

HAZEN AND FLEMMING WON GREAT POPULAR VICTORY OVER ROBINSON AND McKEOWN BEFORE VAST MEETING

Opposition Conceded Every Advantage to Opponents, and Still Scored a Signal Triumph

Premier Got Good Hearing But Could Not Answer Flemming's Searching Questions--A Telling Expose of Government's Frenzied Finance--Hazen Received a Great Ovation and Made a Most Telling Speech--Forty-five Minutes of Anguish for McKeown--A Wonderful Meeting That Foreshadows Opposition Victory on March 3.

Before a mighty audience that fought fiercely for admission and filled the Opera House from the back of the stage to the uppermost row in the gallery, last evening, Messrs. J. D. Hazen and J. K. Flemming debated the issues of the campaign with Premier Robinson and Attorney-General McKeown, and the vast throng of voters awarded the palm of victory to the opposition leaders.

The crush in Union street and in the entrance to the theatre was something to be remembered. A big plate glass window in a shop adjoining the entrance was smashed, and the glass was forced into the lobby of the Opera House that not a few were pressed against the walls until they groaned. A few ladies braved the danger, but not many. It may be doubted if ever before the building held such a throng. The very window-frames in the upper gallery were occupied. On the stage every chair was filled and every foot of standing room was occupied. And the whole crowd remained. Scarcely a man left the meeting until the speaker had begun to speak, and when he had finished the crowd was still so big that those who had gone were not missed.

There was no room for doubt about the verdict of the audience. The signal triumph of the opposition was won in a joint meeting under terms which gave the government speakers every advantage. The government side proposed conditions which gave Mr. McKeown the last word. The opposition were told that Mr. McKeown must have the last forty-five minutes or there would be no joint meeting. Rather than allow the great meeting to fall through the opposition conceded every advantage and accepted the government's own terms.

The result fully demonstrated that the opposition leaders were right in consenting to any arrangement rather than have the meeting fall through. Mr. McKeown wound up the debate by a perfect storm of silence and a storm of cheering. A round of three cheers wound up the applause, and he began what in many respects was the speech of his career. Quietly, logically, without heat or violence, he framed his indictment of the government's financial statement. He drove every point home and the volleys of applause showed that the crowd appreciated the proof he was presenting. His fictitious government surplus of \$9,000,000 disappeared, and in its place Mr. Flemming exposed a deficit of some \$1,000,000. Government bookkeeping could not stand the tests Mr. Flemming applied to it, and the vast audience shouted its approval. When he had finished his long sustained roar of applause had died away, it was evident that in the opinion of the big jury around him the present local government deserved extinction on March 3.

Premier Robinson was heartily cheered when he rose to reply, and though there were occasional interruptions he showed in handling the crowd and he was given a fair hearing throughout. He was on the defensive--as the government has been from the beginning of the campaign. He defended himself with courage and with no little ability, but it was apparent that he could make no effective reply to Mr. Flemming's charges. He never even referred to the estimates Mr. Flemming had requested to answer. He made no attempt to tell the audience that he was not in a position to do so. He explained as he would, but he had no point to make. When he sat down it was noticeable that the applause was perfunctory as compared with that which followed the conclusion of Mr. Flemming's speech.

Mr. Hazen was greeted by three cheers and a long continued roar of applause that seemed to come from the entire audience. He was a fighting speech and he never made a better one in this city. His description of the death-bed repentance of the administration caused a wave of laughter and applause. Early in his speech he drew attention to Premier Robinson's failure to answer the searching questions he showed him had asked him--a failure of which the audience was quick to grasp the full significance. Mr. Hazen was interrupted once or twice, but he answered with good nature, and turned the point upon his questioners with fine effect, notably in the case of an unfortunate who inquired about the Central Railway. Applauded to the echo, Mr. Hazen plunged into an exposure of the government's conduct in connection with the Central and other roads. It was telling work. Those in the audience who were adherents of the government must have wished that Hon. Mr. Robinson had remained in Moncton. The opposition leader went over the Premier's speech in some detail, and when he finished made a great burst of cheering. It was telling work. Those who had had luck with his audience and had to lose his temper under the fire of his speech that he had heard for the meeting that he was not to be used to speak--a declaration that elicited cries of derision. Mr. Thorne rose several times to request the crowd to be

quiet, but while nine-tenths of those present kept good order the other tenth displayed much impatience almost throughout the proceedings. He had been told, he said, that it was a tough job. The disfavor of the audience caused Mr. McKeown to lose the thread of his speech, and his speech was far from effective. If the government party had expected that in the forty-five minutes at his disposal Mr. McKeown could swing the balance of the meeting to his side they were doomed to bitter disappointment.

