

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.
OFFICIAL SYNOPSIS OF PROCEEDINGS.

(Continued.)

mentary to all associated with the Post Office during the past. He questioned the mentality of the Minister who would make such a statement that he required a Secretary to help him create order out of chaos.

THE MINISTER:—"Yes, and I repeat it. I could find nobody in the Department whom I could trust. How could I trust anyone in the office after I had dictated a very private letter to a friend in Boston to a stenographer who went out to the outside office where there were five others, and as she was typing the letter two officials were reading the letter over her shoulder. I found them doing this and how could I place confidence in two such clerks who would do that?"

MR. HALFYARD continuing stated that this lack of privacy was perhaps due to the overcrowding of the office. He stated it was most unusual to hear such disparaging statements from the Minister, who was a big-hearted gentleman. He deeply regretted the lack of an Opposition press, which did not permit of any publicity being given affairs in the Post Office. The member referred to the case of Mr. S. Bradbury, who had been Superintendent and who was suspended and disgraced. He read the "brutal" reply given him in answer to a question respecting the disgracing of this official. He accused the Government of importing Colonel Ross to do their "dirty work." The Committee rose and having received progress, were given leave to sit again.

Remaining orders being deferred the House adjourned until Monday.

APRIL 6th.

The House met at the usual hour.

PETITIONS.

CAPTAIN W. C. WINSOR presented a petition from Portland, Brooklyn, and other places on the subject of a road.

MR. C. J. CAHILL presented a petition from Manuels on the subject of a wharf. Hon. W. Woodford supported the petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY.

Resolutions on Supply on the vote for the Department of Public Works were read the first and second time and passed.

The Council Amendments to the Egress from Churches Bill were read a second time and sent back to the Council advising them of the concurrence of the House in the Amendments.

The House then went into Committee of the Whole on Supply and continued with the vote for the Department of Posts and Telegraphs.

THE MINISTER OF POSTS in continuing the discussion on the Estimates for his Department, pointed out the chaotic conditions that existed there upon his assumption of office. Lack of discipline was an outstanding feature. He was very thankful to the Prime Minister for permitting Sir John Crosbie and the Auditor General to assist him in the necessary investigations that he carried out. The results of this inquiry disclosed a state of affairs far worse than he had ever anticipated, but gave him an opportunity to set things right and to familiarize himself with the working conditions there. He pointed out the huge size of the Department which employed over 2,000 officials. This department was one of the most important departments which suffered from the neglect of previous administrations. The inquiry conducted by Sir J. C. Crosbie, Mr. Berneau himself, was done in a business like way and a great deal of preliminary work had been effected before the arrival of Colonel Ross. In pointing out that during the months of December and January, the Postal Department had handled a great amount of business than ever before in the history of the service, he took occasion to praise the work accomplished by the older officials of the Department who exerted themselves night and day for the public convenience. During this period an extra mail service was created to the Humber area, giving the residents of that area a mail on Mondays and Fridays in addition to the customary express service. He pointed out that the statement desired to correct the statement that he could trust nobody in the service. This statement was qualified by his saying that there were many who, by their

conduct, proved they could not merit the confidence of anyone. He reposed great confidence in many officials and desired to record his regret at the retirement of Messrs. LeMessurier, Martin and Devereaux. He claimed that one member had not been satisfied at the appointment of a private secretary, but pointed out the need for one and the fact that all other Ministers were allowed them. In speaking of the Secretary of the Department, Mr. Campbell, he pointed out that his knowledge of postal affairs had resulted in his being recommended as Assistant Deputy Minister, and as a mark of the worth of his work in the service. Touching upon the matter brought forward by Mr. Warren relative to the pay of Mr. John Short, the operator at Hermitage, he referred to him as one of the first class officials in the service, and one who had done much during the war. The fact that he was in receipt of a pension was no valid reason against his salary being increased, and he thoroughly agreed with all Mr. Warren had said. Mr. Warren had raised another point respecting the non-payment of certain firms for coal supplied to outport offices. These bills referred to were ones incurred previous to his assumption of office and at that time should have been paid by the Department of Public Works. Such bills under the present system of accountability would now on be paid direct by the Post Office and such irregularities would not be likely to occur again. The submission of the following figures of the number of officials at the G. P. O. for the past five years would disprove the many wild and incorrect rumours at present afloat:—

