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AND
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HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

WEDNESDAY, March 10.

Continued.

Mr. Little—Yes, when that balance was squeezed out of the people of the country by the imposition of burdensome taxation. But he (Mr. L.) felt that it was a waste of time to be speaking to gentlemen like the hon. Mr. Shea, or to attempt to convince them? Of course the tail must follow the hie.

Mr. Scott.—After the able and eloquent speech of the hon. the leader of the Opposition, Mr. Little, there does not seem much to be said by those who follow. All they can say will be to corroborate and reiterate what that hon. gentleman has so ably expressed on the subject of this unnecessary imposition of 15 per cent. No one will deny that a government ought not to impose any great burden on the people that is not justified by the exigency of the public service. Where, then, is the justification in this instance? The hon. member Mr. Little made reference to the manner in which this taxation had been going on increasing year after year; how year after year our public debt is being added to; how year after year the burdens of the people are augmented without even the shadow of an excuse. It is a well known fact that large sums of money are yearly extracted from the people. As had been stated by the hon. and learned gentleman who preceded him, the Receiver General had increased the debts of the colony during six years incumbency of office by the large sum of \$517,000 or \$518,000 in addition to the expenditure of \$5,194,430.31, the revenue received during that period. The figures would stand thus:

The public debt of the colony, 31st December, 1879, was \$1,451,290 44
An increase since 31st December, 1873,..... \$299,613 85
To this add the sum taken from the Halifax Fishery Award to pay off floating debt.....218,186 00

Whole sum spent by government in six years..... \$6,712,230 76

The hon. Receiver General has shown no reason to continue this increase. He (hon. R. G.) has attempted to show by figures, which will not bear the test of investigation that the increase of last year was rendered necessary by the depreciation in price of "ad valorem" dutiable goods. How can he excuse the keeping on of that increase this year when the value of "ad valorem" has increased to as high a figure as they were the nine years preceding the placing on of the 15 per cent. A petition numerously and influentially signed by all the large importing houses and all merchants in this city well acquainted with the trade and its wants, and competent to judge of the requirements of the country, is presented to this House by one of the wealthiest and most influential gentlemen in the trade, the hon. member for St. John's West, Mr. Tessier, praying for a reduction of the present burdensome tax, and setting forth in plain terms good financial reasons for a reduction in the tariff. That petition is treated with something very like contempt by some leading members on the Government side. If, then, we are to take the opinion of all