Mr. Thorne Opens the Meeting. Without any delay the chairman opened the proceedings. He had been expected, he said, as chairman of the meeting probably because he had no qualifications as a speaker. (Laughter.) He had been accepted with some reluctance on that account. Among the good qualifications of a chairman he was expected to cut his remarks short, say as little as possible and think a good deal, but he desired to say a few words of explanation as due to the large audience before him. An advertisement calling a public meeting to have the political issues explained by opposition speakers, had been put in the papers and Messrs. Hazen and Flemming and the candidates had been advertised to speak. Mr. Flemming then issued a challenge to the premier to meet him on the platform in St. John, which had not been accepted in its entirety, but a counter offer had been made to hold a joint meeting. An arrangement to that effect had been made and two speakers from each party, Messrs. Robinson and McKeown for the government, and Messrs. Hazen and Flemming for the opposition, would address them for three quarters of an hour each.

It had been settled that the order of speaking should be Mr. Flemming, Mr. Robinson, Mr. Hazen and Mr. McKeown, who would wind up the debate. He trusted that the best of good feeling would prevail and that the audience would keep order in fairness to the speakers. It was only due to Messrs. Robinson and Flemming that they should both be given a fair hearing, and it was only due to the good character of the citizens of St. John on previous occasions would again be in evidence.

MR. FLEMMING

Member for Peel Makes Clear Cut Speech and Asks Premier Pertinent Questions.

Mr. Flemming then introduced Mr. Robinson as the first speaker, he was accorded a great reception with rounds of applause and continued cheering. He said in part: "Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you most sincerely for the kind and cordial greeting you have given me. I have come among you a perfect stranger, and am asking your attention for a short time while I discuss the financial affairs of the province, as they appear to me. I am glad to meet so large a representative audience in this city of St. John, the great centre of the commercial and industrial life of the province. It is a pleasure to know that the people are taking such a keen interest, and I am also glad to meet my friends on the opposite side of the street. I trust that whatever passes on this stage tonight will not interfere with that friendship. (Cheers.)

In replying a short while ago to a request from a newspaper I made a statement on the report of the auditor-general. My statement was a fair and reasonable one and I regret that it drew such a harsh criticism from my honorable friend. He said my statement was unparalleled misrepresentation and an insult to the intelligence of the people of the province. I am a perfect stranger, and I can only say that I have always tried to do so conduct myself as to win the esteem and respect of my fellow men, and in doing so I would not use any statement which could be rightly characterized as unparalleled misrepresentation. It implies that what I then stated was untrue. As far as insulting the intelligence of the people of this province, I have never along so far in my life without insulting anyone and I hope that such a state of things will always continue. (Cheers.)

"Now the auditor-general's report shows, and the premier claims that there is a credit balance of \$9,836,111. I made the statement that there was in fact a shortage of \$400,000. This is a great difference, and it was no doubt a surprise to the people of this province that two men should make such statements. I will point out to you where the difference comes in, where I claim, if there had been a fair system of book keeping, a shortage must have been about \$1,000,000. It is arrived at by a system of book keeping which I think will not commend itself to the people of New Brunswick."

"Now the government has charged to capital account the following items: New Brunswick coal & railway line, \$82,251,230; that item might be fairly chargeable to capital if the money had been devoted to the purchase of cars or for improving the road bed, but it is almost entirely interest and I claim that interest cannot fairly be charged to capital expenditure. Did you ever hear of any other province disposing of its interest in that way? (Cheers.)

