

# Discussion of the Improvident and Profligate School Book Contract

## Mr. Calder Explains His Position and the Leader of the Opposition Verifies His Statements—The Recommendation of the Committee Not Followed.

FRIDAY, MAY 8th

The feature of today's session was Mr. Calder's exposition of the government's policy on the Free Text Books Bill.

In moving the second reading of the bill, Mr. Calder stated that it contained two principles. One was that any board of trustees might if they saw fit, purchase all or any text books and distribute them free of cost to the people. It provides that the board of trustees may include in their annual statement the sum of money required, and raise the money required for purchasing these books and supplies, and for this, a tax will be levied on the property in the district. The government may do what any board of trustees may do, but its distribution is confined to text books alone.

There is a clause validating the contract which has been entered into. The reason why this policy was adopted was that the Liberal party was the party that believed in the principle of free schools.

While the schools now were free in a measure, they were not free in the very broadest sense. Children outside of an organized district and non-tax payers in an organized school district are required to pay fees to receive an education. Some may think the money a parent has to spend on books a small matter, but the parent might think so.

The government's position was to give the trustees of the districts whether high or elementary, the right to purchase school books and supplies, furnish them to the pupils free of cost and have the cost come out of the taxes of the district. In that way the government would relieve the individual parent of the school book burden. He believed that it was the duty of any government to see that the cost of elementary education should be borne, not by the parents alone, but by all the people of the country. He thought that the cost of elementary education should be as low as possible consistent with efficiency. This was a principle which could not be got away from.

For years past the parents have been paying high prices for school books and readers. He pointed out that the present set of readers cost the manufacturers 40 cents. They were sold to the retailer for 85 cents who sold them to the users for \$1.15, a total gross profit of 147 per cent. To put a stop to such enormous profits was one reason why this contract had been entered into. It was because of this fact, too, that the three western governments had held a conference at Winnipeg and even the province of Ontario, through its minister of education, had written to see if some method could not be reached whereby the text books of the whole Dominion should be made uniform and decreased in cost. To secure these text books, a contract had been entered into by the government for ten years and it was this contract which the House was being asked to ratify. There was no need for argument as to the need for the new text books, because the present books in use here were the worst in Canada or the United States.

To reduce the cost and get a better set of readers was the object. Notices were sent to the publishing houses in 1906 inviting them to submit samples. These came early in 1907. A commission embracing the two provinces was appointed to make recommendations to the governments. The commission sat in Calgary, but broke up after four or five days' discussion without coming to any conclusions. The speaker had not personally, directly or indirectly, tried to influence the members of the committee in favor of any set of books, but he had found that one of the publishing houses had their agents through the provinces and had used influence with any and every person who was likely to be on the committee. The agent had tried to poison the minds of these people in favor of their books.

However, when the committee could not agree he had been notified and he went to Calgary but found the committee disbanded. Arrangements were then made for the deputy ministers of the two provinces to meet in Calgary and make a statement as to the attitude of the committee on the whole question. This was done and from their report it appeared that they rejected all but those submitted by the Morang Co., and the Canada Publishing Co. However, this opinion, Mr. Calder claimed, was based on an erroneous idea as to the grades they were to be used in. The mechanical makeup of the Morang Co.'s books was said to be superior to the Canada Publishing Co.

In concluding his two hour speech, the outcome was that it was de-

cidated to give the Morang Co. an opportunity to prepare a set of books that would be suitable to our schools. This was done because they believed they turned out better books, another reason for their action was the fact that they believed that they should assist a company which had done so much towards revolutionizing the publication of text books in Canada.

The committee were all of the opinion that the books submitted would have to be revised to make them suitable for use consequently a committee consisting of Miss Burnett, and Mr. Bryan of Alberta, and Miss Rankin and Mr. Perret of Saskatchewan, were appointed to do this work, the ladies of the committee looking after the junior course. After this committee had completed its work the books were submitted to the educational council.

In reply to Mr. Gillis, Mr. Calder stated that at this time no arrangements had been made with the Morang Co., nor was any made until the contract was signed and if the opposition had received any statement to the effect that there was any arrangement it was absolutely false.

