fleming-Berry-Teed timber land steal would be put into the shade. Last fall when the government proposed to donate 100,000 bushels of potatoes to the Mother Country "for the use of the army and navy," its action was acclaimed by people of all shades of politics. They naturally supposed that the proposition would be handled on a business-like basis, and nobody ever dreamed that any of the government's supporters would be sordid enough to feather their nests in a matter of this kind, at the expense of the public treasury. The government felt, too, that as potatoes were an abundant crop it could pull out with a total expense of at least \$75,000 in connection with the transaction. There was no legislative authority to pay over the money so it was found necessary to raise the fund by a lieutenant governor's warrant and on the 2nd day of September last one was issued as follows:

SPECIAL WARRANT.

To the Honorable the Provincial Secretary of the Province of New Brunswick:

The lieutenant governor-in-council, having decided to make a contribution of one hundred thousand bushels of potatoes to the government of Great Britain at an estimated cost of seventy-five thousand dollars, (\$75,000), for the use of the army and navy as a token of the loyalty of the people of this province to the Motherland, and there being no legislative provision for the expenditure involved in such contribution and the same being urgently and immediately required for the public good, and an order-in-council having been made by the committee of the Executive Council pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 25, sub-section (b) Section 17, of the Acts of the Legislative Assembly 8 Edward VII, you are hereby authorized to issue the said sum of seventy-five thousand (\$75,000) dollars, so required as aforesaid, which said amount shall be placed by you to a special account against which a cheque or cheques may issue as required, for the payment of the amount required to defray the expenses of the purchase of the transportation of the said contribution, and for no other purpose whatever.

Dated this second day of September, A.D., 1914.

JOSIAH WOOD,
Lieutenant Governor.

Instead of inviting the co-operation of a committee of business men to handle the transaction of non-partisan lines, the government placed the whole matter in the hands of Mr. J. B. Daggett, the secretary of agriculture. They gave him a letter of credit to the Bank of Nova Scotia and told him to go ahead. Mr. Daggett's first act was to look up Mr. B. Franklin Smith, an old associate in the defunct Canada-West Indies Company, and let him in on the deal. Members of the government had previously estimated that the potatoes could be bought at thirty cents a bushel, which would have meant \$30,000 for the quantity required. This was a fair estimate and had ordinary business methods been employed would not have been exceeded. We do not know what instructions were given to Mr. Smith but we do know that according to the auditor general's report he was paid for 29,677 barrels of potatoes at \$1.10 per barrel, and 2,608 barrels at \$1.05 per barrel, a total of \$34,722.10. Potatoes were a bumper crop last year and it is but natural that other patriots supporting the government wanted to be let in on the deal, and the government was compelled to surrender unconditionally. The auditor's report shows that 8,567 barrels were bought from other parties, making a total of 40,253 barrels, but information which has since come to hand shows that that total was greatly exceeded. The result was that the government soon found itself with potatoes to burn, but it did not dispose of them in that way. Somebody suggested that a gift should be



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made to the suffering Belgians, and the government, always keen on borrowing other people's ideas, eagerly adopted the suggestion. By this time the appropriation of \$75,000 resembled the proverbial thirty cents, and the potatoes had got no farther than A. C. Smith & Co.'s warehouse at St. John West. Another raid on the treasury was decided upon and it was made in the following form:

SPECIAL WARRANT.

To the Honorable Provincial Secretary Treasurer of the Province of New Brunswick:

It having been found that grants made by the lieutenant governor-in-council on the 2nd day of September last, for the purpose of defraying the expense of, and transporting the gift of potatoes to Great Britain was insufficient for that purpose, and the province being required to make a contribution for the relief of the Belgian people, and it being estimated that a further grant of \$75,000 will be required for said purpose, and there being no legislative provision for the expenditure involved in said contributions and the same being urgently and immediately required for the public good, and an order-in-council having been made by the committee of the Executive Council pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 25, sub-section (b), Section 17 of the Acts of the Legislative Assembly 8 Edward VII, you are hereby authorized to issue the said sum of \$75,000 so required as aforesaid, which said amount shall be placed by you to a special account against which a cheque or cheques may be issued as required for payment of the said deficiency in paying the expenses of said gift of potatoes and the transportation thereof, and the balance to assist the Belgian people and for no other purposes whatever.

Dated the 27th day of October, A.D., 1914.

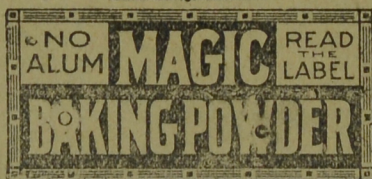
JOSIAH WOOD,
Lieutenant Governor.

