

MR. CARVELL MAKES A MOTION.

And Discusses at Length Claims Of New Brunswick for Increased Federal Subsidy.

ALSO WANTS A SHARE OF THE HALIFAX FISHERIES AWARD.

Popular M. P. for Carleton Exerting His Energies at Ottawa for His Native Province.

(From H. ansard.)

In the House of Commons at Ottawa, Mr. F. B. Carvell, Carleton, N. B., moved:

For copies of all memoranda, papers, or documents submitted to the government of Canada on behalf of the several provinces of Canada, urging a readjustment of the provincial subsidies; together with any replies thereto; and all correspondence between the government of Canada, or any member thereof, and the governments of the several provinces, or any members thereof, relating to such readjustment.

He said: In moving this motion I presume that I am drawing the attention of the House to a subject which is not new either to it or the country. But it is one which is of great importance to the great body of the electors, especially from a provincial standpoint. It is a matter of common knowledge that when confederation was consummated in 1867, the revenues which the provinces derived from customs and excise were handed over to the Dominion authorities; and to compensate the provinces for the loss of these revenues it was agreed that a certain amount of money would be paid them. It is unnecessary in this discussion that I should attempt to state in detail the principles on which these amounts were based. At that time no doubt the fathers of confederation had the idea that the amount set aside for the provinces would be sufficient to meet the ordinary expenses of local government, taking into consideration the revenues which they could raise within their own borders. I think it is also fair to assume that the framers of confederation had no conception that Canada would make such strides in advance as it has within the last thirty-seven years. No one could have conceived then that the revenues from these different sources in thirty-seven years would have amounted to the magnificent sum they have now reached. But while the revenues have increased from a Dominion standpoint, they have not increased as regards the provinces. On the other hand while the provincial revenues have not increased, unfortunately their expenditure have increased to an extent not then anticipated. That increase has become absolutely necessary. It will be admitted that it is impossible to carry

on any business today as cheaply as it could have been managed some thirty-seven years ago. Nor can any one live as cheaply today. The country today could not be governed as cheaply as it was when confederation was formed; and in addition as regards the provinces, there are many matters for which the local governments have to provide that they were not then compelled to provide for. But outside of all that, the many necessary expenditures which have to be met by the local administrations have increased to such an extent that the amount at their disposal today is entirely inadequate. Take the question of schools, I shall not weary the House with a great array of figures, but take the figures in connection with this matter in the provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. In New Brunswick alone in 1868 we expended the sum of \$93,833 for schools, whereas in 1904 that sum had increased to \$192,735, and that does not include the expenditures for grants to colleges, technical schools and other institutions of learning but simply those to the ordinary common schools; high schools and grammar schools.

In Nova Scotia in 1868 the amount paid to schools was \$145,280 and in 1904 that item had increased to the magnificent sum of \$263,092. This also does not include the expenditure of grants made to colleges or technical schools.

What is true of the schools of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, I have no doubt will be true of the schools of the other provinces of Canada, and what is true of the schools is very much more true of many other subjects which have to be managed and looked after by the provincial legislatures. We all know that the administration of justice is more expensive today than it was 37 years ago. We know that it costs more for legislation, that it costs more for the maintenance of prisons and asylums. In New Brunswick alone, after giving credit for all the income which we receive from the patients, we are spending today \$50,000 in the management of the provincial asylums. Last year this was about one-eighth of the total grant we received from the Dominion government and what is true of New Brunswick must also be true to a great extent of the other provinces as well. Then too, in later years we have been compelled to make large grants to agriculture and I think that no person to this House or in the country can contend that the grants made to agriculture in any province are improperly made. But, Sir, perhaps the item which has caused the greatest amount of financial difficulty to different provinces and that which most reduced the amount of available money for expenditures for ordinary affairs, is the expenditure for the construction of bridges and the maintenance of roads which every person must consider to be necessary and above and beyond all that would be the amount of money expended in railway subsidies and I wish to call the attention of the House to the fact that the same electors who elect representatives to this House elect the representatives in the Local House and through these local members they demand these different expenditures. The very electors and the very people who contribute to the revenue of Canada are the people who demand the expenditures from the local legislature, and I say that in all justice these demands have to be met. It is a question for careful consideration how they are to be met.

