

POLITICAL NOTES.

A Glance at the Leading Measures Carried in the House of Assembly of New Brunswick, from the Year 1854.

By G. E. FENNEY, Fredericton, N. B.

No. 19.

Dissolution of the House—Mr. McDonnell's Defection from the Government Causes a Catastrophe—Only Half the Members Wait Upon the Governor Up stairs—The Governor and the Executive—Special Session of 1857—The Old Government Tender their Resignations—The Country Against Them—The Liberals Uppermost Once More—New Session Called—Financial Discussions—Railroads.

Immediately after reading of the Journals, Hon. Mr. Gray informed the House that the Government had unanimously agreed to recommend to his Excellency to prorogue the House with the view of a dissolution. (The reason for this will appear below, the Government having received a hint.) Mr. Smith arose and after speaking at some length in reference to the position of the Government, moved the following Resolution:—"Whereas, the members of the Executive Council have declared their inability to carry on the business of the country; therefore Resolved, that it is the opinion of this House they should immediately resign." Mr. Street spoke for one hour in opposition to the Resolution. Mr. Lawrence followed on the same side, speaking for upwards of one hour, when the House became impatient, determined as it were to hear no more speeches. A scene of great confusion and disorder followed. Mr. Lawrence persisted in keeping the floor. Messrs. Sutton, Johnson and others maintained that he (Mr. L.) should bow to the decision. The Standing Order was moved amidst great excitement. The Sergeant-at-Arms was unable to clear the galleries. Mr. Smith rose to speak and was interrupted from the gallery, Mr. S. with much warmth declared he was not going to be browbeaten by a Fredericton mob, and declared it was high time for the removal of the seat of Government. The galleries were cleared, but there was great excitement outside. Mr. Lawrence persisted in keeping the floor after the standing order had been moved, and great confusion prevailed. Mr. M'Nagle finally obtained the floor and denounced the Government as imbecile and incompetent, and entitled no longer to the confidence of the House.



MR. J. W. LAWRENCE.

Mr. M'Nagle's detection from the Government ranks brought about the climax and the crash: for now the majority of one turned on the side of the Opposition. Instead of resigning their offices in the hands of their opponents, the Government concluded upon the dissolution policy, and thus preserve their chances of holding on and giving their "learned friends" as much trouble as the "Responsible Government" principle would justify.

Before the question could be taken on Mr. Street's Resolution, His Excellency arrived (at one o'clock) at the Council Chamber, and summoned the members of the House to attend him, when out of the 11 members 21 of them remained in their seats while the minority proceeded up stairs.

His Excellency closed the Session with the following Speech:—"I have readily given my assent to the Bills which you have passed. On a full consideration of the present state of public affairs, I have come to the determination of proroguing this Assembly with a view to its immediate dissolution. I entertain the hope that the progress of public business will be fairly facilitated by the authority of a new Assembly."

Thus was cut off, in the middle of it, one of the stormiest Sessions ever known in New Brunswick: and after an existence of only a little over one year, the House in a short time afterwards was again dissolved by Proclamation in the Royal Gazette, and writs were made returnable on the 16th, May.

The whole country was now thrown into a state of great confusion. The friends of both parties called meetings in all the principal centres of the different Counties; speeches, as famous for their rabidness as for their moderation, were made—new politicians came to the surface—the young Cadets of Temperance whose principles had something to do with the first great difficulty, rose into the dimensions of full fledged orators, having undergone a good training in the Division rooms—the Governor was still the object of attack and defence by older politicians—the "prerogative" again underwent a severe scorching—Responsible Government was discussed in its most minute particulars—and the bearings of the points at issue examined and elucidated.

An active canvass by candidates and their friends was now commenced and

carried on all over the Province. St. John being the head political quarters of the Province, and of a somewhat changeable disposition, it may be well here to state that the election resulted (23rd April) in the return of two Government members (Gray and Wilnot) and two Opposition (Wright and Cudlip). Here was another indication that political principles sat lighter upon the consciences of this constituency than the leanings of personal friendship. The late Speaker (Simonds) was thrown overboard altogether. Had it been possible to divide his honour in two parts, it is probable that one half would have been elected on the Government side and the other on the Opposition. It would have puzzled any of the other Counties to judge of the real political status of the largest County in the Province by the result of this election.

