

The New Reid Deal---(Continued)

Now I think anybody would have said who thought about it at all. We will place a limitation of some kind upon that: we won't bind future Legislatures for ever; we will give these men the right, for five years or ten years, or sometime or other, to bring in their machinery, but we will limit the time; and when I turn to the Act dealing with the Anglo Newfoundland Development Co., section 4 from which this very paragraph is taken to some extent, I find that their right is limited to a period of twenty years. The Anglo Newfoundland Development Co. Act says:—

4. All construction material and machinery for pulp and paper mills within or in connection with the demised premises, or operating in connection with the same, or for the purpose of manufacturing the products of the same, both for the original installation and the further extension of the same, but not in substitution for old, shall for a period of twenty years from the date of this agreement, the schedule to this Act, be admitted into this Colony free of duty.

Now that section is copied into this agreement word for word, except the limitation of twenty years, and therefore we have departed in this from the only precedent which we had in this country. I say their imagination must have run riot. I can imagine the promoters' solicitors writing that, and I can imagine their counting up and presenting it to the Government with a covert smile; but that they could have got a body of Ministers, men claiming to be representatives of the country to approve of that would have passed my imagination, if I had not seen it. I can only imagine that the gentleman opposite have not looked into closely, and that they will not support it; and I hope that my conclusion will be justified.

Now, to show the looseness of the construction which this has been drawn, I want to repeat a point made by Mr. Kent, that while it is provided concerning the Hamilton River that a failure to spend the \$10,000,000 within five years will result in the grant becoming void, the same proviso is the word used—provided for in section 2 with reference to the number does not necessarily become void on any default by this company; or that if they fail to spend the \$5,000,000 provided for in Section 18 within five years, this agreement shall be void. The agreement and the proviso are two things. Now, I say here that under Section 1 this Act creates a demise of the water powers on the Hamilton River not held by other persons at the moment the Act becomes law, and that that demise is an assailable one; that the Company may sell it to another company; and that the failure to spend the \$5,000,000 would not void the lease. That is to say, they may acquire this demise upon it to the Hamilton River: they may dispose of it to the Reid Newfoundland Company or anybody else who may desire to acquire it from them; they may fail to spend the \$5,000,000 which is provided for under Section 18; and all that results is that the agreement becomes void and not the demise. The agreement becomes void with reference to municipal taxation and other forms of taxation, the right to bring in goods without paying Customs duties and all that sort of thing. But the point that I wish to make is that the expenditure of the \$5,000,000 is not a condition attaching to the demise and which travels with the property under the demise. The demise does not become void because the agreement becomes void. The other would have been the intention: I am bound to assume that it was the intention, because I cannot conceive of some men intending anything else, but, if so, it is another proof, of which there are many, that the preparation of this ought to have been especially scrutinized by lawyers acting on behalf of the Government, men of high repute about whose opinion on the matter there could have been no doubt.

There is only a little more that I wish to speak about at this stage. The Premier referred to the possibility of these works in giving labor to the people, and to the great benefit which would be derived by the people and by the revenue of the country as a result of that labour; and he gave, at my request, at a later time, some data which he had obtained from the promoters as to the amount of labour which would be given. It is, unfortunately, impossible to contradict the data, but any sane man will hesitate to accept it. It is advanced by a promoter—that ought to be enough. It is advanced for the purpose of attracting public opinion in favour of this deal—that ought to create suspicion. It ought not to be accepted by anybody in this House without being submitted to some authority; perhaps the Government Engineer would be the best authority which we have here for the purpose of finding out whether it is accurate or not, or approximately accurate. It ought not to have been given here as it did not come from an authoritative source, but from one interested to a dangerous extent, but let us take it as it is. The Premier, in his statement here, referred to the possibility of five thousand families of our labourers obtaining assistance from this work, and he went on to argue that the earnings of those labourers expended in imported goods would add a very considerable sum to the present Customs duties of the country. Well, if we got five thousand men who are neither earning, working nor spending in the country, that might be true; but if you take 5,000 men and put them at work here, surely you must take them from some other employment. Surely, what they spend now will be lost and only replaced by what they spend then. Will we not only get Customs duties on the excess of their earnings—the difference between what they earn now and what they will earn then? And if we have to import them into this country if they are foreign laborers, as very many of them will probably be, then, as Mr. Kent has pointed out, their whole expenditure in this country is likely to be very small, unless they move their families after them, which foreign laborers are not in the habit of doing, the most of their earnings will go out of the country and will not contribute to our revenue. And they must remember that the services in the country in connection with these great works will mean additional calls upon our expenditure. When these works are established anywhere, we shall have to follow them with all modern improvements, and our expenditure will probably be increased as much as our revenue is increased. And then let us add ourselves, after all what is in, we are striving after in this matter in the way of labour? We are trying to take our people out of the fisheries of the country in which they are specialists, in which they hold a monopoly, in which, I contend, they can earn as good a living as they can in any part of the world with equal effort. We are, I say, taking them out of the work in which they are specialists and putting them into competition in the ordinary labour of the world with men who know as much about that labour as they do. We are taking a qualified Newfoundland fisherman and tempting him to enter into an industry in which he is no more qualified than a Hungarian, or a Pole, or a Silesian, who may go to work there. We are subjecting him to a competition with all the labour of the world and taking him out of an avocation in which he has no competitors whatever, because he is Lord and Master of the fisheries—the great industry of this country. If we only spent the money and devoted the time and the

