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April 19, 25



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OFFICIAL SYNOPSIS

(Continued.)

HON. THE MINISTER OF FINANCE:—You gave him a second chance—but do you think it is fair if any man steals Government money to give him a second chance. You and I are not the authorities to give second chances and nobody would be justified in letting such a man clear. It would have been better for the Colony if the first debt had been fixed up, and this man sent about his business, as the country would not be \$700,000 short now. Now again let us go to Bonavista where there is a shortage of between three and four thousand dollars. We find that at this place arrangements were made for the guilty one to deduct the money from his salary and pay up the shortage in that way. But how in the name of common sense would the official live if he did that,—the Minister was only fooling himself with the idea.

MR. HALFYARD:—I had no knowledge of that.

HON. THE MINISTER OF FINANCE:—That's just exactly the trouble, there seems to be no knowledge of anything, and when a man does find it out he is only blackmailed, and if he tries to build up the country, and straighten out the finances of the different Departments, he is vilified in every way. Now take Mr. Main, where there is a shortage of \$3,700.00 on the part of a woman official. That began in 1919, and it ran on until now. She admits a shortage of \$3,500.00. Was there ever any attempt to hold an audit or inspect that office until the Monroe party came into power? No, sir. No effort whatever was made in that direction, and if we did not have an auditor travelling and myself make an inspection trip, the shortage would still be unknown. Again at Roberts the same kind of thing has been going on for 10 years, and the Postmaster has a shortage of three or four thousand dollars. Nothing had been done to fix that matter up by our predecessors, but in a few short months we are expected to perform miracles. If that place had been cleaned up when the trouble started ten years ago, the money would not be gone as it is now. I was informed by a man in the Post Office that when the Sulphite Company was started at Terra Nova a girl got into trouble at the office there and your attention was called to it. There is the same kind of a shortage at Exploits. Now let us look at the General Post Office. It will be found that there will be little difference in the amount of Colonel Ross, and that signed by the Auditor General, the Minister of Posts and myself. As has been stated certain offices are over-staffed there, and I may say the same applies to some in my own Department. But we cannot turn innocent men on the street, and have their wives and sisters or brothers come crying to us the next day, and saying it was not fair to turn out father or Joe or Jack. This matter has got to take time and cannot be all done in a minute.

When I undertook to go through the Post Office, after being asked to do so by the Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, what I saw would make one's blood boil, in view of all the money that was spent on it. It was dirty from top to bottom. While going around the Department in company with the Minister and the Auditor General trying to re-arrange matters I asked the clerk of the Customs office if he had any back parcels belonging to the Custom House and he produced six or eight parcels. I said "Is that all you have after three or four years?" and the clerk said "yes". We took a tour around and we found in a heap ten bags of parcels belonging to the Custom House. But the most peculiar thing about it was that we came across a strayway article in the shape of \$17.75 and I remarked that that must have been a red hot stove. Now some of those bags of parcels were lying there since 1919 and nobody cared where they went. But the greatest surprise that I got since I have been in the Govern-

ment was in January last when Mr. Milley telephoned me and told me that the Money Order account in the Bank of Montreal was in credit, the first time for five years. Now does not that show that the little attention given by us in a short time made certain people step up and that the Colony's money was safeguarded in a way that it had not been for some years.

I next want to refer to the Stock Room where I was invited to have a look around. I found everything topsy turvy there, could find no head or tail to the place and I do not think anybody else could either. The whole thing was in a chaotic state. We made an attempt to clean up and after serious consideration we realized that we would want two good men there. Accordingly I recommended Mr. Bambrick to take charge of it with an assistant, a Mr. Manuel. Bambrick has proven himself to be all that I desire since he has taken over that department and I want to say further that I think this Colony will be saved thousands of dollars in the future as a result of these appointments. Now, Mr. Chairman, I would like to give the Committee a few interesting items as to the amount of extra stock in the way of stationery that was piled up in that Department when we went there. Here is a sample of printed envelopes (shows samples to the House) enough to last the Department for three years; here is another sample, enough for two years; here is another kind that will do for seven years; here is another sample of stock addressed to the Manager of the Bank of Montreal and cost \$3,000, and which will do for the next twenty years. Here is a sample with 14 years' supply; another sample with 10 years' supply; another sample with nine years' supply; and last but by no means least, here is a sample of stock of one hundred envelopes that cost thousands of dollars. Still we are questioned on this side of the House for taking stock in that Department.

MR. HALFYARD:—That is too bad for the printers.

MR. HIBBS:—With your permission Mr. Chairman, I would like to explain that the Advocate office did not print those envelopes; they were imported.

HON. MINISTER OF FINANCE (Continued):—I am not raising the point of who printed them. I want to keep clear of being personal at all, any more than I can help. It is immaterial to me who printed them, they were printed during the last four years and even if it had been the "Daily News" or "Evening Telegram" that printed them, I would condemn the parties who gave the orders for printing to be done just the