Next day the elections for the City were held—the candidates were: Messrs. Lawrence and Debever (Government), and Messrs. Tilley and Harding (Opposition). After a sharp contest the latter were elected, without any great difference as to numbers to boast of. Tilley's majority over Debever was 114—Harding's over Lawrence 42. So that public opinion was pretty evenly divided in the City.

The elections all over the Province were concluded about the 20th May, resulting in a large majority of opposition members being returned. The Government shortly after this tendered their resignations, when His Excellency was placed in the awkward dilemma of being obliged to send for the two men with whom he formerly quarrelled, (viz: Messrs. Fisher and Tilley) to form a new Government. That His Excellency could have anticipated such a sudden reaction, after being so well sustained by the people at the previous election, only a year before this, was not at all probable; for he had not considered that the change of public sentiment adverse to the men, whose advice he had rejected, was likely to have been of a less permanent character, it is not probable that he would have held so tenaciously to the prerogative, and bowed his Countenance to the Opposition.

The following gentlemen composed the new government:—Messrs. Fisher, Brown, Tilley, Steeves, Johnson, Smith, Wark, Watters.

[Note.—Some of the Liberals out of doors complained that the new Government did not afterward ask for His Excellency's recall, when they had so large a majority at their back; but it was answered that His Excellency had received reproof enough in being obliged to call upon his opponents for help in the time of need—besides asking for his recall would have kept the country in a continual broil.]

SPECIAL SESSION 1857.

On the 24th June the Legislature was called together when Judge Carter swore in the new members.

James A. Harding, Esq., one of the Saint John City members, was chosen Speaker, only thirteen members voting against him.

In his opening speech, which was very short, the Governor alluded to the busy season of the year, and the exigencies of public business demanding immediate attention. The birth of another Princess and the death of the Queen's Aunt (Duchess of Gloucester) were noticed.

The Address in reply to the Speech was agreed to in both branches without opposition.

Mr. Gilbert again brought forward his Bill (passed at a previous Session, but failed in the Council) for disqualifying subordinate officials from holding seats in the House—the Session being a special one, there was no time to resume the subject then or on a subsequent day.

The principal business of the Session was the granting of supplies for the public service, and organizing matters as it were, for operations during the next year.

On the 26th on motion of the Attorney General, the House went into Supply—(the Provincial Secretary, Mr. Tilley, had not yet taken his seat, having met with opposition in St. John in Mr. Lawrence, he was obliged to go through another election, which occupied him a couple of weeks, and was therefore unable to be in his place in the House to give the Financial Statement—indeed he was not in the House at all during the session.)

Mr. Tibbits moved a resolution for suspending operations on the Railroad between St. John and Shediac. He said this undertaking, if persevered in, would result in the Province being swamped and the Railroad debt repudiated. Mr. C. Farley said he had always looked upon the St. John and Shediac Railroad as a mammoth humbug. He believed the line would never pay working expenses, much less yield the interest on the cost; and those who lived to see it completed would find out that what he said was correct. Mr. Connell also supported the resolution. After a round of sectional speeches the resolution was put and lost.

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HON. JAMES STEADMAN.

Mr. Steadman (now Judge) was chosen Chairman. The mover spoke at some length in reference to the Estimates; he explained the financial state of the Province at that time, and the causes which led to the making of necessary appropriations without Legislative authority. There was quite an animated discussion on some of the expenditures of the previous year; and the "Gray and Wilnot Government" were severely handled; but in reply they gave good reasons for what they had done, based upon the ground of public necessity. Party spirit again manifested itself in sharp criticisms and recriminations. The tables, however, were turned, this time there being a large majority against the "Speaker's Government"—so that the

