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HOUSE of ASSEMBLY

Opposition Continues "Third Degree" -- Government Being Brought to Time on the Estimates--Debate on Police Vote

FRIDAY, March 14.

The good work of the loyal Oppositionists in the Assembly was continued yesterday when the session opened, and he was a poor observer of human nature who could not discern on the countenances of the occupants of the Government benches from the Premier down to the latest "recruit" a reflection of the surprise and dismay they entertain on witnessing such talent for getting at the root of things and such a reserve of political sagacity and acumen as that displayed by the comparatively small though doughty workers who sit at the right of the Speaker's chair. The unexpected ability and unimagined versatility in debate possessed by the Opposition members has disconcerted as well as surprised the Government forces so that they are on their best behaviour and show that they entertain a wholesome respect for their opponents. One of the first and most important matters on the tapis yesterday was the discussion of a largely signed petition from the residents of Bay St. George's praying for a Branch Railway from Stephenville to Port au Port spoken to by the Premier who referred to the disabilities of the people of that place and St. Barbe labouring under in the past, the splendid possibilities of the districts in many ways and the intention of doing partial if not full justice to these places in future. Sir Edward gave interesting statistics as to the growth of the population of these important parts of the country. They were in the remote past taken conjointly and in 1857 their population was 3,300; in 1874 an increase had been recorded but in 20 years they had doubled and totalled 8,600. They were given representation in 1882 when the late Michael Cary was elected for St. George's, and the late Mr. Boone, for St. Barbe. In 1884 St. George's had 5,400 of a population and St. Barbe 6,500, and in 1891 their respective populations were 6,500 and 6,200; in 1901, 9,000 and 8,184, and last year, respectively, 11,800 and 12,000 or roundly for the districts 20,000. He thought these districts would quadruple themselves in a few years and he traced their history up to the time in 1904 when the mortgage which the French had on them was raised by British diplomacy impelled by local agitation and French "rights" were exchanged for an exchange of British territory in Africa thereby causing further possibilities for growth and development for these two promising countries.

Mr. Kent had listened to the Prime Minister's speech on the matter with

pleasure. One of the greatest problems of railways and railway enterprise was development. These two sections, St. George's and St. Barbe, held in themselves some of the greatest promises relating to the future of Nfld. and not a year passed that they did not hear of the great resources that were discovered in the earth or grew on the surface or of the great products the soil was capable of producing. St. George's was already forging well ahead in the matter of agricultural pursuits. Its farmers were numerous and settled on rich soil and had a great future before them. The first great resource was coal, with copper, lime and other natural assets well worthy of development. The same might be applied to St. Barbe which is also one of the most promising agricultural sections in the country. This petition asks for a railway and is well worthy the favourable consideration of the Government and he thought it was their duty to enquire into the conditions prevailing there and to see how far our financial circumstances and the possible returns from this projected railway would allow them to go in according to the request of the petitioners and he felt sure that the Government would recognize its obvious duty in the premises.

THE SUPPLY BILL.

The House having gone into Committee on Supply.

Mr. Kent referred to the lack of any satisfactory or correct information regarding surveys. He referred to the number of documents burned in the big fire of 1892. The surveys of allotments of land were destroyed in the Surveyor General's Office of the time and all that information by which the land held by private owners for collection are placed or plotted on the maps and plans now in the offices of the Crown Lands is made up from time to time as either old grants or new grants are issued. The result is that the plans are very incorrect not being taken from any survey of the lands itself, but the individual cases or leases are plotted and placed on plans in the office itself. He had occasion to visit the offices for clients and in every case found overlapping on the plans that exist. This should be remedied as the rights of many individual land owners were affected. He cited a case where two parties had what they considered separate pieces of land surveyed in St. John's East, they had applied for and had grants issued, and when they went to get their diagrams they found both pieces of land overlapping. He (Mr. Kent) with the clerk adjusted the matter but it entailed considerable expense on the individuals concerned, and he could cite similar cases during the past four years. The time is come to replace these plans with correct and up to date plans of the granted and ungranted lands of the city.

Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Mines (Mr. Blandford) said that the Deputy was giving the matter his earnest attention with a view of doing for the lands what Mr. Kent had suggested.

His name having been mentioned for a vote in the Estimates, Mr. Kent asked as to the position and status on the civil list of Mr. James Spratt. He showed that he received as much as Mr. Churchill, the Superintendent of Public Works in salary, when the Premier pointed out that his duties were to look after the proper construction of concrete and mason work

at which he was an expert and that his function was to see work in this line properly and satisfactorily performed.

Mr. Kent now referred to the various duties performed by Mr. Power, as Magistrate of Bell Island. He had seen this official day after day deal with just as heavy and responsible a docket as could be seen any day in the District Court in St. John's. His civil jurisdiction and the amount of business he transacts was astonishing and the time was come when the importance of the magistrate's position on Bell Island, should be recognized. He showed by comparison with the stipends of other magistrates that \$750 was utterly insufficient for this man and hoped the Minister of Justice would grant an increase.

The Hon. Minister of Justice, Mr. Morison, referred as to the justice of some increase for Mr. Power, but could not see how at present it could be granted.

PLEA FOR THE POLICE.

In connection with the votes for the Department of Justice, Mr. Kent spoke in the strongest possible terms of the unfair manner in which the police were treated in the matter of salary. It is simply disgraceful to expect men to work at this particular juncture for the pittance which the police get for the important service they render to the public. They will however, get little fair play or satisfaction from the present Government and nothing will be done for them this session. However, next session, when Sir Robert Bond and the Liberal Government are in power, the police can rest assured of more equitable treatment.

