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Semi-Weekly Telegraph

ST. JOHN, N. B., MAY 20, 1908.

GETTING AT THE TRUTH

While New Brunswick is growing ac-
customed to revelations concerning the
provincial government which it rejected
in March last, Hon. Mr. Fleming's bud-
get speech will cause fresh amazement.
Speaking with the knowledge of one who
has had opportunity to learn at least a
part of what the late administration did,
he presented Thursday afternoon an array
of facts which, had they been known be-
fore the elections, would probably have
prevented the election of more than two
or three members of the present oppo-
sition, and which would have justified the
electors in defeating every supporter of
the old government.

Mr. Fleming does not yet know the
whole story, but we must suppose that
the whole of it will be told before the
session is over. The discovery Thursday
of a hitherto unsuspected bill of nearly
\$30,000 against the Central railway, which
has been withheld for six or seven years
suggests that new liabilities may be un-
earthed at any time. This bill is alleged
to be for "rails and fasteners" sold to
the Central by the Intercolonial. It will
be asked why the I.C.R. was so slow in
demanding payment, and whether or not
the delay was a part of the scheme for
keeping the people as much as possible in
the dark concerning the Central.

The Telegraph this morning prints an
extended account of Hon. Mr. Fleming's
speech, and it desires to impress upon the
electors in every county the necessity for
carefully reading it if they are desirous of
knowing where the province stands, what
has become of their money, and how bra-
zen was the conduct of Mr. Robinson's
supporters on the public platform during
the recent provincial campaign. When
on the eve of the elections, the govern-
ment of the day caused to be printed in
the Sun an alleged summary of the report
of Mr. Robinson's expert auditor, this
journal warned the electors that the re-
port as printed was garbled and incom-
plete. It is now seen that had the truth
about the public accounts and the admin-
istration's methods of carrying on the
public business been spread before the
people a week before the elections Pre-
mier Robinson and the handful of sup-
porters who survived would very prob-
ably be in private life today. Mr.
Fleming shows how the policy of con-
cealment was persisted in. The surplus
which the late government claimed was
figured out by methods which can only
be interpreted as disclosing a dishonest
determination to hide the truth from the
people in the hope that in their ignor-
ance they might give the government of
that day another lease of power.

The electors who overwhelmed the reck-
less government at the polls were con-
vinced that things were in a bad way,
but few of them suspected the frenzied
financing and deceit which Hon. Mr.
Fleming laid bare Thursday. Men who
will defend the old government's record
will defend anything. But they will not
in future succeed in deceiving even those
who were blind supporters of the old re-
gime. The facts now coming out will
stick in the minds of New Brunswickers
for years to come.

AT OTTAWA

The report that the Laurier govern-
ment might dissolve the House at once,
which was current here Thursday, and
doubtless in other provinces also, is dis-
cussed in our Ottawa despatches this
morning. The situation is one from which
steadfast supporters of the administra-
tion will not be able to extract much com-
fort. Hon. Mr. Aylesworth's attempt to
secure a partisan advantage brought the
government into its present trouble. Sir
Wilfrid Laurier has made concessions to
placate the opposition, but it now appears
that these are insufficient to do full jus-
tice to the provinces and that the oppo-
sition believe it well to continue the
blockade which up to date has been so
successful.

Sir Wilfrid, it is true, might escape
from one horn of the dilemma by going
to the country, but that would bring the

other horn in view, and there is much
reason for thinking this second horn is
long and sharp. What is the country's
present feeling toward the administration?
That is the question the Liberal leaders
will be debating today among themselves
before they decide what avertures to
make to Mr. Borden.

It may be assumed that some of the
government's advisers would prefer an
immediate election on the ground that
more scandals at Ottawa are inevitable
and that the government would do well
to take the plunge before it is further
discredited. It is unlikely that this view
will prevail. The scandals already made
public have had a tremendous effect upon
public opinion and they are too fresh to
have lost their weight with the electors.
The government's tactics in ordering a
sort of second civil service investigation
showed a desire to gain time and give
the people other things to think about
before asking them to pass upon the ad-
ministration. The government needs some
sort of constructive programme for cam-
paign material, and it needs funds and a
period of active organization. If it were
to go to the people today its principal
campaign slogan would be "Not guilty,"
and the jury would be strongly pre-
judiced against the defendant.

So far as the election bill is concerned,
Mr. Borden set forth the opposition's
position concisely at the conclusion of his
speech on Wednesday when he said:
"The statement of the premier was not
clear enough to justify the opposition in
withdrawing opposition. He would say
briefly what the opposition believed to
be their duty."

"They believed that clause one author-
izing federal intervention in two specially
selected provinces, should be withdrawn
(Applause.)"

"They believed that the clauses provid-
ing that ballots improperly marked by re-
turning officers should be valid, was a
dangerous departure from the secrecy of
the vote, that would make it possible to
show how every man voted, and it was
better to set aside a few electors than
violate the principle of the secret ballot."
Mr. Borden did not believe that the min-
ister of justice intended such violation
and considered that the purpose sought
could be obtained in another way.

"Thirdly, Mr. Borden said the oppo-
sition believed it ought to stand out for
simultaneous bye-elections. (Applause.)"

