

SINNERS CONVERTED.

Local Opposition, After Declaring Central Railway a Sink Hole and the Government Culpable in Purchasing the Road.

VOTE UNANIMOUSLY AGAINST A PROPOSITION TO LEASE IT FOR \$21,000 A YEAR.

House Stood 28 to 7 Against Hill's Resolution.

In the legislature Wednesday evening, Hon. Mr. Tweedie, resuming the debate on the Central railway resolution, said the subject matter of this motion does not of itself require many remarks from me and were it not for the extraordinary attitude of my friends opposite I would have very little to say. Not that they have left me anything to say, but the unfortunate manner in which they have put their case before the house, some comment would seem to be required. The opposition member for St. John expressed great surprise at the resolution, but he has been surprised at everything since he came to this house and he must have been still more surprised before he came here at being elected for St. John over a much better man than himself. The member for St. John has virtually taken charge of the opposition and claims to be an expert at everything. He is an expert on finance and has attacked the finance minister of the government with great violence, accusing him of all sorts of neglect of his duty. I think that a little more modesty on the part of a new member would be more becoming and that he might take the advice of one of old to tarry at Jerico until his beard had grown. In his speech he had introduced an entirely foreign element and in his desire for notoriety sought to lug in personal matters. He tried to get into an argument with the attorney general by making statements that were entirely incorrect, claiming that the government had wrongfully purchased a steam shovel for their contractors on the Central railway, although Mr. Brown the engineer, had included it in his estimates. He also attacked the engineer as being either a knave or a fool. Now I affirm that this reference to the steam shovel was a wilful endeavour to mislead. He knows that the report of Mr. Brown will not bear the construction he has put upon it. But the member for St. John having improperly dragged it in, I feel it my duty to make the matter clear. Taking the estimate of Mr. Brown, he states the probable cost for permanent cost of building at \$83,858, and gives the various items in detail and no amount is included for steam shovel, but he states that the estimate is based on the purchase of a steam shovel and plow for ballasting and filling. He says this will cost about \$6,300 delivered at Norton and can easily be sold at \$5,000, after the work is completed. This shows clearly that the engineer assumes that the steam shovel and plow will not be supplied by the contractors but, by the railway company, now represented by the commissioners and appointed by the government. And to make the matter even more clear upon the next page the engineer makes an estimate of the entire cost for the permanent way and repairs and renewal of rolling stock and adds to his estimate for permanent way of \$83,858 the sum of \$1300 which he states would be the difference between the cost of steam shovel and plow, and the amount for which it could be sold after the work is done.

I must confess that the opposition are entitled to some sympathy in connection with the Central railway. It was on this that they proposed to make their grand attack upon the government, but the ground was cut from under their feet by the offer to lease it for \$21,000. This offer has had a most demoralizing effect on our friends opposite for the Central railway was their great card. They said that the government had committed a great crime in purchasing it that it had placed the country in debt, that the railway was no good and never could be utilized, and the member for St. John represented the grades to be just twice as steep as they really are and stuck to it, but when they found that \$21,000 a year was offered for the road a change came over the spirit of their dream. Not when they are asked to say whether the offer shall be accepted or not they become agnostics. They do not know how to vote, they are afraid to express any opinion and they pretend that the reason is that they do not know the names of the persons making this offer. It has been made through a firm of reputable solicitor and what difference does it make whether it is the Grand Trunk Pacific or the Canadian Pacific railway who wants to obtain this road.

The leader of the opposition says that he would be inclined to let it go for \$21,000 if it were the Grand Trunk Pacific, but not if it were to be leased to speculators. When did he come to the conclusion that there was anything in this road for speculation? I can understand the great difficulty the opposition have had in trying to get over this resolution. I could see them cuddling and whispering together for days and the result is the amendment which declares that

they have no opinion to express. The leader of the opposition set out with the idea that the amendment had had one beneficial effect in causing one member of the government to express an opinion. This is a subject in respect of which the government was not required to have a policy, for it is simply a business proposition and a matter of judgment. The opinion I am about to express on this question is only an individual opinion and is not given as premier or a member of the government. An offer has been made for the road but the government has no more information than is contained in the offer. But what more do we want? I would have no right to ask Greenshields whom do you represent? It is not customary for principals to declare themselves. All that we have to do is to see that the rights of the province are protected. I am pleased that the member for Charlotte has seen fit to introduce the resolution. My view is that we should accept the offer, provided sufficient guarantee is given and that the rates charged are subject to the approval of the government. The leader of the opposition claims that we should charge interest on the provincial subsidy. Who ever heard of such an absurd proposition? He said that we should receive interest on the subsidies we paid to this road fifteen years ago. Yet we have given hundreds of thousands of dollars to other railways in the shape of subsidies without the slightest expectation of receiving anything in return. The amount that we have to consider is \$700,000. If we were paid for this road in cash and put the money in the bank we would only receive three per cent. on it. One reason why I am in favor of accepting this offer is that this government has no machinery for running railways. I may be entirely wrong in my view of this matter, and I am. I desire not to be understood as trying to lead or to influence another member. I am dealing with the subject purely as a business proposition and as a private member of this House. I think that whatever the result may be, my friends of the opposition must feel that with respect to this railway the policy of the government has been fully justified. It is like the house of the man on which the rain descended and the floods came, but it stood firm because it was founded on a rock.