The books were submitted to the educational council of Alberta and Saskatchewan and Manitoba and were endorsed unanimously by the three.

The books were edited by Mr. Salt and Mr. W. A. McIntyre, and in the opinion of the speaker there were no two men better fitted to do the work. To his mind there was no better set of readers in Canada or on the continent of America than the set prepared.

He referred to the fact that Mr. Salt was an old friend and colleague of his, but wished to impress upon the House that this fact did not weigh one iota with him in the business transaction.

Regarding the contract he thought it was the best contract ever made by any government in Canada. The contract gave the exclusive right to the publishers to publish these books for a term of ten years. This was the usual term for which contracts of a similar nature had been made. The amount of capital a publisher had tied up in the preparation of the books had to be considered, and they had to be sure of the sale of the books for a reasonable time. Another feature of the contract was that these books were subject to revision at the pleasure of the government. Then too the books must be up to sample submitted and on file with the department.

Mr. Calder then dealt with the prices showing how the government would get a discount of five per cent. in buying in 55,000 lots. The publishers could not assign their contract and had to give a bond.

The price of the books depended upon the quality, cost of manufacture, the market, the publisher's capital expenditure and as well, a reasonable profit. In comparing the binding of the books submitted by the Morang Co. and the Canada Publishing Co. he tried to show the inferiority of the latter.

The cost of the Morang Primer chosen he quoted as follows:

Paper 1.49 cents.  
Printing, 1.8 cents.  
Binding, 7.75 cents.  
Or a total for each of 11.046.

The revised book had four additional pages and the Union Jack was put on the front page. This brought the cost up to 11.70 cents per book.

The third reader cost as follows:

Paper 4.98 cents, printing 2.8, binding, 9.5; or a total of 17.28 cents. When revised, 8 pages were added, which brought the cost up to 17.53 cents per copy.

The Morang series as submitted would contain 1184 pages at a cost of 75.63 cents per set in lots of 5,000 or 71.50 cents per set in lots of 10,000. The revised books contain a total of 1,304 pages, and the cost of manufacture is 79.25 cents per series in lots of 5,000 or 76.88 cents per series in lots of 10,000.

Mr. Calder contended that there would not be as many books distributed by the government as would be used in the ordinary way. He also maintained that the capital expenditure by the publishing house was in the neighborhood of \$20,000 before any books would be sold.

Mr. Calder referred to the cloud he had placed under owing to the remarks of the leader of the opposition when speaking to the Address. He had done nothing he was ashamed of and he challenged the leader of the opposition to make any charge against him.

He moved the second reading of the bill.

HAULTAIN REPLIES

In opening his reply Mr. Haultain stated that in the largely quoted phrase the hon. gentleman "doth protest too much," it was a favorite position of the members of the government to imagine themselves victims of misrepresentation, and to set up men of straw and vigorously proceed to knock them down. They tried to make people believe they were much maligned individuals. There was nothing in the remarks he had made earlier in the session which would justify anyone in drawing any conclusion of a charge of graft. However, the ordinary man, having a clear conscience does not look for charges of graft in every utterance that may be made.

The minister must have felt that there was some ground for such a charge or else he misunderstood what had been said. If he (Haultain) had any charge of graft he was prepared to make the charge. He never insinuated things, what he did say was that a profligate contract had been entered into and from the cloud of figures given by the minister, that one conclusion could be drawn. He (Haultain) stated that the contract had been improperly made and the minister had convicted himself.

The minister had stated that the bill had covered two purposes, one to promote free text books, and the other to ratify the contract. The bill did not provide free text books, it only provided for the text books being issued by school districts at the expense of the districts and for the possible distribution by the commissioner. The bill did not tie the government, or the House, or anyone else to provide for free distribution of text books, but only if the Assembly voted the money to carry it out.

The bill mixed up two things, the policy of free distribution and the ratification of the contract. The latter had nothing to do with the former, and both should not have been in the same bill for while a good many of the members might believe and endorse the policy of free text books, they were not willing to endorse the contract that had been made. The method used by combining the two in the one bill—to get the contract ratified was ingenious, tricky and cunning, but unfair.