Then we have permanent bridges, \$129,730,191. A portion of this I said might fairly be charged to capital, but certainly

not all. When the government began to build permanent bridges they used a steel superstructure and masonry substructure, but time went on and they began to extend the kind of structures which they could charge as permanent. Cedar cribs filled with ballast, and stone and clay cribs were used. Permanent work, a stone culvert costing \$80 was charged as permanent work. I say that my idea of permanent work is not items that cost \$30 or \$40 but the class of work they did in the old days. Why for some time past ordinary little repairs have been charged to permanent account."

Mr. Flemming at this point took up the official report and read several items of this class including one for \$4.36 for repairs to a retaining wall in St. John county. The reading of this item was received with derisive laughter and applause.

Asks Premier to Explain. "I will now pass on," Mr. Flemming continued, "to the provincial hospital. We have under this head an overdrift of \$22,502,31. This is the most ordinary kind of ordinary expenditure and should be taken out of current revenue. It is charged to capital expenditure. The overdrift of the public works department amounts to \$107,000,000. It has \$47,000 had no right to be charged to capital expenditure, and last year a new item--an overdrift on the public works of \$100,000--made its appearance. I have watched the public accounts pretty closely and I don't know what it is for and I don't believe the commissioner of public works knows either. (Laughter.) My honorable friend, the premier, is here and I'll ask him to give you some information on that point to enable us to see if it can be fairly charged to the permanent debt. It is made up of \$1,400,000. I say that it has become part of the permanent debt. If the premier says any part has come out of current revenue I will accept his statement, but if he says it is a right in saying that this \$1,400,000 has become part of the permanent debt of the province. Then we have in the permanent debt \$200,000; York and Carleton Railway, \$11,212,50; and New Brunswick Railway lands purchased, \$36,913,50; or altogether, \$1,228,126. I claim that the government is keeping the balance of \$1,500,000 of indebtedness had been incurred and added to the debt of the province during the past year. \$400,000 in the province in five years. (Laughter.) Probably we shall get some light on the subject tonight from my friend the premier. (Renewed laughter.)

Great Interest Cheered. The interest charges according to the last statement of the auditor-general amounted to \$125,560. An ordinary observer would suppose that was all that was paid, but I would make more than that. When the government made a loan of \$1,400,000 in London they did not bring home all the proceeds, as they ought to have done. The money lender did not wait till the end of the year, but took out \$72,870 at the beginning. That was paid out of the revenue of the province. Then \$82,000 was paid on interest on the loan. The government bonds, so that it cost this province a total of \$331,000 to pay the money lenders, or more than \$1 for every working day in the year. Ought we not to strenuously oppose any increase in our indebtedness? Ought we not to use every effort to live on our own resources? (Applause.)

"Now, I want to direct the attention of my friend, the premier, to the overdrift in the public works account for the year ending Oct. 31, 1907. You may ask why I can't deal with 1907. Well, he has not got it and won't get it until the legislature meets in 1908. He has the way the account stood. They tell us, by the way, that our finances are in a splendid healthy condition. I will read you the statement of our great spending department and leave you to judge if it is satisfactory: "The ordinary overdrift was \$47,122,31. The previous year's office costs in the Bank of British North America was \$149,943.78, and the overdrift by the road superintendents (for they spent all their money on interest on the loan) was \$169,871.82. So the true state of affairs was a shortage of \$206,937.89."

"I would ask my honorable friend, the premier, to tell us how the public works account stood at the close of the year 1907 and how much the road superintendents borrowed from 1908 to expend in 1907. I would like to know if that system of borrowing has been stopped. The accounts will only show how much was expended up to Oct. 31, 1907, and perhaps the premier will also tell us what accounts were left unpaid until after Nov. 1. We always find large payments for roads and bridges in November and December. In my country we don't make roads in winter. (Much laughter and applause.)

"The people have been told that expert accountants were to make a report on the public accounts. I am surprised my honorable friend thought it necessary. We are paying enough for bookkeeping as it is. I'll tell you what it costs a year. There are three departments to do the business. The provincial secretary's office costs \$18,514, the crown land department costs \$6,650, and the public works department \$6,000. So the expenses of bookkeeping are \$31,164. The government is paying \$31,164 a year without taking into account the expense of the auditor-general's office at all. That's what the province pays for bookkeeping."

