

"Men Are No Longer Contented To Be Slaves, "They Are Going To Be Properly Represented; "To Have A Voice In Making Their Country's Laws."

—President W. F. Coaker, M.H.A., Bonavista, In The Debate On The Speech From The Throne In The House Of Assembly, January 19, 1914.

MR. COAKER—Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a few remarks in connection with the matters before the House. I should like first of all to congratulate my hon. friend, Mr. Currie, upon the speech he made upon opening day. Although I heartily congratulate him upon that speech I do not agree with him in most of the things he said. Especially is this so when he took up the question of the fishery. He stated that the price of fish was kept so high this year by the fact that we exported so much green fish to the United States. Before he made that statement he evidently did not try to find out the exact figures, because if he did he would know that the export of green fish to the United States for the past year was not as great as that for the year 1912. In fact, Sir, the export of green fish had nothing whatever to do with the price. There was not enough exported to make any difference in the price, but I hope the day is not far distant when we will have one-third of our total catch going out of the country as green fish for the American market, or in such forms as it is now packed for use in the United States. When the time comes you will find that the export of green fish will have an influence on the price of fish in Newfoundland.

Reduced Taxation.

Another remark made by my learned friend was that after the reduction of taxation the revenue did not come up to expectations. There is not the slightest doubt about that. But why was not better consideration given to that fact when the Government were considering their reduction? \$380,000 was the amount of the reduction made by the Government. I contend that when this amount of \$380,000 was under consideration, everything possible should have been considered. And such was not the case.

I am told that all the members of the Executive were not present when the matter was decided upon. I do not know whether that is true or not, but in any case the matter did not receive a great deal of consideration. We, as members of the F.P.U., have been considering the matter of the reduction of the tariff. We have expressed our opinion and we have brought our opinions before the Government. We asked for a reduction in tea, sugar and other articles, but we never contemplated that there would be a reduction of three cents on granulated and four cents on cube sugar. If the Government wanted to take off the duty on sugar, why did they not take off two cents on granulated and keep on one cent? That would have given them fifty or sixty thousand dollars. The amount of sugar consumed since the reduction has nearly doubled, and at one cent a pound that would have given \$50,000 or \$60,000 revenue. Then, again, they took four cents off cube sugar. That is the sugar used by professional men, by business men, by men who have plenty of money to pay for it.

What They Should Have Done.

The Government took off four cents when they should have put on 2 cents and made the duty 6. For these reasons I do not agree with a lot that has been said by my hon. friend, Mr. Currie. I hope that when any such matter comes before the Government it will receive better consideration than heretofore. I do not believe that the duty should be taken off these articles altogether. I do not believe in bringing in a number of articles and making them free of

duty. The people expect a lot of money to be spent upon public necessities, and that being so, it is not fair that all these things should be free. One cent a pound upon sugar should have been left, and the people would have been just as well pleased to get that reduction. Then that particular duty should be ear-marked. I do not believe in everything being placed to the general revenue. There are various things required by the fishermen for which certain monies should be especially ear-marked, say for such things as motor boats, bait depots, etc. Certain duties should be ear-marked for certain purposes.

The Election.

Another remark made by my hon. friend was in regard to the recent elections. He said that where the recent policy of the Government was discussed, the Government was victorious. What was discussed down North? What was discussed in the districts where Mr. Blandford, Mr. Morison, Mr. Squires and other gentlemen stood? What was discussed but matters of policy? I contend that in the northern districts nothing but the Government's policy was laid before the people. It was in the northern districts that the matters were discussed, and no other matters were laid before the people. Elsewhere and in the Southern Districts anything and everything was sufficient to hurl about, and we find the men who fought these districts attacking not only the Opposition party, but the F.P.U., with such cries as Socialism and Godless Schools, and other catch-cries.

Dastardly Attacks.

