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The Legislative Session.

The Legislative session, which had dragged along for nearly eight weeks came to an end on Saturday last, when the House was prorogued with the usual ceremonies, by his Honor, the Lieutenant Governor. The length of the session certainly cannot be accounted for by the volume and importance of the legislation enacted; but must rather be attributed to the time spent in caucus by the Government and its supporters. From the very beginning of the session scarcely a day passed during which several hours were not by them devoted to caucus. In consequence of this manner of procedure by the Government, the sittings of the Legislature were, for the most part, very short and the members of the Opposition always ready for work were obliged to wait for hours and hours until any recalcitrant Government followers were "fixed" in the caucus. The way in which the Government thus wasted the time of the session was little short of disgraceful. Why were the Government obliged to pursue this course regarding every measure of any importance brought before the House? Were they so distrustful of their followers that they could not risk the slightest move without recourse to the "whipping into line" process; or were they so frightened of the Opposition that they considered it safer to kill time in caucus than afford reasonable time for free discussion in the House? It is not at all unlikely that the Government's tactics were inspired by both these causes. In any event, it was quite evident that whenever the faithful had not been "fixed" in caucus the Government lost control; and every opportunity the Opposition got for fair discussion they snatched and left them no leg to stand on. The Leader of the Opposition and his followers certainly put up a splendid fight, and fairly frightened the Government out of their boots. The industry, research and ability shown by Mr. Mathieson and his colleagues fairly staggered the Government and made them appear very very small. No one who has studied the matter can doubt that the vigorous course pursued by the Leader of the Opposition on the subsidy question backed up by the Island Opposition members at Ottawa, caused Sir Wilfrid Laurier to amend his address to our advantage. Then Mr. Mathieson's advocacy of our larger claims on the Federal Government; his fight to have the road money spent in the districts where it is collected; his pronouncement in favor of less frequent and less expensive changes in our school books; the Opposition's declaration in favor of keeping the expenditures within the estimates passed by the Legislature, and their persistent and reiterated demands for explanation of the hay business; these deserve the thanks of all well wishers of the Province. In many of these matters the Government were forced to moderate their arrogance.

The Government's transactions in connection with the hay constitute a most scandalous affair. The hay was purchased for \$7.00 to \$8.50 per ton and sold for \$10.50 a ton. The number of tons was 5344 and the net loss charged to the Province is \$5,885.68. The hay was carried over the International free of cost; but in the face of this it cost \$13,014.94 to procure and distribute. Among those who profited by their connection with the Government hay are Mr. Nelson Rattenbury, who received as his share \$1,115, and Col. H. M. Davison, who received no less than \$2,069.14 as his portion of the swag. There are many others who received lesser sums, which go to make up the \$13,014.94. But this is not all. Investigation in the public accounts committee as far as it went showed that no less than five car loads of hay are missing. Who got them? The more this hay business is investigated the more scandalous it becomes. There is quite a lot more to be found out about it yet. What do the people think of the Government's conduct in this matter so far as we have got?

Our readers will find in the

minority report of the Public accounts committee the facts above stated regarding the hay business. It was with the greatest difficulty, and only with the utmost perseverance that the opposition members of this committee succeeded in bringing to light as much as they did. Captain Joseph Read, the bully, was made chairman of this committee at the beginning of the session and the minority report shows how persistently he obstructed the work of investigation by failing to call meetings, from time to time. The chairman's report was held back from the House till the last moment, so that no opportunity would be afforded for discussion. The Lieutenant Governor was in the Legislative building and ready to enter the chamber to prorogue the House, before Captain Read presented his report. Captain Read knows a lot more about the Government hay business than he is willing to tell the public.

Among the bills advanced a stage on Monday the 8th was the one respecting practice in certain cases. Against some of the provisions of this bill Mr. Mathieson had previously protested, as they were regarded as very arbitrary, by members of the bar society. At this stage Mr. Mathieson submitted a protest signed by seventeen members of the Law Society and moved that the bill should not then be read a third time, but be referred back to committee for the purpose of striking out the most objectionable clause; but it was no use, Mr. Hazzard was bound to push it through and he was backed up by the Government contingent. In the evening the budget debate was resumed. Mr. Morson delivered an able speech, showing up the Government's mismanagement, their record of deficits and debt and their ridiculous course in connection with the subsidy affair.

On Tuesday Mr. Prowse made a valuable contribution to the debate on the budget. He took the Premier severely to task for the manner in which he and his friends had wasted valuable time in caucus. Every member should be free to speak his mind independently on the floor of the House instead of being fixed in caucus. He lashed the Government on the debt and the subsidies. During the evening sitting Mr. A. J. McDonald made a good speech in condemnation of the Government's policy of waste and extravagance. Every thing they touched came to destruction. We had an example in the stock farm. They had so demoralized this institution that it was now to be sold. This was how they brought everything to destruction. Mr. McDonald concluded his speech by moving amendment to the motion to go into committee of supply that "all the words after that to the end of the question be left out and the following words added instead thereof: "In the opinion of this House the expenditure of the public moneys of this province without the authority of this Legislature has assumed alarming proportions and is to a large extent responsible for the enormous debt of this province and further that it is the duty of the auditor to refuse to certify to such unauthorized expenditures and that his failure to do so is a grave dereliction of duty to the taxpayers of this Province for which the Government is responsible." This amendment was voted down on a party division and the main motion carried.