In 1868 the total revenue of the Dominion from customs and excise duties together amounted to \$11,580,968 and the total payment to the provinces amounted to \$2,735,906 or 24 per cent. of the total revenue of the Dominion from these two sources. In 1904 the Dominion received from these two sources of revenue the sum of \$53,374,583 and they paid to the provinces altogether, exclusive of what it may have cost so maintain the government of the Northwest Territories which I did not take into consideration, the sum of \$4,402,291, or a total of 8 per cent. of the revenue of these two sources. If you will add to that the proposed amount to be paid to the new provinces by the Bill now under discussion, we will then be paying less than 12 per cent. of the total revenue from these two sources, or, in other words, we will next year be paying less than one half the percentage of the money which we receive now, as compared with the money which we received in 1867 at the time of Confederation. Now, Sir, this gives rise to many questions, and it has given rise to discussion particularly by members of the local government. Various means have been taken in order to remedy this difficulty and it is not necessary for me to go into details. I shall only call attention to the fact that in 1867 the assembled wisdom of five of the provinces gathered at Quebec and

there made certain suggestions that I am sorry to say were not carried out. They did not meet with the approbation of the government of the Dominion of that day, and the difficulty, instead of decreasing, is increasing, the different provincial governments have found themselves face to face with greater problems every year until in 1902 the wisdom of the different provinces again met in Quebec and again passed a series of resolutions, and it seems to me that the time has arrived when something ought to be done, when I believe something will be done in order to meet the requirements of the different provinces, because I contend that a certain amount of money should be expended by the provincial governments. They can get nearer the homes of the people, can better judge their requirements and can do more good by the expenditure than can this House, and therefore I think that we may well consider whether or not a revision of these subsidies should not take place by which a larger amount will be placed to the credit of the different provinces so that they would be in a position to better meet the requirements of the people than they are at the present time. Holding these views I felt it to be my duty to present them to the House in as brief a manner as I could, and I trust that this discussion may be the means of bringing about some arrangement between the federal government and the governments of the different provinces, or rather of some arrangement being made by this parliament by which these subsidies will be re-arranged, so that the different provinces will receive a greater amount than they have received in the past.

SIR WILFRID LAURIER.

said: There is no objection whatever to bringing down the correspondence which is sought by my hon. friend (Mr. Carvell); on the contrary I think a good purpose may be served if the memory of the country is refreshed as to what has taken place upon this subject for the last 15 years or so. The correspondence upon this subject is now pretty voluminous. It commenced, if I remember rightly, in the year 1887 when there was a conference in Quebec between the representatives of the different provincial governments at which the subject of subsidies paid by the Dominion to the provinces was fully discussed. The tenor of this correspondence was that the principle adopted at Confederation for the payment of subsidies out of the federal treasury was not entirely satisfactory, and that some other principle ought to be adopted. My recollection is that it was not so much an increase of subsidy that was desired as some principle of paying the subsidy to be given to the provinces, and if I remember rightly, the proposition was that that the proportion of payment should move with the population as established in the decennial census. Although these resolutions were adopted in very solemn form at the time, no action was taken upon them by the Dominion Government and for some years it was not pressed on the attention of the Dominion Government by the provincial governments. At a subsequent date I think the federal government has received from all the provincial governments, either collectively or individually, a similar request pressing for a re-adjustment of the subsidies.

Two years ago another conference of the premiers of all the provinces met in the city of Ottawa. New resolutions were passed, much upon the same basis as those which had been adopted at the Quebec conference in 1887. Apart from that the province of British Columbia, though it joined with the other provinces in a demand for a re-adjustment of the tariff, put in a separate demand of its own, claiming that it was entitled to special treatment on account of special circumstances affecting that province and not the others. The matter has rested there, and it is not free from difficulties. I have had occasion more than once to express the view that I thought the principle adopted at the time of confederation of giving subsidies to the provinces was not as wise as it might have been. But at all events we find this principle in the Confederation Act today, and even if we do not agree with it, we must accept it and abide by it. I think if it were to be found that the principle adopted in 1867 is too drastic, that it should be more elastic than it is, perhaps the people at large would not be averse to taking the matter into renewed consideration.

But there are other matters besides the subsidies as to which the relations between the Dominion and the Provinces are not as satisfactory as I think they ought to be. The question of the fisheries which, up to 1889 or thereabouts, was in rather a satisfactory condition, has been much disturbed by a judgment of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council and it is now difficult to know where the jurisdiction of the provinces commences and where the jurisdiction of the Dominion ends in fishery matters. Up to 1889 it was generally expected that the Dominion had about complete jurisdiction over all questions affecting the fisheries, but since that judgment it has been found that there is a division of jurisdiction between the Dominion and the provinces as to certain fisheries. The question is not one, as I have said, which is free from difficulty. It has given rise to very complicated questions between the Dominion and the provinces, and I have thought for my part that it would be advisable to take some method of securing an adjustment of that question. I would be disposed—but in saying this I speak only my own mind, without having consulted my colleagues—I think the public interest would be served if the fisheries were vested altogether in one body or the other, but there should be no divided authority; and I believe that the fisheries had better be vested in the Dominion than in the provinces. It may be that is a question also as to which we might very well consult the provinces in connection with the subsidies. How to deal with these difficulties is a matter that has not yet engaged the attention of the

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