brains in trying to develop the fisheries that we give in trying to coax industries to come here to this country, the results would be far greater as far as the advancement of the people of the country is concerned. I say that it is not necessarily a great thing for this country that men should be taken out of the fisheries and put into industries of this kind. A few of them may work up into the higher branches and may get a better wage than they could ever hope to earn at the fisheries, but they will be very few. The most of that five thousand which has been talked about will necessarily be the common laborer, the handlers of coal and coke, the class of labour that is being performed in Sydney to-day at the steel works; and I say that we are not conferring a gift upon the labourers of this country when we take them out of the fisheries and put them into work of this kind. They would do far better at their natural avocation. Then again, you have not said here that there will be a fixed rate of wage, as you said in the railway contract. Why not do that? You have not said that foreign labour shall not be imported while labour can be obtained in the country. You are enabling them to bring all their labour from across the water to work in the Bay of Islands, and yet you are handing over to them all or most of the franchises of this country that are left. You are giving this great paper company all sorts of improper advantages; you are mortgaging the future; you are taking away the right of self government from our municipalities; you are taking away the constitutional right of this Legislature to tax; and you are creating a great industry, if you like, a great company in any case, which will be a great competitor of the other business people who will be unfairly taxed not only to maintain the ordinary services of the country but to maintain the services which this industry will create.

Mr. Kent has already pointed out as an evidence—and there are thousands of them—of the looseness of this contract, that there are no restrictions whatever. The Company undertakes to begin actual construction. The driving of a single nail will be a beginning, and having begun, there is no provision whatever that they shall continue, except the provision that within five years they shall expend \$5,000,000. Having begun, they meet the first condition, and then they can stop, and they can wait, and hold, until the last day of the last year without going any further. There is no provision that they shall go on working; there is no provision that they shall expend so much per year; there is no attempt whatever to safeguard. It is impossible to conceive men with the worst possible intentions, drafting an agreement that is looser, that is less guaranteed by safeguards, than is this. There is not a safeguard worthy of the name from the beginning to the end of this agreement; and while I do not say for a moment—while I do not want to believe that the government of the country ever had any intention whatever that a loose agreement of this kind should be tolerated upon us, yet it illustrates again and again my statement that it must contain a good deal that the Government never thought of, and that the Government must have thought a good deal was in it which is not in it; because the agreement in its present form is the most infamous document that was ever placed before a Legislature. And, therefore, I say that I hesitate to accept it. I don't accept it at the present time. I am prepared to accept the statement that its looseness is unintentional, but I am not prepared to accept the statement, or the argument, that looseness is not there, that the possibilities are not

there. In its present form it is the most extraordinary contract that was ever placed before a Legislature in a civilized country. It has not only not got the safeguards which it ought to have, but it has not, as I pointed out, the ordinary safeguards which you find in the other contracts from which this to some extent was copied, and must, therefore, have been within the sight and within the comprehension of those who drew this. Take, for instance, the Reid contract with reference to their lands. I think (I am speaking now from memory) that the provision there is that the lands shall not be taxed until they are improved, but after they are improved they are taxable. This Company's rights are never to be taxable, so that even the Reid Company contracts form no precedent whatever for this. And then the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Co. Act, which I opposed in this House at the time it was passing, and for which, therefore, I am not responsible with regard to a single word of it, contains precautions limiting the time during which they are to be free from taxation, limiting their rights over others, and such like. On reference to that contract you will find that before it was passed the Legislature deliberately put in a provision in Section 6 protecting the prior rights of people who were on the same waters, while in this contract there is not the slightest provision of that kind; on the contrary, there is an extraordinary, an almost insulting provision, that they shall have the right provided they don't interfere with their lords and masters. They may live, they may breathe the breath of life, they may, if you please, pass along, while this Company lords it over them and is superior to them in the exercise of the common, proper rights that were always enjoyed by the people of this country.

Now, I am satisfied that every consideration will be given to the objections which I have advanced. I have studiously avoided this afternoon putting them forward in a partisan way as against the Government of the country. I am, as I have said, prepared to accept—and I am sure the Opposition will be prepared to accept—evidence of good faith on the part of the Government, and of their readiness to accept resolutions of one kind and other which shall qualify and modify until this assumes proper proportions, and something is evolved which will not be a drawback to the future of the country.

War Stories told by Mrs. Whitney

Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, who has equipped a \$250,000 field ambulance for the allies, told many interesting war stories during her recent visit to America.

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Kier Hardie objects to Lloyd George insulting English workers as a "set of drunken wastrels." A worse insult to a decent English workman would be the charge that he is a follower of Kier Hardie.—Mail, Toronto.

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