same. The point is that there is stock enough in some cases to last twenty years and even a hundred years. We next went around and found rolls of cloth of which Uniforms were made. I asked Bradbury about the cloth, and he said he knew nothing whatever about it but somebody must have known about it. It was a very much overstock. Now I would like to ask the question, Am I looking across at the Liberal Party, Mr. Chairman, that was led by Mr. Hickman? Can anyone tell me if that is the same as the Liberal Association? My reason for asking the question is because up in the Postal Telegraphs Department to-day are bills for six thousand dollars against the Liberal Association, and we cannot get anybody to acknowledge them and they are still left unpaid. There is another bill there for \$634 charged to the same people and that nobody seems to recognize. These were messages sent out by the Liberal Party during last election. Whoever the party is they started pretty liberal alright and helped themselves pretty liberally to the courtesy of the Telegraph Department. Still I am asked by members of the Opposition if the Monroe Government is doing anything to change things that existed in the past. Yes they are, but you cannot expect them to make golden roads in this country within the short time of nine or ten months. Mr. Monroe has been left legacies that no previous Prime Minister was ever left in this country and, in view of recent disclosures, when he goes to sleep to-night he does not know what he will have to face in the morning as a result of the misrule and mismanagement of this country's affairs for the years 1920, 1921, 1922, and 1923. Now another matter I would like to refer to is that there are bills in the Post Office to-day for \$88,000.00 that the Monroe Government got to face. Bills for repairs, etc., to old steamers that were given to us, we thought, as a free gift. There are coal bills that came in from Fortune Bay for the years 1922-23. Why were all these bills left over? I would certainly like to know. I would also like to take this opportunity of saying that if the Auditor General had been given the slightest backing from the Finance Minister of the late administration things would have been different than what they are. I was speaking to a certain man in connection with a certain office in the Post Office and in answer to a question I put to him he said that his accounts had not been audited for five years. I asked him why?

MR. SCAMMELL:—What did the man say?

HON. MINISTER OF FINANCE:—He told me to see the Auditor General and I did so. The Auditor General told me that he reported the matter and it was no use reporting it. Nobody noticed it. Take the Auditor General's report now on the table of the House. How many honourable members have taken the trouble to read it through.

Now, Mr. Chairman, the only thing I am sorry for to-day is for the unfortunate people who were connected with the Post Office and who started in to take money, were never checked and who gradually went on incurring shortages until the large amounts that we have discovered were reached, and I am convinced that by the time Auditor Crumme gets through with his work that a further story of shortages will be told. My only reason for speaking at all is to defend my position in connection with the Post Office. My help was given at the request of the Government. Mr. Woodford asked me to go there. Perhaps it would have been better had I stayed out. Mr. Hickman has asked me if Hickman's Harbour was fixed up. Through the assistance I gave to him within thirty hours, the whole thing was cleaned up and audited by Crumme.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I only make these remarks this afternoon to tell Mr. Halfyard that there was a lot more going on that he knew anything about. I don't think it possible at all for the minister of a department to know every detail unless he has a man at the head of every department who is prepared to devote a great deal of his time in trying to carry it on. The only thing I want to impress on him is this, that if he happens to have half an hour off to-morrow I will show him the post office as it is to-day, and if Mr. Halfyard does not tell me how much we have done I will be much more disappointed than you can possibly believe, but I am sure he knows I am right, and will give Mr. Woodford and his so-called Commission credit for something they have done.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: said that there are four cases where arrests have been made and prisoners on bail. The many other instances have not been subject to arrest, owing to the state of affairs existing in the Department. The Attorney General who would institute proceedings in the Deer Lake and Corner Brook cases would be fit for the lunatic. Conditions were a crying condemnation of the Post Office in the past two years. There were frequent requests for assistance and \$25,000 in Money Orders were handed by the one man in eight months and a shortage of only \$700 was found. Funds were

kept in a cigar box, in a biscuit box and in a stove and yet there was no great loss. At Corner Brook, there was an admixture of pathos and comedy. The postmaster was really the telegraph clerk, and owing to the convenience of the situation of his office he was allowed to receive mail and put it on the train. Later on he was allowed to issue Money Orders and until the situation was brought before the present Minister this state of affairs was permitted to continue. He made a deliberate statement that with regard to affairs at Deer Lake and Corner Brook the criminality and gross criminality was not in the officials, but in those responsible for the administration of the Department. He therefore stated that he had deliberately declined to take, as Attorney General, any criminal action against Boland at Deer Lake and Leawood at Corner Brook.

MR. WARREN: said it was gratifying to see the clean-up plan adopted by the present Government. His administration had started the work of cleaning-up and in January 1924 when first brought to their attention, they had appointed Mr. Aylward as an Inspector and later on instructed Messrs. G. N. Read, Son and Watson to hold an audit. His party shortly after left office.

THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION: was thankful he had been unconnected with political life back in 1919. His impression all along had been that an auditor should have disclosed these affairs long ago, and wished to know explicitly what were the duties of the Auditor General's Department.

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE: was of the opinion that as a matter of fact the Auditor General had reported these irregularities as he reports everything that happens since he took charge as Minister of Finance and Customs.

THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION: said his object in bringing up the matter was in order to know why a definite understanding could not be come to as to the powers of the Auditor General's Department.

The Chairman then left the chair until 8 o'clock.

NIGHT SESSION. MR. ASHBURNNE made some suggestions with regard to the salary of the postmaster at \$700 was found. Funds were

(Continued on page 3.)

NOTICE

To Owners and Masters of British Ships

The attention of Owners and Masters of British Ships is called to the 74th Section of the "Merchant Shipping Act, 1904."

74.—(1) A Ship belonging to a British Subject shall hoist the proper national colours—

- (a) on a signal made to her by one of His Majesty's ships, including any vessel under the command of an officer of His Majesty's navy or full pay, and
- (b) on entering or leaving any foreign port and
- (c) if of fifty tons gross tonnage or upwards, on entering or leaving any British Port.

(2) If default is made on board any ship in complying with this section the master of the ship shall for each offence be liable to a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds.

At time of war it is necessary for every British Ship to hoist the colours and hoist it if signalled by a British Warship. If a vessel hoists no colours and runs away, it is liable to be fired upon.

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