THE PREMIER IS HEARD

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He merely brought this incident to the attention of the premier, who might act on it if he thought fit. Before touching the contents of the speech, the remarks of the mover and seconder of the reply, the member for Alberni also dwelt upon the conduct of the recent campaign, producing a canvassers' card alleged to have been used by one of the Conservative organizations in this city, in which the concluding line was read as: "If absent from the city get age of voter." He could not imagine that the benevolent intention was uppermost—that if the voter was absent through old age, it was desired to ascertain the fact in order to arrange an old age pension in his behalf. Of course it might not suggest itself to some that there was a desire to ascertain the age of the absent voter in order that he might be successfully impersonated—not even in a city that voted 300 people who were not entitled to vote.

Turning then to the address, he first gave his attention to the subject of agriculture, hoping that the member for Delta, who had introduced himself as a "son of the soil," would as a government supporter prove more successful in pressing the necessities of agriculture upon the administration than had his energetic predecessor, who had urged the matter continually during his presence in the House, even to advocacy of free lands for the actual settler, which was a subject meriting the attention of the government. The latter should remove every possible obstacle so as to induce the settling up of the land, and enable all who were willing to work to get on the soil.

Land Clearing.

He hoped in this connection that the government would devise some measure to assist the settler in clearing heavily timbered land. Speaking for Alberni, there was one portion of the district the development of which was seriously restricted because of the impossibility of clearing the land, and making a living while doing so. He thought that some arrangement to assist the settler could surely be made, the cost of clearing being made a first charge on the land.

With respect to the deferred appointment of a new Finance Minister, and the the temporary administration of the Finance Department by the Attorney-General, it was probably found convenient by the government to have such a man as the Attorney-General in charge of the spending department, and in this connection there might be some interesting disclosures when the supplementary estimates were presented to the House. As for the Ministry of Agriculture, however, as the new member for Delta had introduced himself as "a son of the soil," he would suggest that the opportunity was presented to the Premier of strengthening his cabinet by calling to it the member for Delta as Minister of Agriculture.

With regard to the foreshadowed timber legislation, he had heard that the Premier on his election pilgrimage, had got as far as Revelstoke when he was held up by the timbermen and forced to pledge his promised legislation as the price of their support. It would be interesting to hear the First Minister's explanation as to how he had climbed down from his position on this question of two years ago.

Regarding railway legislation, which had been undoubtedly the paramount issue of the recent election, the House would be greatly interested in seeing the contract embodied in legislation and how carefully therein the rights of the people of British Columbia had been safeguarded. All knew what it should contain for if he had been largely deliated upon during the election campaign.

The public had read in the Victoria Colonist in its issue of the 23rd November, a carefully prepared pre-election assurance appearing over the signature of the Hon. Richard McBride, printed in ten sections, and which contained a number of distinct promises that had undoubtedly contributed largely to the party's success. The signature of this statement bearing the signature of the Premier was highly edifying. The situation in Victoria had appeared so desperate a few days before the election that the proprietor of the Colonist had himself travelled post haste up the line and impressed upon the Premier that unless desperate remedies were resorted the day was lost—and presumably had induced the Premier to subscribe to what had been written for him. Although the Colonist had been convicted of telegram forgery on another occasion, and stood discredited among all newspapers by that act, still this particular statement over his signature must have been seen by the premier, and as he had not repudiated it as a forgery, it was to be assumed that it was bona fide. The member for Alberni proceeded to read the several pledges contained in this statement bearing the premier's signature, especially directing attention to his reference to a government control over rates. It was exceedingly interesting to read, in relation to this assurance of the premier what Mr. D. D. Mann had said at the Victoria Board of Trade as to the impossibility of fixing rates in advance—that the railway did not want the government to control the rates, and the government did not want the railway to do so, "the railway commission being the compromise." Yet the premier in this section 8 of his pre-election pledge had given a distinct promise of the government's course.

Manitoba's Case

The member for Alberni held that the course and action of Manitoba in the control of rates should be closely followed by British Columbia. It was there enacted that in consideration of the provincial guarantee assistance that the lieutenant-governor-in-council should fix the rates up to a certain date (the 30th June) on all the company's lines in Manitoba. There was no talk of railway commission control there; it was fixed and definite control by the government of the province concerned. Yet Mr. Mann said here, "we will leave the rates to the railway commission." He would like to ask how competition in rates was ever to be secured if the matter of rates were left to the railway commission? If the contract made the passenger rate 3 cents a mile, as in Manitoba, it was true the railway commission might say that it should be 5, but the province would control the penalty, it might cancel the guarantee or deal otherwise with the company as the situation demanded. He would take it for granted that the members for Vancouver and others directly interested in the matter of freight rates would see that they really obtained the same rates as insisted upon and secured in Manitoba.

With regard to the promised guarantee of white labor and the payment of standard wages, he held that what had transpired before in the history of similar guarantees by the present government entitled the promise to be received with skepticism. He recalled where a road two years ago had sought exemption from taxation, and it was thought by members on the opposition side of the House that as the company was asking considerable it might be well to insert conditions. A labor-protection clause was accordingly moved by Mr. Henderson on February 11, 1908, that the bill be referred back to committee of the whole, but this had been voted down 22 to 14.

The premier and others had said that they would, instead introduce a fair wage clause, but had refused Mr. Macdonald's amendment that provided for "the current wage paid white labor." Another amendment by Mr. Hawthornthwaite providing for a minimum wage of $2.50 per day had also been rejected. The fair wage clause devised by the premier was in effect of no avail whatever. The member for Alberni claimed that recently he had been informed by a man working on the railway construction near Alberni that the wage paid was $1.85 a day, out of which 60 cents daily was deducted for food.

Turning again to the pledges published in the Colonist just previous to the election, the worthy proprietor of the Colonist had possibly done the province good service as it was hard to see how in the face of so distinct pledges the government could evade the promised guarantee. It would not do to let the railway commission control the rates as that body could not discriminate between the C. P. R. and the C. N. R., whereas if the government was the controlling power it could dictate the rates as Manitoba had.

Passing to more local matters, he held that numerous districts represented by government supporters had been especially favored in appropriations, and urged that Alberni, returning a Liberal, had received less generous treatment. He closed by censuring the government for permitting the Nanaimo river to wash away the property of the settlers, an acre on this side and then an acre on that. And all because a few hundred dollars would require to be spent. He pressed in closing for a fair share of expenditure on the roads and public works of his own district, one of the best and biggest in all B. C.

Mr. Jardine

Mr. Jardine (Esquimalt) who followed, directed attention to the omission in the speech of any reference to the retirement from the cabinet of Messrs. Tatlow and Fulton, and sought some explanation from the premier. He also wanted to be informed why the attorney-general had significantly deserted the chair of justice to take the more comfortable place of the finance administrator. As to the late election, he wished to find no fault with the manner in which the campaign had been conducted. Both sides put up as fair and honest a fight as could be, and the Conservatives have a right to claim that the election