I have here now in my hand a paper issued just previous to the election, in which such dastardly charges are made against the F.P.U. Now, Mr. Speaker, where is this dastardly thing, Socialism? Where is it in the F.P.U.? This kind of thing was got off on dozens of platforms in the elections. I contend that we are as far from Socialism in the F.P.U. as the North Pole is from the South. We have never had anything to do with Socialism, as it is known in Germany and England; it never had a foothold in the Councils of the F.P.U. We have been accused of circulating "Cotton's Weekly" and "The Menace." Now, Sir, we have never circulated "Cotton's Weekly" or "The Menace." I have never taken "Cotton's Weekly." It is true it was sent to me for three months, but I returned it and told them I did not want to have anything to do with it. If you are going to run an election upon such stuff as that, how can you say that the policy of the Government has been laid before the people, and that you have won on the merits of your policy?

Now, Mr. Speaker, what does the Speech contain? I was expecting that the first Speech that we would hear in this House would contain something that would be of real benefit to the fishermen.

The Premier congratulated us as the new members of the House. I do not think he really meant that. I think he would prefer that some of his friends had been returned in or places. But, Sir, now that we are here, I hope that we will work together that we will be able to do something that will be of great benefit to the people, and that at the end of four years we will be able to say that the fishermen of this country are in a better position than they are now.

As I said before, there is nothing

of importance to fishermen in the Speech from the Throne. I see there is reference to the water powers on Labrador. I doubt whether anything will ever come from that. There is no chance of it. There is no more chance of getting a company to undertake the development of these water powers than there is of my flying to Heaven to-night. If the Premier can show us one specific letter that he can lay before the House to show that he is negotiating with some substantial company or man to open up the water powers of Labrador, I would believe it. And I would ask the Premier that he hand any agreement he may contemplate to the House, and to take the House into his confidence before anything of a binding nature is done, so that we may not be party to anything that is likely to cause friction with the fishermen of the country. We have several agreements with companies and corporations, and particularly with the Reid-Nidd Co. They all appeared to be splendid when brought before the House, but were of doubtful benefit when the agreement came into operation.

Should Submit Them.

I certainly hope something will come of this Labrador business, and I hope the Premier will lay his proposals before us in a friendly way before they are embodied in a formal agreement, so that something may be done to develop these water powers in the interest of the country. One thing that strikes me about this matter is the dispute over the boundary question. That seems likely to wreck the whole proposition. If people are going to spend six millions or one million dollars in a venture like this, they are not going to do so without knowing who has the right to give them the land, and who is going to give it to them. Another matter is that some provision will be necessary to prevent the exportation of pulp wood from the Labrador. Now, I hope we won't have any measure of that sort. If we do, I am sorry, but we shall have to oppose it from this side of the House.

Whale Fishery.

Then there is going to be an investigation into the whale fishery. I remember taking an interest in this whaling business when it first came up in Newfoundland. Quite a number of fishermen presented a petition to Sir Robert Bond, who was then in power, against allowing any whale factories in this country. An investigation was then supposed to have taken place, and the decision of the Government was that no injury had been caused to the Norwegian fishery by the killing of whales there. Now that the whales have been exterminated and the damage done we find the Government are to have an investigation to find out what effect the killing of whales had on the fisheries.

There are hundreds and thousands of fishermen in Newfoundland who think that if you kill the whales you will get no bait. I do not give this as my opinion. I have no opinion upon the matter; but these fishermen think that if you kill the whales you destroy the agency which drives the bait fishes towards the shore. They may be right and they may be wrong, but why should the Government have waited ten or twelve years, until all the whales have been killed out, and then sit down and make an investigation into the matter?

Cold Storage.

Another thing that we want is Cold Storage, and the Government

are going to see now what can be done in this matter. The only way to deal with that question is to erect bait stations, and in cases where the fishermen would not have easy access to these stations, have a flotilla of motor boats to carry bait to where they can get it. Thousands and thousands of quintals of fish are lost annually to our fishermen because of the want of bait? If the Government had done what we wanted there would be no necessity to take up this matter now. The Fishermen's Union offered to erect bait depots free and maintain them free if the Government would provide the money for the materials.