On Wednesday afternoon the prohibition bill came up for third reading but when the speaker put the motion Dr. Warburton moved in amendment that the bill be referred back to committee, for the purpose of reconsidering the clause thereof introduced by Hon. Mr. Hughes, when the bill was formerly in committee. The clause provided for the sale by druggists, without a doctor's certificate for medicinal purposes, of prescriptions containing liquor. The speaker ruled the motion to be out of order; Capt. Read moved an appeal from the speaker's ruling. After considerable contention as to authorities favoring both motions, the appeal was sustained by a small majority. In committee in the first instance the clause had been carried by a vote of 18 to 8. It was not a strict party vote. But now it was most amusing to see one after another of the Government members and supporters, who had been of the 18, swallowing themselves by recording their vote against it. This was a palpable evidence of the "fixing" process in caucus. The clause was struck out after a very amusing debate in committee. Mr. Kennedy again moved his amendment condemning the clubs; but the prohibition Government again voted it down. On the motion

for the adoption of the committee report Mr. McKinnon moved an amendment to the effect that no liquor be allowed to be used or consumed at election times, from nomination day till after polling day. This was promptly set aside by the Government machine.

During Thursday's sittings in committee of supply the question of exhibitions was considered. The grant of \$4,000 appropriated for this purpose was divided by agreement between the three counties \$1,500 for Queen's County, \$1,500 for Prince County and \$1,000 for King's County. Afterwards a supplementary estimate of \$2,000 was submitted. This was given to Queen's County so that the usual Provincial exhibition may be held. We shall consequently have this year, County exhibitions in King's and Prince, and a Provincial exhibition at Charlottetown. During the evening session Mr. Mathieson again brought to the notice of the House the case of the loss of a horse by James Abner McPhee on the Cardigan River ice in the winter of 1904. He pointed out that this man lost his only horse through the ice, in consequence of the improper bushing of the ice by the officials of the Government. He unmercifully scoured the Commissioner of Public Works and the Government generally, for their utter negligence and culpability in this matter. But the Commissioner of Public Works simply sneered at the Leader of the opposition for making so much fuss about a "dead horse."

During Friday, Mr. Mathieson called attention to the hardship to which the people of the county were subjected by the frequent changes in school books, and concluded his speech by moving, seconded by Mr. McKinnon, the following resolution:

"Whereas the frequent changing of our text books authorized for use in the public schools and the excessive prices charged for the same, imposes a very burden upon the parents and guardians of this Province:

"Be it therefore resolved that it is desirable that a committee of competent persons be appointed by this House to enquire into the matter and to select suitable text books for use in the public schools of this Province; and to recommend such action as appears best in order to secure such books at reasonable prices and to prevent unnecessary changes for the future."

So strongly did Mr. Mathieson press this matter that the Leader of the Government admitted its justice and promised to take some action in the direction indicated in the resolution.

During the budget debate, on one of the motions to go into committee of supply Mr. McKinnon moved the following amendment. That all the words after "that" to the end of the question be left out and the following words added instead thereof: "This House is of opinion that action should at once be taken by the Government upon the claims of the Province to receive from Canada its share of the Fishery award so that sufficient encouragement may be given to the fishermen of this Province to enable them to prosecute this industry to the best advantage and to contribute to the general revenue of this Island." The Government majority voted this down.

During Friday evening Mr. Mathieson resumed the debate on his motion for a committee to enquire into our claims against the Dominion Government. Captain Read moved amendment limiting our claims to specific matters. To this Mr. Prowse moved, that the following words be added: "That the scope of enquiry of said committee shall not be limited to the matters above mentioned, but all claims of this Province against Canada shall be prepared for presentation." The amendment was unanimously adopted.

Almost when the Lieutenant Governor was at the door of the assembly chamber on Saturday, Captain Read chairman of the Public Accounts committee, presented his report. It was a white washing document and was signed by Joseph Read, J. D. Melnick, John McMillan, J. F. H. Arsenault and J. W. Richards, Government members of the committee. When the motion for its adoption was made, Mr. Fraser moved, seconded by Mr. A. J. McDonald (opposition members of the committee) that the report be amended by incorporating therein the following report:

"That the report of the committee be not adopted but that it be referred back to the said committee to be amended by incorporating therein the following:—

"The present session opened on the 19th day of February, 1907, and Capt. Reid was appointed chairman of said Public Accounts Committee. That the first meeting was after repeated requests called on the 13th day of March, 1907, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon, and sat until 11 o'clock that is to say, one hour. L. B. McMillan, Sect. of Public Works was particularly examined with regard to the Rocky Point ferry, and committee adjourned until the 14th day of March last. That the said committee

again assembled at 10.45 on the 14th, and examined W. G. White with regard to extra charge for clerks in the land office and adjourned at 11.15, to meet at 2 o'clock the same day. At 2 o'clock the chairman did not meet the committee and there was no further meeting until the 9th day of April.