Years: 1919 1920 1921 1922 1923 1924
Officials:—
261 276 265 235 239 230
The Estimates as submitted show an increase of \$70,000, but of this some \$60,000 is sought to pay off liabilities incurred previous to the present regime. In addition it was formerly customary for certain items to be charged against the Contingencies Account, but which were now specially voted. One good result of the investigation was the inauguration of a pre-audit system of accountability, which has since been adopted by other departments. The Minister had to censure previous administrations for a system which allowed of a shortage of \$27,867.44 in eight offices. As a consequence of the investigation the Department of Justice has the matter in hand, and in some cases dismissal, suspensions, and legal actions have been started. This state of affairs was due to criminal neglect on the part of the responsible persons. To-day every effort is being made to prevent any recurrence of such a state of affairs, and a competent system of audit has been adopted. Colonel Ross has conducted a complete inquiry and has submitted many recommendations, some of which have been already adopted, and at his suggestion modern equipment has been installed. Concluding the Minister pointed out the magnitude of the work of the Department, which was the most important public utility.

THE PRIME MINISTER, replying to the accusation of Mr. Halfyard that Colonel Ross had been brought here to do the Government's "dirty work," asked that the honourable gentleman draw the remarks or substantiate it.

MR. HALFYARD claimed that this was the only conclusion to draw from the Minister's speech on Friday. He only said that certain structural improvements had been carried out, and nothing further had been done by the Minister. He did not see the reason of Colonel Ross's importation. The Minister had referred to the dirt and filth that had accumulated in the buildings during the past twenty years, and it was to this work that he declared he had made reference. He had no fault to find with the remarks of the Minister. He deeply regretted the increase in the votes, which was not in accordance with the Government's policy of retrenchment. He suggested that the Committee rise until such time as they might consider the lack of esprit de corps amongst the officials in the Postal service. Touching the matter brought up by another member, of the conjunction of Government Railway and Telegraph offices and Postal Telegraph offices in certain places

he did not know whether this would be feasible but thought due inquiry should be made. In certain other places there were Anglo and Postal Telegraph offices, which were a liability to both concerns, and suggested consideration of combining these offices likewise.

THE MINISTER OF POSTS pointed out that the Government already were considering the possibility of combining Railway and Postal Telegraph offices and thanked the honourable member for his suggestion relative to the Anglo offices being taken over.

HON. MINISTER OF FINANCE AND CUSTOMS:—Mr. Chairman, I had no intention whatever of getting into any controversy over the estimates. I looked forward to each Minister being able to explain matters concerning his own department. I would like to say to honourable members opposite me that anything I may say is not said in any personal manner; and I have no intention of making it a personal attack, but I would like to point out that on Friday afternoon last in debate, Mr. Halfyard, raised the question of my right to go up to the post office, and he went so far as to say that it would be better for me to mind my own business.

I was not ready at that time, nor anxious, to get into any controversy, but I feel that I cannot let this opportunity pass without explaining to this House the position as I found it at the Post Office when I went there with the Honourable Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, and Mr. Berteau. I would like to say that since Hon. Dr. Robinson left that department, the department has gradually gone down. Possibly, as the late Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, Mr. Halfyard, has said, it is mainly due to politics that the office has been misused in the way it has; and I think that it was a great loss to this country when Dr. Robinson left that position, because I feel confident that he was gradually rooting out politics, and slowly but surely bringing the department into proper condition, and running it in a business-like way. But I suppose that he, like many more could not do it all in a day; and his efficiency and the results of his stay in the department did not show until he left the department.

I want to take advantage of this opportunity to thank Mr. Milley, Mr. Howley, Mr. Crumme and Mr. Aylward for the information which they gave me during my enquiry. First, with regard to Mr. Crumme, I would like to say a word on his behalf. He was an auditor at the Railway Station, but on a change of policy Mr. Crumme was practically thrown out of a position, and as I knew that he was a good man, I got the Auditor General to take him on; and all I can say now is that Mr. Crumme has been a very valuable servant to the Colony, and helped

me as Finance Minister in rooting out things in that enquiry.

When I first visit the Post Office my firm intention was to find out where the Customs money was—that they were doing with the money, and what went the books. When I went there I asked for the books of the department, and when some books were given to me I said, "what are these books?" The man said "yes, these are the books I kept." I asked when he last wrote them up and he said about six months ago. Then when he last wrote them up and down, and they reminded me of the cross word puzzle that you see in the papers. But how any man could work out the problems that I wanted to work out from those books was beyond my imagination. That was one of the things that we found out there when the cross-examination took place.

There was a gentleman up there whom we called in and asked a few questions; and I was astonished when he told me that for the past three or four years he had been taking the exchange on American notes, and putting the money in his own pocket—and thinkink he had a right to do it. I asked him why he had done it? He said that he used to buy a pencil or a drop of ink now and then for the department. I said, "young man, what about the stock of that commodity upstairs?" He said—"there is, that is what I have done."