"It seems to me with a whole business of less than \$10,000 we ought to have the accounts sufficiently well kept for accurate and clear information to be spread before the people at a glance instead of a note when a man would receive the statement. I am surprised my honorable friend thought it necessary. We are paying enough for bookkeeping as it is. I'll tell you what it costs a year. There are three departments to do the business. The provincial secretary's office costs \$18,514, the crown land department costs \$6,650, and the public works department \$6,000. So the expenses of bookkeeping are \$31,164. The government is paying \$31,164 a year without taking into account the expense of the auditor-general's office at all. That's what the province pays for bookkeeping."

"This debt is a mortgage on every working day, on every store, and on every farm in New Brunswick. "Our friends the government will tell you that you never pay the debt, that it goes on for thirty or forty years. Yes, but you pay the interest. Suppose you had a strong box and you opened the lid and poured in the revenue for the province for a year. Now what have you got to take out to provide for your expenditures? There is \$225,000 for education. You don't want that cut down. Then you must take out \$230,000 for the roads and bridges. Anyone who lives in the country (and I wish more of you did live in the country) would not complain that the roads were in too good condition. They need more money, and they would need a good deal more if the interest on the debt were to be continued. (Laughter.) Then you have to take out of the box money for grants to hospitals. You can't decrease those. I should like to see them doubled; and then there are exhibitions and many other things to be provided for. The point I want to make is that if the debt, he increased it takes a larger amount out of the box to pay the money lender."

"Today we are paying \$50,000 more in interest than five years ago. Which of the public services can afford to lose \$50,000 more? Yet if we go on at the rate we are going there will be another million added to the debt in five years time."

J. D. Hazen, M. P. P. Spending money to bring order out of chaos. (Laughter.) "I am tied for time," concluded Mr. Hazen, at a word from the chairman, "and I thank you most sincerely for the good order you have kept and the careful attention with which you have listened to me."

MR. ROBINSON Premier Delves in Ancient History, But Does Not Give Direct Answer to Questions Asked.

Premier Robinson was next introduced and he was received with prolonged cheers from the government supporters. In opening his address he said he hoped the time taken up in cheer would not be counted in his allotted time for speaking. He had listened, he said, with a great deal of pleasure to the clever speech of Mr. Flemming, often called the financial critic of the opposition. There was no desire on his (the premier's) part to trespass on a meeting called in the interests of the opposition. When challenged by his friend Mr. Flemming, he had said he thought it would be better to leave the question of the government's financial position to a chartered accountant to make a report. If there was a dispute between him and one of his hearers over a debt it would hardly be considered necessary to hire a hall to argue the matter out in public. He held it would do no good. However, he was glad of the chance, in his imperfect way to defend the actions of the government and offer reasons why the government candidates should receive the support of the electors in the coming election.

The difference with Mr. Flemming in the matter of finance was an account of an article published in the Daily Telegraph of Dec. 31, 1907. Mr. Flemming had said that one million five hundred and odd thousand dollars ever been added to the public debt in a single year. Last night Mr. Flemming had said he didn't mean that it had all accrued in a single year, and he (the premier) accepted the apology. He claimed \$410,000 was the amount added. The premier then went on to explain how this amount was made up. Part of it was an overdrift of \$22,532.31 for the Provincial Hospital which was not included in the account. The other part was an overdrift of \$24,000 in the bank on the Provincial Hospital account, and at the close of the year this had been reduced by \$2,000, showing a net gain of \$2,000.

The amount of \$196,000 in the public works accounts was not all incurred in the year 1907. Some was incurred in 1906 and should therefore not be charged up. He referred to Mr. Flemming's statement at the recent meeting that there was an expenditure of \$310,000 to this account in 1906, but about half of it should have gone into 1907 account. A voice: "Why don't you prove it?" "I have proved it from Mr. Flemming's own figures."