The whole country will be quick to
grasp the significance of Sir Wilfrid's
retreat in this matter. The Montreal
Gazette tersely sums up the situation
thus:

"With a multitude of words that did
not serve their intended purpose of dis-
tracting attention from his retreat, Sir
Wilfrid Laurier has accepted Mr. Bor-
den's propositions in regard to the ar-
rangement of the voters' lists in Manitoba,
British Columbia and the unorganized
territory of other provinces. The oppo-
sition's resistance to the proposals of the
Aylesworth bill has been justified by in-
complete. It is now seen that had the truth
about the public accounts and the admin-
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THE BUDGET

Hon. Mr. Fleming's budget speech
will be well received throughout New
Brunswick. It will recall many other
provincial budget speeches delivered in this
province during recent years—it is no
different. The other budget speeches had
for their main purpose concealment. Mr.
Fleming, thanks to the vote of the
people, was in a position to expose much
of that which his predecessors concealed.
Some of his critics complain that he
dealt with ancient history. Much of it is
not so ancient that the people of this
province are done paying for it. One does
not wonder that critics friendly to the
late government object to Mr. Fleming's
course in turning on the light. They natu-
rally would prefer that he should leave
past transactions undisturbed; but how
can he when formidable five-year-old bills
against the Central turn up, and when
the excessive interest charges that must
be met by the taxpayers speak so loudly
about the transactions of the late admin-
istration?

And more chapters are to come. All
the bills are not yet in. The Crown Land
Department audit is not yet complete.

Full information as to the Department of
Public Works is not yet at hand. And
the Central Railway mystery still
calls for light. The James Barnes Con-
struction Company is now mentioned
afresh in connection with the purchase
of \$47,000 worth of rails and fasteners for
that wonderful railway. All in all it is,
perhaps, fortunate that there are still
within the confines of the province so
many gentlemen who enjoyed the confi-
dence and esteem of the Pugsley-Robin-
son government, and who today are fairly
panting for a chance to go before the
Central Railway commission of enquiry
and tell all they know about the nature
and progress of an enterprise which swal-
lowed up public money as fast as even an
expert like Dr. Pugsley could get the
bonds issued.

It is by no means Mr. Fleming's fault
that he was compelled to spend much time
in dealing with the acts of his predeces-
sors. We have to pay the bills they in-
curred. They cheerfully put on the mort-
gage and left the people to do the rest.
Mr. Fleming directed attention to cer-
tain increases in expenditure that are par-
ticularly worthy of attention. The inter-
est charges call for an extra \$30,000 and
the bridges contracted for by the govern-
ment responsible for the interest charges
will cost an extra \$30,000. The new gov-
ernment cheerfully assumes responsibility
for another increase of \$30,000, that for
education. This includes additional aid
to that sterling public institution, the
University of New Brunswick, and the
augmentation of the salaries of school
teachers. Mr. Fleming invited his crit-
ics' attention to the expenditure for
education, but that is scarcely the sort of
ammunition they are looking for. They
will be likely to avoid that subject and
charge the government with extravagance
because it does not repudiate contracts
entered into or expenses incurred by the
last administration.

The outlook, as Mr. Fleming truly
says, is not dark but extremely hopeful.
The period of reckless waste, and worse
than waste, is at an end. The province
has been delivered from the spoilsman.
It is in the hands of men who promise
progress and fair play, protection and de-
velopment of the natural resources, and
honesty and publicity in the management
of public business. If these men keep
faith with the public they will go far.
At least they have started well.

A BRIDGE

Ald. Scully's note of motion regard-
ing a small committee to discuss a har-
bor bridge is timely and may result in
useful action. The city has made costly
experiments with the ferry service, but
has by no means established satisfactory
communication with the West Side. The
passage of time will intensify dissatis-
faction over existing conditions, for the
traffic, which now exceeds the accommo-
dation, is growing rapidly. If the ferry
service is to be developed, the city will
have to retire the Quagondy and the
Western Extension and build new boats
to replace them. The initial and subse-
quent cost of the Ludlow, if capitalized,
would represent a very formidable sum.
To face the future squarely we should
multiply that sum by two or three, and
we should remember also that the ferry
service is not the model solution of the
problem but only a compromise.

The city needs a bridge. The C. P. R.
and the street railway need a bridge.
Every year increases the need of all three
of these interests for easy communication
between the city proper and Carleton.
The provincial government is talking about
a bridge. The structure which would best
meet the situation would be one which
would provide for teams, pedestrians,
street cars and railroad traffic, and for
such a bridge the Navy Island site will
naturally suggest itself. It may be urged
that to span Navy Island would not
meet the convenience of many people, but
would it not serve more people and more
important interests than can be served
by a ferry and a bridge at the Falls?
With proper approaches and a street car
service a bridge at the Island would seem
to fill most of the requirements. One will
say the cost is prohibitive, and another
that it would have to contain a draw. The
cost of the ferry improvements which will
be inevitable without the bridge might
well be considered in this connection.
There is no reason for supposing the city
will not ultimately find partners for the
enterprise. Mr. Scully's motion, when it
comes, should lead to a discussion of the
preliminary, and it should at least show
whether or not the project is to become
practicable in the near future.

BUSINESS CONDITIONS

This week's Maritime Merchant con-
tains a talk with Mr. James Jack on the
business outlook in New Brunswick. The
Merchant, in introducing the interview,
remarks that there is probably no one
"better situated to size up the conditions
than the manager of one of the great
mercantile agencies." Industrially, Mr.
Jack says, things are slack in New Brun-
swick as compared with a year or two
ago, "but," he adds, "the condition of the
people universally is good, and no one

who has studied the situation has any
apprehension whatever of prospective dis-
tress. We realize that the world at pre-
sent is passing through one of its periodic
resting spells and that it is good philo-
sophy to sit pat for a while and wait
for a new era of industry and enterprise."

After referring to the depression of the
lumber markets in Great Britain and the
United States, Mr. Jack reminds the Mer-
chant that our lumbermen are in a posi-
tion to wait. Possibly his view of the
situation is somewhat more cheerful than
that of the lumbermen themselves. Any-
way, he draws this picture of them:
"They have had seven fat years—the fat-
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