We knew that our fishermen wanted this, and we offered to assist the Government in the matter of erection and maintenance; all they had to do was to provide the materials; but, of course, nothing was done; and now we are going to have another investigation to see whether such a thing as bait depots are required. Now, give it up and get down to business. Allocate \$100,000, and offer to every harbor that will come forward and agree to build the depots free and maintain them free, whatever the cost of the necessary materials will be—\$1,000 or \$2,000, or whatever it may be—and you will find that nothing that you have done since you have been a Government will be of greater value to the fishermen.

More About Coal.

We are also going to have something done with the coal again. We are going to have a professor come here and tell us about our coal. Well, it seems to me that we have had a lot of men come here from time to time to tell us whether we have coal or not, but we do not seem to have got any further ahead. If there is coal here I would like to see it located. There is nothing I would not do to settle this question; but whether, in the event of coal being found, it is going to be a tremendous benefit to our people is another matter. I think it would be of very great benefit in developing the interior resources of the Colony, and the Fishermen's Union, Mr. Speaker, will do nothing to cause any trouble to the Government if their object is to find out fair and square what coal there is in the interior.

Then as regards the supplying of coal to the outports, we have taken up this question. We find quite a lot of trouble in getting schooners and many a harbor that wants coal cannot get schooners to bring it. We have done what we can, in fact we have supplied all our harbors that wanted coal at \$6.00 a ton. Some of the business men think that we are off our heads because we are doing that, but I want to say that as far as we are concerned, we have lost no money on the coal we have delivered to the outports; and if we can deliver coal at \$6.00 a ton and make a profit on it, I don't see why business men cannot do the same. We are bringing in a load of coal now to sell in St. John's to the poor people at \$6.80 a ton. Coal has not risen in Sydney to the extent that local business men say it has.

Profitable Price.

Coal can be landed here at \$6.80 a ton if the business men are prepared to sell at a small profit; but of course, you cannot expect business men to be philanthropists. But why do not the representatives of St. John's do something? Where is Mr. Higgins? Why does he not try to do something for the people of St. John's?

Who have just returned him with such a tremendous vote? Why should he not get four or five men together and charter a steamer and bring down coal here and sell it at cost? It could be landed at the Government wharf and the Government could put a scales there so that it could be weighed out.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't intend to delay the House with my remarks on this occasion, because our presence here indicates something unusual. It is not by accident that we have come here. A revolution, though a peaceful one, has been made in Newfoundland. The fisherman, the common man, the toiler of Newfoundland, has made up his mind that he is going to be represented upon the floors of this House to a larger extent than he ever was before.

Day of the Common Man.

And the day will surely come, Mr. Speaker, when the fishermen of Newfoundland will have the controlling power in this House. Sir Robert Bond has laid down the issue that he is opposed to that policy I would like the Premier to open the district of Twillingate in a bye-election, and if he will do that I will resign my seat in Bonavista and oppose Sir Robert in Twillingate, and we will then decide this question as to whether the fishermen have the right to control the Government or not. I am quite satisfied to go to Twillingate District, and lay that issue before them there, and have them decide it, and I will be content with the result. The common man all over the world, Mr. Speaker, has made up his mind that the future is going to be a different thing from what the past has been with him. Men are no longer contented to be slaves. They are going to be represented and have a voice in the making of laws of their country.

Want A Change.

They are not going to be content any longer to go to work at 6 in the morning and knock off at 6 in the afternoon, and then go home as best they can, getting something to eat and go to bed, and get up the next morning and go to work again, and do that for three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, and be just as well off at the end of December as they were when they started on the second of January. There is a general protest all over the world against these conditions. You can see it in England; you can see it even in China where the people rose up last year and overthrew a government and had been in control for thousands of years, and established a republic. And if the Chinese can do these things, how is it that men living in Anglo-Saxon countries cannot have a greater say as to how they shall be governed?

Heretofore they have not used the powers which they possess, but they are now waking up to see that unless they have public representation, unless they have men to represent them on the floors of the Assembly, they are not going to get what they should get.

Where Does It Go?

I shall have a considerable amount to say upon matters that come before the House, especially in connection with expenditures. We are not here to fight the Government on small details of general matters, but we want to get at the expenditures. Four millions of dollars are taken from the people of Newfoundland and expended by the Government, and of that four millions the totting masses pay the

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