Speaking of the demand for the books and the financial ability of the province to make provision, Mr. Haultain stated that when the estimates were brought down he thought the government would find it difficult to carry on the ordinary service.

The premier interrupted to say that there was a surplus of over \$300,000.

Mr. Haultain thought it must be like the surplus of the previous year, a hidden surplus. The premier was either mistaken in his statement or his treasurer had brought down a false and misleading statement. The government were not able to meet the ordinary expenses of the country out of the ordinary revenue.

Mr. Scott still maintained that there was a surplus of over \$500,000 but the leader of the opposition would not accept his statement as being true. If there was a surplus it was like last year's, a hidden one. The treasurer said it was there, but no one could find it.

Coming again to free text books, he asked if the government were going to land in the socialistic or communistic realm. It was all very well to say children must have books in order to go to school, but why not extend the reasoning. Children must have shoes and stockings too, were they to provide these?

At this stage the House adjourned until Monday.

MONDAY, MAY 11.

On the second reading of the bill to provide for the free distribution of text books and for the ratification of the Morang contract Mr. Haultain said:

Mr. Speaker—When the debate was adjourned on Friday I had spoken for a few minutes on the general questions of the free distribution of school text books and I should like to add to what I said there, a few more remarks.

In the province of Ontario there is, at the present time, no system of free distribution, that is, general distribution by the government, although I believe it is under contemplation. The ordinary school there is free distribution by school boards and by towns and cities and school districts generally. The experience there is not altogether one-

ed and does not furnish evidence altogether in favor of the free distribution, although there are very strong opinions running in that direction. Among the objections are that in the first place the people like to have their own books. The books become the property of the pupils and the family and, in the country districts, especially, they are handed down through the family and with the splendid books in use, especially a certain class of readers, make a very considerable addition to the family library. There then is the objection from the sanitary point of view and the sentimental objection—by some considered sentimental, but which I am not so sure is sentimental—to the children having books which have been handled by others, books which have been in use and possession of others for any length of time, and which now come to the family in the course of the free distribution.

Manitoba's experience, which is the nearest by, and it is not very old, shows by the report of the minister of education for 1906 that school buildings were burned and with them a number of text books. In 1906 a very large number of books were destroyed when it was found that there were infectious and contagious diseases among families having them in their possession.

There are other sides to the question of free distribution. It is expensive. Of course it is expensive to the province, and the experience of Manitoba shows that the cost of distribution after the books have been received bears a very large proportion to the cost of obtaining the books. In the state of Delaware, which as the members know is a very small state, the same difficulty has been experienced. The cost of sending out a very large number of books to the districts, in express particularly, goes away with the trade discount to the department or the districts purchasing the school supplies.

Many parents, in spite of the free distribution, will buy the books. Possibly that is of no concern to this house, but the experience in places where this system has been carried out, is that a very large number and a considerable proportion of the books are purchased direct by the parents of the pupils. That fact has another bearing upon the question and that is in relation to the retail price which is charged, because it simply means that if a very large number of persons are going to pay dollars on the retail price.

Take the finding of the text book commission in Ontario in 1906. It held a very exhaustive inquiry and took evidence on every possible subject in connection with text books. It finds that until the policy of free text books has become more popular and more extended, that it should not be extended too far. If it is limited to the readers as an experiment it is thought that it will do the province of Ontario, and it should be sufficient for the present time.

The bill before us seems to me to mean anything or to mean nothing as the government may decide in its discretion, and I would suggest if the government is going to furnish any of these things they should at least limit it to the readers. That will involve a very large expenditure. I would suggest that the government should experiment on safe lines and merely with regard to the readers.