The subject of finance was not a very interesting one, but it had been charged by their opposition friends that the increase in the debt was bringing the country to the verge of bankruptcy. When he assumed the position of provincial secretary he had consulted financial critics in Montreal as to whether it would be better to float a temporary loan or to issue bonds, and the reply was, a temporary loan. Mr. Tweedie had received ninety-six for three per cent bonds which he had placed on the market. He (the speaker) had been misrepresented in a Montreal paper, and it was heralded all over Canada that he couldn't sell the bonds of the province. He had never attempted to sell them as it would have been unwise at the then state of the money market. The Bank of Montreal had agreed to lend them all the money they wanted at five per cent. He referred to Mr. Flemming's statement about paying the interest on the loan in advance, and said that this was the usual procedure in a matter of this kind. It was like discounting a note when a man would receive the amount of his note less the discount."

How Loan Was Expended. He described how the money received from the temporary loan had been expended as follows:

Treasury bills standing 31st October, 1907, to Bank of N. B. A. redemption 6 per cent.	22,532.31
Permanent bridges,	200,000.00
Permanent bridges,	174,872.53
N. B. Coal & Ry. Co.	250,000.00
Board of works--over expenditure and advances for services to 31st October, 1907,	197,065.97
Provincial hospital--due to 31st October, 1907,	22,532.31
Redemption of 8 per cent debentures in 1907,	122,500.00
1907,	126,739.19
1907,	82,351.26
501,068.73	
Intersections Railway in 1907,	1,127,931.26
20,000.00	
1,147,931.26	
Bank of Montreal, 31st Oct., 1907,	9,188.33
Proceeds of treasury bills	1,157,119.59
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J. K. Flemming, M. P. P. Flemming had made but he should know that he was in error as he had made a mis-statement of nearly \$70,000 in an overall, which he had counted twice. The public debt, his friend had claimed, was a great octopus that was not nearly as great as he had claimed. He had charged the interest for a year and a half on the temporary loan, whereas the interest was paid ahead. There was also \$300,000 or \$800,000 of another statement that was an error on the part of Mr. Flemming. "Let us look at the debt in an honorable way. Would the opposition, if it was in power, not increase the public debt of the province? Do you suppose it is possible to build bridges, embankments, culverts and so on, without incurring an increase in the public debt?"

Hon. C. W. Robinson. He was, like his friend, Mr. Flemming, afraid of debt. In looking over the record of their predecessors he saw that they had started with a surplus and left a legacy of over \$2,000,000 of a debt and an additional amount of about \$2,000,000 at Ottawa, making over \$4,000,000. The previous government had also given away 647,000 acres of crown lands to the New Brunswick Railway and sold the balance of 1,800,000 acres at fifty to sixty cents an acre, whereas they were worth a considerable sum.

Asks Comparison With Former Governments. Their predecessors had used the revenue of the province to the extent of \$10,000,000 in fifteen years and yet the opposition called the present government extravagant and wasteful because they had increased the debt \$3,000,000 in twenty-five years. He asked them to compare the results of the present administration with the Blair government and its predecessors.

Their predecessors had the Suspension bridge and a few buildings to show for their expenditure, while the present government had spent \$1,500,000 on permanent bridges, culverts, etc. "Then we have the Central Railway, which we own absolutely. (Great laughter.)

A voice: "That's King's road." Another voice: "You ought to be proud of it." Mr. Robinson: "My friend thinks the Central is not an asset."

Mr. Robinson: "If you rode over it you wouldn't think so." The premier replied he had ridden over it that very day and it was as good as any other branch railway in the province. Much money had been spent by the present government on other roads and the government didn't own a stick. The opposition leader and members thought a good deal of it for they had voted to refuse the offer of \$21,000 a year for a lease of it for a short time ago.

For the increase in the debt of \$3,000,000 he claimed the province had \$2,500,000 in assets. They had a sinking fund of \$150,000 and at Ottawa there was \$200,000 on deposit, which had not been touched since 1894. The net debt of the province of New Brunswick was \$10 a head, whereas as an alderman had stated that the debt on the city of St. John was \$116 a head. The premier spoke of the courage and energy of St. John in putting money into harbor facilities.

He said he might have gone to extremes in calling Mr. Flemming's statement "unparalleled," but Mr. Flemming was certainly wrong.