friends of the new formation were powerful to speak and strike too. Then the unfortunate "Initiation" question was again riddled as on a former occasion, in consequence of members complaining that several provisions in the budget were entirely too large to be passed hastily, and without due time and consideration. One honorable member denounced the system as abominable, and said he would perish at his desk before he would consent to give up the Initiation to the Executive. The Government had been placed in a somewhat embarrassing position in making up the estimates; from the abrupt manner in which the late session was brought to a close, and the consequent appropriation without authority of the Legislature, of large sums for the public service. Some hon. members believed that the hasty passing of the budget would shield a few of the financial delinquencies that lay at the door of the late Government. Mr. Cudlip commented in a facetious strain upon the harmonious feeling that apparently existed between members of the two Governments upon money matters. He said he did not wish to do any thing to embarrass the Government, but he wished to see the Accounts come before the House so that they could be clearly understood. Among the items, the expenses of the Session of the Legislature ending 26th March, 1857, and paid by the Central Bank are as follows:—Pay of members of the Legislative Council, £1,342; House of Assembly, £2,490; officers, doorkeepers and messengers of Legislative Council, £446 15s; House of Assembly, £468 12s 6d; contingencies of Legislative Council, £1,104 15s 2d; of Assembly, £1,121 11s 1d; postage of Legislative Council, £27 4s 7d; of Assembly £220 8s 1d; Librarian £100. Total, £7,475 16s 6d. The proposal to grant £2,600 for the maintenance of the Penitentiary gave rise to a long discussion. Mr. Mitchell said, the impression in the North was that Institution was "one grand job," and that there was much mismanagement in the manner in which it was conducted. Mr. Wilnot assured the hon. member from Northumberland that the commissioners of the Institution were men of respectability and standing, and that its affairs were well and satisfactorily conducted. The amount finally passed, when Mr. Mitchell again addressed the House, urging the importance of having further reformation from the Government respecting these large amounts in the budget. He thought it wrong to pass them hastily, and therefore moved that progress be reported, and supply be resumed on Wednesday morning next, when it was expected that the Provincial Secretary would be present. On the question being put, the motion was lost, Messrs. Mitchell, Sutton, Cudlip, M'Leod, Allen, M'Leellan, Gilmore and Botsford voting in the affirmative.

June 30. The most important debate of the Session turned upon a resolution offered by Mr. Gilmore, to the effect that the Railway extension from Fredericton to Woodstock, and Shediac to Miramichi, should not be proceeded with for the present, in consequence of the depressed financial condition of the Province. It will be remembered that these extensions were simultaneously provided for in the European and North American Railway Act. The resolution was strenuously opposed by Mr. Kerr, Mr. Connell and other Government members. Mr. Chamberlain of Charlotte, referred at some length to the history of the St. Andrews and Quebec Railway, its prospects, and the benefits likely to arise from its construction; 65 miles of this were under contract, and 20 miles more would bring it to the St. John River, and all could be got along without the assistance of the House. He had no faith in the paying qualities of the line from Fredericton to Woodstock, nor the one from St. John to Shediac. Mr. Steadman said he believed now was the time to proceed with the construction of Railways instead of stopping them. Instead of embarrassing our finances, it would greatly improve the business condition of the country. We had either to build the railways or else be behind all other countries. The whole contemplated cost of the railways in New Brunswick would not amount to as much as the Provincial debt of Canada. He was prepared to see the present scheme with the extensions fully carried out, and the line from Fredericton to Woodstock would have to be built sooner or later. The Government had power to stop the works, and they needed no further expression of opinion from the House. The resolution, however, was finally sustained; only 13 voted against it.