On the 9th of April the said Committee was called at ten minutes after ten in the forenoon, and sat until 12.40 o'clock. At this sitting Mr. H. M. Davison was examined as to his charges in connection with the distribution of the Government Hay, and we find Mr. Davison received the sum of \$2137.60 for his services being at the rate of 40 cents per ton on 5344 tons less \$98.86 and your committee consider the charges excessive. Mr. N. Rattenbury was also examined and it appears that he received a further sum of \$1,115 for his services, being at the rate of twenty-five cents per ton on 4463 tons. Mr. Rattenbury failed to disclose to the satisfaction of your committee what his duties were, or why he was entitled to this or any other sum in excess of 25 cents per ton on 623 tons distributed by him. It further appears with respect to the claim of this Government against the Government of Canada for 3 cars of hay short delivered that on the 31st day of May, 1906, the Railway Department of Canada submitted a statement showing that they had in fact delivered on board the Minto, Stanley, and other ships on specified dates consigned to this Government two cars of hay more than the total number to which this Government was entitled, and this statement remains to this day unanswered, and that the procuring and distribution of hay was marked by great waste, mismanagement, and extravagance. Many of the agents are short in their accounts and it does not appear that any adequate efforts have been made to collect these arrears.

The total amount of hay imported by the Government is stated by them at 6344 tons and the costs and charges in connection with the transportation and distribution thereof amounted to \$13,014.94 which your committee consider to be so large as to call for a full investigation before an independent tribunal empowered to examine all the parties concerned upon oath.

That from the limited examination which the committee was able to make into the Public Accounts it appears that numerous expenditures aggregating the sum of \$12,896.00 have been made during the nine months ending 30th September, A. D. 1906, without the authority of the Legislature. The deficit for the twelve months ending 31st Dec. A. D. 1906 is \$70,868.83.

Your committee recommends that members of the committee having an interest in matters under investigation should not preside over or take part in the deliberations of such committee in respect of such matters, and further that this committee should be empowered to examine witnesses upon oath.

This committee also submits that the Public Accounts should be in their hands at the opening of the session of this Legislature and that meetings of the said committee should be held at stated times and for a sufficient time to enable them to perform thoroughly this important work.

The amendment was put and defeated on a strict party division 48 to 8, and the main motion was carried on the same division reversed.

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On the 9th of April the said Committee was called at ten minutes after ten in the forenoon, and sat until 12.40 o'clock. At this sitting Mr. H. M. Davison was examined as to his charges in connection with the distribution of the Government Hay, and we find Mr. Davison received the sum of \$2137.60 for his services being at the rate of 40 cents per ton on 5344 tons less \$98.86 and your committee consider the charges excessive. Mr. N. Rattenbury was also examined and it appears that he received a further sum of \$1,115 for his services, being at the rate of twenty-five cents per ton on 4463 tons. Mr. Rattenbury failed to disclose to the satisfaction of your committee what his duties were, or why he was entitled to this or any other sum in excess of 25 cents per ton on 623 tons distributed by him. It further appears with respect to the claim of this Government against the Government of Canada for 3 cars of hay short delivered that on the 31st day of May, 1906, the Railway Department of Canada submitted a statement showing that they had in fact delivered on board the Minto, Stanley, and other ships on specified dates consigned to this Government two cars of hay more than the total number to which this Government was entitled, and this statement remains to this day unanswered, and that the procuring and distribution of hay was marked by great waste, mismanagement, and extravagance. Many of the agents are short in their accounts and it does not appear that any adequate efforts have been made to collect these arrears.

The total amount of hay imported by the Government is stated by them at 6344 tons and the costs and charges in connection with the transportation and distribution thereof amounted to \$13,014.94 which your committee consider to be so large as to call for a full investigation before an independent tribunal empowered to examine all the parties concerned upon oath.

That from the limited examination which the committee was able to make into the Public Accounts it appears that numerous expenditures aggregating the sum of \$12,896.00 have been made during the nine months ending 30th September, A. D. 1906, without the authority of the Legislature. The deficit for the twelve months ending 31st Dec. A. D. 1906 is \$70,868.83.

Your committee recommends that members of the committee having an interest in matters under investigation should not preside over or take part in the deliberations of such committee in respect of such matters, and further that this committee should be empowered to examine witnesses upon oath.

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