Mr. Kent said that he had brought this matter before the Minister of Justice the past two sessions, and was sorry to see that the estimates now brought down, did not indicate that the desire he then expressed, would be complied with. All would agree with him that the police and firemen were very poorly paid. It was a position that required the very best type of manhood to perform. They had, police and firemen, to work under circumstances the most trying to a human being. In all kinds of weather, under most trying circumstances the police should be about protecting us while we slept, and we seldom stop to think what the policeman actually means to us. A man must be in the force 15 years before he earned \$1.25 per day. Compare that with the way the police were paid in other cities and we can see that we pay the police less than any other country in the world. With their large increases the past four years, the Government could well afford now to deal justly with these deserving parties the police and firemen, the latter being men who faced extreme danger and who protected hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of property. As regarded the police they got the service of the best young men at \$1 per day, increasing to \$1.10 after one year's service, \$1.15 after 5 years, and \$1.25 after 15 years of service. Looking at the cost of living at present and the demands on the policeman, it is only reasonable to suppose that they should be given at least a living wage. These men (or those who were married), must educate children, feed, clothe, and house them and at what a salary. Those who do not live in barracks get for rent the sum of \$48, but any person with experience knows that this amount will not secure for a man a respectable dwelling. The cost of coal was also a factor in household economy with them, and it was now prohibited. This condition of affairs ap-

plied to the St. John's policemen, particularly, as he has to pay the city taxes which the outport policeman was not asked to bear. He was sorry that the Minister of Justice could not see his way clear to make a thorough revision of the police pay rolls, as the Liberal Party did some years ago, when the Prime Minister of to-day was in the Justice Department. This now was utterly inadequate, and as the Minister of Justice could meet this matter and revise the salaries, when additional estimates came up he (Mr. Kent) hoped he would do so and give police and firemen a liberal living wage to which they were so justly entitled.

Hon. Mr. Morison Minister of Justice, said that while on the question of salaries, in the Department of Justice, he was sorry that Mr. Kent did not evince that sympathy for the head of the Department that he held for the police and firemen. Mr. Kent here interjected that that gentleman could well look after his own interests, and the outcome was that Mr. Morison could not see that the members of the force were after all so badly paid. The Government must cut its cloth according to its measure and though thousands of dollars were squandered in useless salaries for Agricultural "experts" for bulls, exhibitions and contingencies, not one cent could be granted the police and firemen who protect the police. The Premier, Sir E. P. Morris, also pointed out the very "liberal" pay the police on the whole receive, and could not see that an increase for them was so absolutely necessary. He gave interesting data (he is strong on statistics always), as to the amounts the police receive and their lines have fallen in such pleasant places, according to the Premier that we must wonder how they can spend their bulging salaries in the short space of a year. Sir Edward said that there were no gratters in our police force. Well, hardly, and for obvious reasons. The present "People's Party" save the mark, can do all the shady to be done around this little domain and they do not want the help of the police to do it either. They are perfectly capable themselves.

Mr. Kent said he was sorry but he had not the sympathy with the Minister of Justice that he, the Minister might think. He believed that the \$2,000 per year (he the Minister receives) was not the limit of his bills on the Exchequer. He said the Premier sympathized with the firemen and police but not with the men who protect the men could not live on sympathy. He then made a vigorous onslaught on the Government for the truculent and unfair policy they had evinced towards the police and it is not the fault of the Opposition that these deserving men (police and firemen) were not treated with fair play.

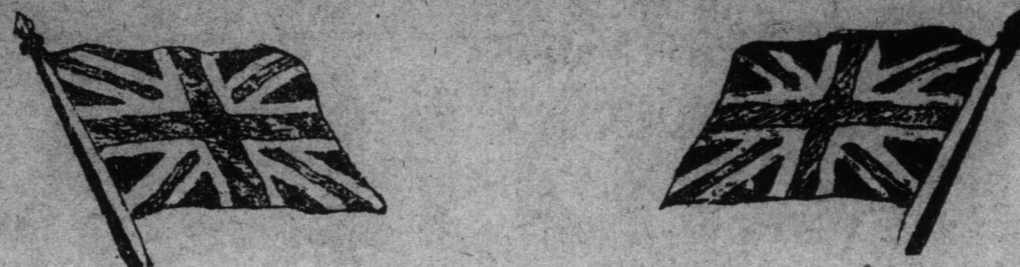
Mr. Clift—in connection with a vote for the Tuberculosis Hospital asked about the proposed sanatoria, when the Premier said that last year a vote of \$20,000 had been taken to defray the expenses for the past year. Plans were drawn up for them by a Specialist in Canada at the request of the donors, and the general sanatoria in St. John's will cost from \$75,000 to \$100,000. The Government has been looking round for suitable localities to build them in the outports. Several sites about St. John's were available but none were yet decided upon. The Messrs. Reid would not alone build and equip that at St. John's but these in the Outports. The Opposition severely criticised several other votes in the Estimates.

Mr. Clapp also opposed proceeding any further with the Estimates. He was in possession of correspondence from White Bay complaining both of the mail service as well as the coastal service. The Col. Secretary and P. M. G. were also in receipt of complaints of a like nature and from which no satisfaction could be obtained. Mr. Clapp then asked if it was the intention of the Government to look into the matter before the passage of the Postal Estimates. He was informed the service was never worse.

Quite a number of petitions were presented including one from Mr. Clapp for a road from the Riverhead of White Bay, which he declared to be badly needed and for which he made a strong appeal supported by the Premier. The Premier gave notice of Resolutions for a railway from Quebec to Labrador, and quite a number of questions were answered including one asked for by Mr. Dwyer re expenses of agricultural stations and farm, showing that up to the 12th inst. that for printing, salaries and other items that \$698.30 had been paid and the farm and stables sold for \$7,500 to Harold Macpherson.

The House adjourned till 3 p.m. on Tuesday.

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