I stated at the very beginning that while the system may be very popular it is going to involve a very large expenditure of money with a very small benefit to the individual and after all, it must be judged solely and wholly on the advantage to the individual. Outside of a few colonies and a few people not very well off, I do not believe any very large community requires any gift of this kind from the government. If we do not distribute books free what is it going to mean to the pupils and parents. The parents will be obliged to buy from the retail dealers, the text books, and especially from the general store in the country which will be expected to keep a small supply of these books on hand. It might, if the child goes through the whole course of the school from the primary to the fourth book, require a lot of books, aggregating \$1.75 in cost at the retail charges. That cost would be distributed over five or six years, and does not amount to 287¢ much. That means that the amount of benefit to the child under this system, is 287¢ divided over five or six years. It means to the individual the enormous benefit of 30 cents a year. Of course 30 cents is 30 cents, but I do not believe there is any family in the whole of the province which is going to be particularly embarrassed in any particular year, as he is obliged to find 30 cents to supply the school reader for the child. The

same might be said of the family of two, because the same set of books would do for the second child following the footsteps of the first. So far the sake of giving this benefit of 30 cents per year for four or five years, the province is going to undertake expenditure which at the very outset will involve \$16,000 or \$16,000, and in addition to the cost of the books there will be the cost of distribution. For the sake of giving this small benefit the province is going to undertake this very large expense at the very beginning, an expense, of course, which will be continued from year to year throughout the whole time in which such a policy is continued, and I might say it would be very much easier to tackle the policy than it would be to withdraw it. It is, as everyone knows, very much easier to give 30 cents than to take away 30 cents. We are undertaking a very large thing for the sake of a very small benefit.

Now, in regard to the main question of the contract, on Friday last I made a few references to the line which the minister of education took up with reference to certain charges. Since that time certain newspapers have come out and said in very clear headlines some things which are most misleading, and made some unfounded statements. I am credited with having withdrawn something and with having made a retraction. I wish to say most positively and distinctly that I have withdrawn nothing. No one can read my words and read in to them any such charge as a charge of graft against the commissioner of education. The words do not bear such an interpretation and they were not intended to. I do not think any fair minded man can read that into them. The hon. gentleman waged very indignantly on certain alleged charges for the purpose of drawing a red herring across this contract. And then I am credited with actually taking the Calgary Eye Opener as my authority. If there was anything in what I said that would give anyone the right to think that, I fall to see it. I was drawing attention to the statements in the press. I was not, of course, responsible for these, and did not have anything to do with them, but it was not improbable that if these statements were made, the people who made them must have known what they were talking about, but no one could glean that I was going to bring down all sorts of charges. If it does the hon. gentleman any good I will say this: I have no intention of attributing personal graft or corruption to them. Any evidence which I have in my disposal does not have any foundation for such a charge. I stand on exactly the literal language I used at the opening of the house. I say it was a most profligate contract and it was made for improper motives. There are all sorts of ways to do improper things. But there is another sort of charge, and that is this: that persons in positions of trust, ministers having the administration of the affairs of the province would enter into an arrangement with regard to expenditures which meant money, might give contracts under such conditions and prices and circumstances as to allow a very strong foundation for the charge that this contract has been entered into improperly. I say these circumstances exist in regard to this contract and I will prove it.

The hon. gentleman would like very much to gain a considerable amount of sympathy and thereby divert attention from the charges which will be made, which are really the charges in this particular matter, and by assuming an apologetic attitude seem to give color to his case.

It may be a very fine thing to have a college friend and the world is always willing to give a generous sympathy to true friendship, but these are things which should not be used unfairly so far as this province is concerned. Take the figures which the hon. gentleman quoted. The hon. gentleman admitted that he had very strong prejudices against the publishing houses which had been exporting money from the people of Canada. I believe they have. I believe the prices have been exorbitant. That had nothing to do with this contract and it had nothing to do with the personnel of the press who were putting in their readers. What has the past history of text books in Ontario to do with a new regime here? What effect has the fact that certain publishers get as much as they could on contracts to do with the terms and conditions of the contract to be entered into for the people of this province?

The hon. gentleman devoted the whole of his time to unfair comparisons and surely comparisons between Morang's present prices and the prices of the old Ontario readers.

Mr. Calder—I gave during the last 15 minutes figures which were given by the Canada Publishing Company and made comparisons.