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friends of the new formation were powerful to speak and strike too. Then the unfortunate "Initiation" question was again riddled as on a former occasion, in consequence of members complaining that several provisions in the budget were entirely too large to be passed hastily, and without due time and consideration. One honorable member denounced the system as abominable, and said he would perish at his desk before he would consent to give up the Initiation to the Executive. The Government had been placed in a somewhat embarrassing position in making up the estimates; from the abrupt manner in which the late session was brought to a close, and the consequent appropriation without authority of the Legislature, of large sums for the public service. Some hon. members believed that the hasty passing of the budget would shield a few of the financial delinquencies that lay at the door of the late Government. Mr. Cudlip commented in a facetious strain upon the harmonious feeling that apparently existed between members of the two Governments upon money matters. He said he did not wish to do any thing to embarrass the Government, but he wished to see the Accounts come before the House so that they could be clearly understood. Among the items, the expenses of the Session of the Legislature ending 26th March, 1857, and paid by the Central Bank are as follows:—Pay of members of the Legislative Council, £1,342; House of Assembly, £2,490; officers, doorkeepers and messengers of Legislative Council, £446 15s; House of Assembly, £468 12s 6d; contingencies of Legislative Council, £1,104 15s 2d; of Assembly, £1,121 11s 1d; postage of Legislative Council, £27 4s 7d; of Assembly £220 8s 1d; Librarian £100. Total, £7,475 16s 6d. The proposal to grant £2,600 for the maintenance of the Penitentiary gave rise to a long discussion. Mr. Mitchell said, the impression in the North was that Institution was "one grand job," and that there was much mismanagement in the manner in which it was conducted. Mr. Wilnot assured the hon. member from Northumberland that the commissioners of the Institution were men of respectability and standing, and that its affairs were well and satisfactorily conducted. The amount finally passed, when Mr. Mitchell again addressed the House, urging the importance of having further reformation from the Government respecting these large amounts in the budget. He thought it wrong to pass them hastily, and therefore moved that progress be reported, and supply be resumed on Wednesday morning next, when it was expected that the Provincial Secretary would be present. On the question being put, the motion was lost, Messrs. Mitchell, Sutton, Cudlip, M'Leod, Allen, M'Leellan, Gilmore and Botsford voting in the affirmative.

June 30. The most important debate of the Session turned upon a resolution offered by Mr. Gilmore, to the effect that the Railway extension from Fredericton to Woodstock, and Shediac to Miramichi, should not be proceeded with for the present, in consequence of the depressed financial condition of the Province. It will be remembered that these extensions were simultaneously provided for in the European and North American Railway Act. The resolution was strenuously opposed by Mr. Kerr, Mr. Connell and other Government members. Mr. Chamberlain of Charlotte, referred at some length to the history of the St. Andrews and Quebec Railway, its prospects, and the benefits likely to arise from its construction; 65 miles of this were under contract, and 20 miles more would bring it to the St. John River, and all could be got along without the assistance of the House. He had no faith in the paying qualities of the line from Fredericton to Woodstock, nor the one from St. John to Shediac. Mr. Steadman said he believed now was the time to proceed with the construction of Railways instead of stopping them. Instead of embarrassing our finances, it would greatly improve the business condition of the country. We had either to build the railways or else be behind all other countries. The whole contemplated cost of the railways in New Brunswick would not amount to as much as the Provincial debt of Canada. He was prepared to see the present scheme with the extensions fully carried out, and the line from Fredericton to Woodstock would have to be built sooner or later. The Government had power to stop the works, and they needed no further expression of opinion from the House. The resolution, however, was finally sustained; only 13 voted against it.

[NOTE.—From that time and for some years afterwards nothing was done towards these extensions—other schemes took their place—such as the branch from St. Andrews to St. Stephen—from Woodstock to the line in rear of it—and from Fredericton to Hartt's Mills.]

Mr. Tibbits moved a resolution for suspending operations on the Railroad between St. John and Shediac. He said this undertaking, if persevered in, would result in the Province being swamped and the Railroad debt repudiated. Mr. C. Farley said he had always looked upon the St. John and Shediac Railroad as a mammoth humbug. He believed the line would never pay working expenses, much less yield the interest on the cost; and those who lived to see it completed would find out that what he said was correct. Mr. Connell also supported the resolution. After a round of sectional speeches the resolution was put and lost.

On the 1st, July His Excellency proceeded to the Council Chamber and closed the shortest Session (one week) in the shortest Speech (four lines) ever known in New Brunswick.

Old Time Weapons.

In mediaeval times the dagger—broad, heavy and with a stout guard for ordinary use—was rendered needlike and almost guardless for concealment, and became the poison dagger.

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