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Attorney-General McKeown The audience for the good hearing they had given him, and hoped all the speakers would receive the same treatment. He referred to an act passed at the last session setting aside \$300,000 each year out of the increased subsidy from the dominion government which, he claimed, in fifty years would wipe out the entire debt of the province. He claimed to have shown that he had the capacity for managing the business affairs of the province. He might be too young as the opposition had said, but if the young men of the province were not wanted by the opposition they would find room for them in the government ranks.

As there were calls of "time up," the premier again thanked the audience for their hearing and resumed his seat amid applause.

MR. HAZEN Opposition Leader Makes Ringing Speech and Arraigns Government in Masterful Manner.

When J. D. Hazen, M. P. P., the leader of the opposition, was called upon to speak there was a vast demonstration. He succeeded cheer, and it was some minutes before Mr. Hazen could make himself heard. He said in part: "I must thank my fellow citizens of St. John for the splendid reception given me at this magnificent meeting. I am delighted to stand upon this platform tonight and speak to this vast audience. I am delighted to listen to my friend Mr. Flemming, a tower of strength to our party at Fredericton, and a power in the legislative halls of his country. I am also delighted to hear the speech of Premier Robinson, which, to me, appears, as also his appearance here, to be another example of political death-bed repentance, of which so many victims have been given by my honorable friend."

He last session of the legislature he, with his colleagues, was rejoicing with exceeding great joy over the great success of that brilliant piece of constructive legislation--the highway bill. And up to the time of the Norton meeting, Oct. 17, when Hon. James Barnes, who has since gone to his reward of \$2,000 a year, had told of the thousands of miles of well-drained roads constructed under the act, the premier lost no opportunity of heralding the act as a success and a triumph. Then he instructed the attorney-general to announce that the people were to be deprived of that estimable, valuable legislation. (Cheers.)

"The province had been delivered into the hands of a school book, through a warning was sounded by Mr. Hazen, the member for Charlotte, and myself, yet Premier Robinson scoffed at the idea of there being truth in the opposition charges. He stated that an independent commission consisting of non-partisans, such as John T. Hawke, editor of the Montreal Star, and others, had been appointed to inquire into the matter. Example No. 2 of death-bed repentance. (Applause, and cries of "Give it to them.")

Mr. Flemming's Challenge. "When Mr. Flemming first made the challenge I was not sure when the premier went around the province and gauged public opinion, he retreated from his former position and stretched out weary limbs upon that political repast--death-bed. (Laughter and applause.)

After listening to my honorable friend I can not help but admire the adroit and admirable way in which he avoided the questions put by Mr. Flemming. (Cries of "Give it to them.") "Never touch them." "Mr. Flemming stated three plain, categorical questions and my honorable friend makes no effort to answer these questions, but delves into ancient history and tries to hold us responsible for the acts of a government which held power when Mr. Flemming and myself did not even have votes. (Great applause.)

"The people do not want to know about this ancient history. They want to know is the present government worthy of confidence, honest in administration, and able to stand upon its record. (Loud cries of "No," intermingled with "Yes.")

"Don't try to decide tonight," continued Mr. Hazen, "but decide with your votes on election day. The premier has stated that Mr. Flemming is astray in his statement that the overdrift of public money amounted to \$100,000. He claims that \$50,000 or \$60,000 should not have been included, and he may be right. But if he is right then his chief commissioner of public works is wrong. In answer to Mr. Flemming in the house the chief commissioner gave Mr. Flemming the information and I will leave Mr. Robinson and Mr. LaBrosse to fight it out between themselves. (Applause.)

The Debt. "I believe the premier and his colleagues are trying to minimize the public debt. Many will remember Mr. Blair's appeal in 1894, when he said the province was running too much in debt. Mr. Blair said that it was not good business for the expenditures to exceed the revenue, and thought that the province should be a net debtor. What about the present debt of \$5,000,000, and the increase of \$2,000,000 added by legislation? (Applause.)

"In Bathurst, I stated the liabilities of the province were \$8,000,000. It was the country that I had in mind, not the province at \$8,000,000. This statement goes to show the premier's liabilities, or sending my (Continued)