Mr. Haultain—During the concluding 15 minutes, which according to my recollection was given to something very much less important, the hon. gentleman admits he made some comparisons. Certainly he did not make any very elaborate comparisons.

Now, as I say, Mr. Speaker, with regard to this contract, let us see what Morang's prices are. Now the question, it seems to me, for the house to consider is, what would be reasonable prices for which to obtain a suitable series of read-

ers for the children of the province for use in schools? Not what would be a reasonable commission for Morang's to make, founded on figures which were obtained from them and which we do not know whether they are correct or not, and which I think I can show are not reliable. The question is, what would be proper prices and reasonable prices for which to obtain these books.

What is the position? If the charges are exorbitant, and if a preference has been given to a particular publisher for no reason except that of personal bias, and preference has been given, what then are we to draw from this? The conclusion we must draw is that an improper contract has been entered into. Now the question was considered long before action was taken toward getting a new set of readers. The old readers were unsuitable both in contents and in make up and other respects. A joint committee is appointed consisting of four prominent men in each province, men who should, by virtue of their positions and experience, have been capable of deciding upon this very important question. Tenders were called for so that both provinces might come under the same terms. Very elaborate conditions were attached, involving a very large amount of work, and calling for a series of books to be submitted for adoption. Attached there were a number of important questions which would have a very important bearing upon the prices, and many other practical questions were also required to be answered.

Now, I will say this: That was the proper method of going about securing a system of text books, by open competition, and if the government made a mistake it was in withdrawing at the time it did withdraw from the element of competition. They must have adopted this plan deliberately. Governments do not come together, issue elaborate specifications and ask a large number of responsible publishing houses in Canada, Scotland, England and the United States, to get to a very large amount of expenses they do not adopt this system simply by chance. Their judgment in this respect has borne out most distinctly by the text book commission in Ontario. It finds most distinctly in favor of such a plan. But they also favor the plan of open competition. I have a further authority on that point as well and that is no less a person than the commissioner's friend and college chum, Mr. Saul. At page 148 of the Ontario Commission report, when speaking on that point, he says:

Q—Do you think a better book could be got by permitting each publisher to prepare a sample and submit it for approval?

A—Yes. They should always be open to competition by publishing houses.

Of course that was Mr. Saul's opinion before the beginning of last year. He was questioned further:

Q—Do you think the department would obtain better results by leaving it to the publisher to prepare a book?

A—Yes, I do.

Q—Why?

A—For this reason, that the various competing houses are going to give the very best they possibly can, one against the other.

Q—You think a committee on book preparation might perform their work with a little less zeal than those who want to make money out of it?

A—I think so.

Q—Mr. Saul, you are an educationalist of some experience; what would you think of a scheme whereby all the provinces would combine and produce one national set of readers?

A—I think that as an ideal it would be very fine; but as an actual condition I do not think it possible.

There we find Mr. Saul very distinctly in favor of a scheme which later on the commissioner of education throws overboard for the benefit of the same Mr. Saul.

Now, these tenders were asked for under the terms which I have already mentioned, and which have been fairly well stated. The committee was not bound to take the books from any one publisher, and might have selected the set from the books of all of those who competed. They were simply to secure their best judgment and to secure the best possible set.

We find that Mr. Morang did not send in his tenders for nearly a month after the time fixed for receiving them. Then he did not comply in some further important respects as the books were unfinished. He did not mention the price and here shirked the question of the exchange of the old books for new books.

Mr. Calder—The question of exchange is referred to in the tender and the question of price is referred to in the tender.

Mr. Haultain—I say Mr. Morang did not comply with the requests of the department as to whether he would be prepared to exchange new for the old readers. He said it might be arranged with the government after the contract was let. He did not even mention, as the commissioner says he mentioned the initial cost.

Mr. Calder—It is attached to the re-

turn and was attached to the original tender.

Mr. Haultain—He did not furnish books completed; he did mention price and he shirked the very important matter of exchange. This may seem a simple matter and that it is not worth while. If there is nothing in the contract about it, it simply means that a very large proportion of the initial issue of the books is going to be lost.