MR. CLARKE.

Mr. Clarke congratulated the Premier on his speedy recovery from his sudden cold last evening and on the oratorical wealth of his speech, which showed great skill in evading the resolution altogether. The opposition were satisfied with the amendment and that it will commend itself to the good sense of the people of the country. The opposition has been charged with manifesting hostility to the development of the coal fields and Sunbury coal fields, but that charge was baseless. What they had objected to was the reckless manner in which the people's money had been squandered. I cannot tell whence this offer came but no spectacle could be more humiliating than the course of the government in taking shelter behind the wing of the member for Charlotte. It was not often the attorney general made a bad break, but he must realize that he did so when he accused the member for St. John of cowardice, a charge that the opposition could make with far better grace against the government. The attorney general had boasted of the government's policy of developing the coal wealth of the province, and as to what glorious results would follow in the future, but the country was beginning to realize that money had been poured into this railway enterprise with lavish prodigality; loan and bond issue succeeding bond issue.

After having exhausted the patience of the country, the Premier comes down with an offer to lease the road for \$21,000 a year, an offer concerning which no details were given, no information to tell whether it came from friend or foe, or from speculators anxious to make money out of the deal. A little while ago the Premier said the government would decide whether the offer should be accepted or not, but a change has come over the spirit of their dreams and they confess their inability to arrive at a decision. They are on one of the following three horns, first that they have no faith in the attorney general's statements; 2nd, that the government has not the courage of its convictions; 3rd that it lacks the necessary business ability to deal with the question.

The only reason to lease the road that I can see is the fear that it may continue to be a sink hole for the provincial revenue for along time to come, but as I am situated tonight and as other members are situated, we have not the information that would enable us to vote for the resolution, so I will therefore support

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the amendment moved by the hon. member for St. John.

MR. OSMAN.

Mr. Osman said that he did not intend to speak again, but after the most pitiable exhibition made by the member for Charlotte, he felt he must say a few words. The Premier had given out that this was an open question, yet the opposition had not the courage to give an honest open vote for this resolution.

MR. MURRAY.

Mr. Murray could not cast a silent vote as he had strong views on the matter. From outside sources he had learned much and came to the conclusion that the road would open Queens and Sunbury coal areas and give much employment to our people. This was an era of railway extension and we have the best of assurances that the Grand Trunk Pacific will come through this province, running close, if not into, Chipman, and there tapping the supply of coal which it will require in large quantity. There was a great future for these coal fields and holding this view I feel it would be a great mistake to lease the road for \$21,000 a year, an offer of speculators who expected to make a good thing out of it. Let the province keep the good thing itself. Nor was the time opportune for the sale of the road as the time will come perhaps ere long when the government would be in receipt of better offers. There was opposition to the government management of railways, but there are instances, and this was one, when the government should control the road until better terms came in.

The opposition to the contrary, the house was in possession of all the information it could reasonably expect with respect to the offer for the road. I know of one case where I bid in a property from the premier and would not disclose the name of my principal till the sale was closed. Then the premier told me that had he known who the party was I represented he would not have sold me the property except at a greatly enhanced figure. Perhaps if the principal of this railway transaction was known he would not get it at the \$21,000 rental. I hear much about the government having no policy, but it looks as if the opposition had put forward their amendment to escape the responsibility of voting on the square issue, which is, that the government would lease the road, what is it worth? I do not think that the government will be afraid to take the responsibility of preventing the road passing into the possession of the enemies of St. John and New Brunswick coal. I am strongly of the opinion it would be very unwise for the government to accept the present offer or anything approaching it. Events in three or four years will prove I have taken the right position.

The vote was then taken on the amendment, which was defeated as follows:

Yeas—Hazen, Flemming, Smith, Grimmer, Clarke, Maxwell, Hart, Morrison, 8.

Nays—Tweedie, Pugsley, LaBillois, Farris, Jones, Hill, King, Whitehead, Copp, Scott, Osman, Ryan, Carpenter, Burden, Goggin, Barnes, Murray, Lowell, Dr. Ruddick, Tweeddale, Robertson, Young, Johnson, Poirier, Burgess, Leger, Clair, Martin, 28.

MR. HILL.

Mr. Hill closed the debate and was speaking of the amendment as a dodge when he was called to order by Mr. Maxwell and the Speaker ruled the point that he could only speak to the original resolution as well takers. Mr. Hill said when I moved my resolution I did not ex-

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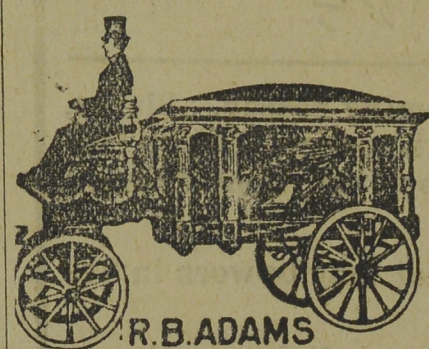
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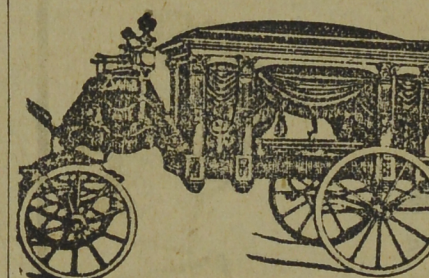
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