Now you know when you looked round and saw chaos like that, especially in the books, you were naturally suspicious. I got in touch with Mr. Milley, Superintendent of the M. O. branch, and I had a talk with him as I wanted to see what the conditions of outport offices were, and after I had a chat with him about certain matters I decided to say nothing more at the time. I proceeded then on an inspection tour on behalf of my own department over the country. Accompanying me were the Attorney General and Hon. Mr. Sullivan.

We had an audit at Grand Falls which I must say to the credit of the gentleman in charge of the Customs Office there, we found pretty satisfactory. Then we went on to Botwood and found a puzzle in the office there. Eventually we got things right, and then we drifted along to Millertown, and finally reached Deer Lake about six o'clock in the evening. Audit-Fred Brien was with us, and I said to him, you take the Post Office and I'll look after the Customs. After spending about four hours I thought I had things pretty well straightened out at my end of it, and I went over to where Mr. Brien was working. I asked him how he was getting along, and he said, "Sir John, we'll never be able to audit this." I said to him, this is an awful looking place, and then I asked him how far he had got with the work. He replied that he hadn't even started to count the cash yet. I said I'll do that, and we started in, and at midnight we were about exhausted without the job being completed. Mr. James Boland was in charge of the office. We found that up to a day or two before that he was keeping his cash in a till made from a biscuit box, and his stamps in a cigar box. Sometimes he used to put the money in the stove and at other times he would hide it under the mail bags, and once in a while he would even throw it on the floor, as nobody would expect to find it there. That man, James Boland, handled no less than \$268,000.00 in eight months, and when he wrote in here for assistance, he was sent out a 16 year old boy at \$70.00 a month. Boland was getting the sum of \$75.00 a month. I do not know how he ever carried on that office, it was certainly a mystery to us, and as the Attorney General said there must be an honest crowd of people in Newfoundland. My companions like myself were simply dumbfounded at the condition of affairs in that office. After handling \$268,000.00 in eight months Boland was only \$700 astray, and when I saw the conditions under which he had to work I certainly could not penalize him. Imagine a man having to handle \$268,000 in eight months at a salary of \$75.00 a month, and then when he asked for assistance being sent a boy at \$70.00 a month.

Now let us take a look at Corner Brook. When we got there the Customs' office was closed, and so we went on to the Post

Office. I said to Mr. Leawood, you owe money to the Department, and he said "I will pay it now." I asked him what had become of the money. He said he had got it all and would pay it up, so that we could go on. I said "no," everything is all mixed up here. He said he had enough to pay up, but I told him I did not like the look of things, we were going West, and for him to find out just how much he was short. When we came back he didn't know, although he had had the auditor working with him. We came on back to St. John's, and got Mr. Crumme to go out there and make an investigation, and the result was that we found a shortage of \$10,000.00. Now I do not say this was the fault of the past Minister, because some time previously Mr. LeMessurier, the Deputy Minister, was out there, and said everything was correct.

MR. HALFYARD:—Did Leawood have an assistant?

HONOURABLE THE MINISTER OF FINANCE:—He was never even appointed Postmaster. As has been said, perhaps he was more to be pitied than blamed, because when he asked for an assistant it was not given him. This was done under the late Minister, and in no way can Mr. Woodford be held responsible. Now take the case of the Gambo man—my honourable friend, Mr. Halfyard, was cognizant of that, or at least I believe he was. You remember that when he was short at Deer Lake under your jurisdiction I asked if anything had been done with him, and to have the matter cleared up. This was not done, but now he has been dismissed from the service.

MR. HALFYARD:—We gave him a second chance.

(To be continued.)

NEWFOUNDLAND
NOTICE TO MARINERS
No. 3—1925.

Brunette, F.B.
Lat. 47° 15' 32" N.
Lon. 55° 51' 50" W.
Notice is hereby given that the WHITE FLASHING LIGHT shown on BRUNETTE ISLAND, Fortune Bay, is discontinued from this date, owing to defect in machinery. Due notice will be given when this light is to be re-established.

W. C. WINSOR,
Minister of Marine and Fisheries
Department of Marine and Fisheries,
St. John's, Aug. 17th, 1925.
aug.28.31

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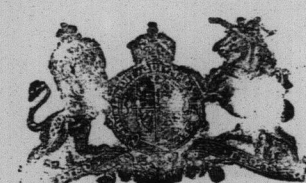
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