Now, I make this as a statement, and I think it can be substantiated, and will strengthen what has been said in the course of the debate already: Whether there was an understanding or there was not an understanding, Mr. Saul, who like many people, has his expansive moments—prior to the opening of the tenders, prior to the sitting of the joint committee, openly said and openly boasted that he was going to get the contract anyway. Of course, the commissioner did not know that. It looked like an understanding, and people heard him say it. Might not that be an explanation of Morang's apparent unconcern and of the terms of the tender. He acted as though he did not want them to take any of his books. He did not give them some of the most important information which was asked. Why didn't Morang give this information? Had he the same certainty that Mr. Saul had that he was going to get the contract anyway? He did get it anyway.

The committee met and sat for four days. They then bring in a report saying that they cannot arrive at an unanimous conclusion. The commissioner of education says very properly that they were not expected to arrive at a unanimous decision. I think the report of the commission was put in later and was to justify what happened to be a deadlock. Of course they were not expected to arrive at a unanimous decision. The idea of eight men occupying these positions and with ample qualifications being called upon imagining for a moment that any book was going to be unanimously adopted. No eight experts in the world can agree.

The hon. gentleman gives us another charge that has been made, that he sent up the delegation with arrangements all made. This was the first time that I had ever heard of such a charge being made. I am inclined to think the hon. gentleman would not dare tell some of the members of that delegation anything of the sort. But why did he think it necessary to call these four into his office? Is Mr. McColl the sort of man to be called in like a little boy and to be told there is going to be an important commission of this sort and for him to disabuse his mind of any prejudices which he might have? What prejudices had these gentlemen that the commissioner of education was so anxious they should free their minds of? None, except that enterprising members of this firm had been getting at members of this commission. The fact that he did call these men into his private office would to my mind, and to the minds of a great many other people, be in itself a suspicious circumstance. The idea of telling Mr. Perret, Mr. McColl, Mr. Hutcheson and Mr. Black anything of that sort. It looks to me like saying to them, "You must not have any prejudices OF YOUR OWN, if you have any you had better get up there and get rid of them." That is what it looks like to me. It has been said that the Saskatchewan delegation was unanimous.

Mr. Calder—Oh, no.

Mr. Haultain—It has been said that the Saskatchewan delegation was unanimous.

Mr. Langley—Who said it?

Mr. Haultain—Let them say, whether or no, these gentlemen and ladies, for I believe there were ladies there, met at Calgary and spent three days looking over these books and came to the conclusion that they could not arrive at any unanimous decision, and therefore they did not report their finding. Now, I have had it stated as a fact that there was a report prepared, or if not prepared, very nearly prepared, but it was destroyed. I have the further statement made to me that this was a majority report, and it was destroyed. Why? Because a minority report would have followed it. It would, in the popular language, have put the fat in the fire. Whether this is a fact or not, I will leave to the commissioner of education. He has the ear of the gentlemen who were there.

Anyway, they could not come to a unanimous decision and word to that effect reached the commissioner of education at Winnipeg, and he immediately fled himself off to Calgary. From Calgary he went to Edmonton. He then had the deputy commissioners report on what happened. That was on May 1. What was the deputy commissioner's report? We cannot question as to whether it was an absolutely correct report of what took place, but it was made from memory. The joint committee recommended Gage's primer as the best book of the whole lot. They recommended that certain books of Morang's should be taken. They also recommended certain books of the Canada Publishing Company with certain changes. I might say here that one of the conditions of the tenders was that if the books were selected reasonable revisions and changes would be allowed. But this was the finding of the joint

committee.

Following out the finding of the joint committee, would not way have been for the commission to take the opinion of the joint committee? Why did he not do that? It is not worth while. If there is nothing in the contract about it, it simply means that a very large proportion of the initial issue of the books is going to be lost.

Another reason was that Mr. Gage would have had two and Morang would have had two. That would not do. So he proceeds to discuss Rutherford's granting to the Company the whole contract had come into Canada as a so-called publishing Knight-Errant ridden into the ring and had broken it, a statement which founded on fact at all, been not doing anything of the sort.

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