This made a total of \$150,000 raised by means of lieutenant governor's warrants to pay for patriotic potatoes and the cost of packing and transportation to the Old Country. A. C. Smith & Co. of St. John, were paid \$12,072 for "barreling, coopering, culling and piling 41,242 bags and 19,118 barrels of potatoes at 20 cents each." A quick change artist seems to have handled the potatoes after they left the Smith warehouse, for when they were placed on board the steamer for shipment it was found that the number of bags had increased from 41,242 to 49,860 while the number of barrels had decreased from 19,118 to 10,310. On this quantity freight was paid from St. John to London to the tune of \$15,205.95. Mr. Daggett was given \$100 in pocket money and sent to England by the same steamer to superintend the delivery of the potatoes. The potatoes reached England in safety, but the auditor's report does not state what proportion of them were turned over for "the use of the army and navy."

So much for the patriotic potatoes. Now, what many people would like to know is, what disposition was made of the unpatriotic potatoes. The minister of agriculture admitted in the legislature a few days ago that some of them had been condemned after they had been paid for in part. Our information is that eighteen carloads failed to pass the inspector. This being so, what was done with them and how much was the province out on

the transaction. There is nothing in the auditor's report to show that any revenue was derived from them. We know that a small shipment from the surplus stock was made to the Belgians. We also know that after returning from the Old Country Mr. Daggett made a trip to Cuba, ostensibly for the purpose of looking out a market for potatoes. He travelled at the expense of the province and there is reason to believe that the only potatoes he was anxious to sell were those which he bought for patriotic purposes. How many he succeeded in disposing of, if any, has not yet been disclosed. It is known however, that some thousands of barrels, including culls, were hawked around St. John and that the government still has on hand a considerable quantity which might be worth about one-third of the cost price.

To put the matter in plain English, this potato transaction is nothing more than a scandal and is so regarded by every intelligent man familiar with the facts. Even members of the government and legislature smile and "wink the other eye" when the matter is mentioned to them. If they are not heartily ashamed of the whole transaction they certainly should be. A government which at a time when the nation is plunged into the greatest war of all history could not buy forty thousand barrels of potatoes without permitting scores of hungry grangers and hogs to get their snouts into the public trough, has no license to pose as a business-like administration. In Nova Scotia, where a Liberal government is in control of affairs, a cash gift of \$100,000 was made to the Mother Country and the people are to make good the amount by a special tax on real estate. From New Brunswick something like fifty thousand barrels of potatoes were sent across the Atlantic to the people of England and the Belgians, at a cost of nearly \$150,000 and the amount is to be added to the public debt of the province for future generations to pay. In view of the timber land scandal, the Valley Railway scandal, the patriotic potato scandal and the hundred and one other scandals, is it any wonder that the people of this province are heartily sick of the present government and view its every act with the gravest suspicion.



IMPORTANT LEGISLATION.

It is now thought that the legislature, which reassembles this evening, will prorogue on Friday or Saturday. The most important matter to be dealt with is Valley Railway legislation. The government would like to have work resumed this year but there are several problems to be solved, the most important of which is that the money voted for the purpose is tied up with the Prudential Trust Company. It is pretty well understood that Mr. Gould is to be eliminated. One of Mr. Gould's friends who has an inkling of the nature of the proposed legislation, is said to have described it as "highway robbery." Bills are still to be passed legalizing the patriotic potato gift and also the sums voted by various municipalities to the patriotic fund.

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Notice of Legislation

NOTICE is hereby given that a Bill will be presented to the Legislative Assembly at its present session to provide that the provisions of Section 34 of the City of Fredericton Assessment Act, 1907, shall not apply to the assessment of income of journeymen mechanics and laborers who work in the City of Fredericton, whose actual residence is in the County of York, outside of the city. This is the same Bill that was presented to the Legislature last session and was withdrawn.

Dated this Nineteenth Day of March A.D., 1915.
BY ORDER OF THE COUNCIL OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF YORK.
FRED ST. JOHN BLISS,
Secretary-Treasurer of York.

FOR SALE

FOR SALE—A driving horse, seven years old, in good condition, sound in every particular, good roader, not afraid of autos. Also carriage, road cart, pump, robe and harness. A great bargain. Terms cash. Apply to
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FOR SALE—A pure bred Tolstein bull, nine months old. Apply to
MRS. S. J. DARCUS,
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Mrs. James Tibbits and Miss Frances Tibbits, who have been spending the winter in Ottawa, with Mr. and Mrs. Archibald R. Tibbits, will return shortly to their home in Fredericton. Commodore Stewart, M.P.P., returned to the city by the I.C.R. train today.

For Farmers

A new Waterproof Shoe, Oil Tanned
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