the respectable mercantile men in St. John's, the "ad valorem" goods will reach as much in this year as they did in any one time of the nine years preceding 1879. In 1879 the "ad valorem" goods brought in \$272,000 or \$273,000. If the imports be only equal in quantity to last year, of which there can be no reason to doubt, your customs revenue will be \$35,253 without the 15 per cent. If to this be added \$54,800 for 20 per cent. increased duty on the "ad valorem" owing to that rate of increase in value, you have \$89,953. 15 per cent. on this will give \$1,023,215 instead of \$972,000 received. Thus you will have a balance of \$54,000 at the lowest estimate over the amount alleged to be necessary to carry on all the workings of the civil Government. But this credit balance does not include some \$40,000 received from other sources which will make a total of some \$100,900 over and above even what you claim to be necessary for the working of the machinery of Government. It was vain that we looked for any justification for such a course. The hon. gentleman is borne out by precedent in preparing his estimate so as to have a balance to the credit of the colony at the termination of the financial year. Such a course alike necessary for the sustentation of our credit at home and abroad. But neither the hon. gentleman who has prepared the estimate nor the Government who supported it were right in dragging from an over taxed people thousands of dollars annua ly over and above what was so absolutely requisite. If the expenditure of the Government was annually increasing, it required an extraordinary discernment to foresee that at a time must shortly arrive when a long suffering people would rise in their wrath and refuse to submit to further taxation. Turning again to the consolidated statement it would be found that at the end of the year the colony appeared to have the sum of \$14,000 to its credit. A close inquiry into the accounts would show that that credit balance was made up by crediting the current year with a sum of some \$15,000 which is to be returned by the Imperial Government, part of the sum had been retained by them from the Halifax Fishery Award to pay our proportion of the expenses. Whatever may be said to the contrary, he believed his position perfectly tenable that this sum should not be credited to the colony in the Receiver General's statement when it was to all intents and purposes a portion of the Halifax Award. It had taken from that award and should, when received by our Government on account of that commission had been amply recouped when we look \$218,000 to pay our debts. There was only one hypothesis upon this action of the hon. gentleman's was explainable if this or some similar amount were not passed to the credit of the colony upon current account, the consolidated statement would show the country to be in debt some thousands of dollars. Despite all these things the Government asked the assent of the House to imposition of taxation which would give an increase of \$100,000. If hon. members on his (Mr. S's.) side assented to such a proposition they would be recreant to their duty. They would not fail to express the true state of affairs. There ought to be sufficient intelligence, and there was in the country, to understand a plain statement of fact. If after a clear exposition the people chose to retain the present Government in power, then at any rate he would have done his duty, and would have no remissness to tax himself with. No doubt the Government would seek to draw off attention from the unfortunate state of its finances by rising side issues for discussion. No doubt they hoped that in the excitement of the debate upon the contemplated railway a little matter such as an extra 15 per cent duty would pass without comment. But there was hardly a believer outside in the sincerity of the Government, and by-and-by when in the natural order of events the present Government resigned the reins of office, they will be known as the Government of magnificent projects and disastrous failures. From time to time we have heard about the construction of a dock in our harbor, but beyond elaborate and highly colored plans and specifications, probably expensive nothing has been done.

Hon. Attorney General.—The surveys and plans for the dock cost the colony nothing.

Hon. Scott.—Even if they did it would be satisfactory to pay for work that was palatably accomplished. That the additional 15 per cent tax is unpalatable to some of the warmest supporters of the Government, the pet on presented the other day sufficient y attestis. That some hon. gentlemen opposite were induced to assent to it because of its alleged temporary character, probably they themselves will not deny. Now that the exigency has passed away why do they still support it? It had been said that if it could be proved that the 15 per cent was unnecessary, it would not be continued. But it would be hopeless to contend against hon. gentlemen's capacity for not believing when it is suited them. No matter how potent or unanswerable the

arguments, hon. gentlemen would still say there were worthless. In reference to the petitions before the house asking for the abolition of the additional fifteen per cent, coming as they did from such men as Edwin Duder, P. L. Tessier, the Messrs. Stewart and others, he did not consider that the hon. Receiver General and the Government had treated their opinions with that respect which they deserve when they attempt to put forward the hon. member for Twillingate to reply to petitioners. He may be a man of intelligence and quite qualified to look after the interests of his district, but with all due respect for his powers, he considered that his legislative experience was too limited a character to entitle him to assume that role. He should be glad to hear their position detented by one of the members of the Government. Hon. members of the opposition were, however, strongly supported by public opinion in this matter. The petitions are before the House, and they did not originate with them, and those petitions contain the requirements of a most convincing character as to the hardships of such an unnecessary imposition.

Hon. Mr. Rorke had listened with a great deal of pleasure to the arguments adduced by hon. members upon the subject matter before the chair, and he should say that he was not a little amused by some of the statements made by hon. and learned member, Mr. Scott. In his accusation against the Government, and their supporters whom he thought proper to designate as a "ring." He enumerates certain persons as absolutely ruining the revenue and amongst those he includes him self. The hon. and learned member could not have been serious in making this statement for neither directly nor indirectly was he interested. He (hon. Mr. R.) was an importer to a considerable extent of manufactured goods to the colony, and this additional imposition of fifteen per cent must necessarily be disastrous to him. He should therefore have some very strong reasons for supporting it. The arguments put forward in support of the position of hon. members opposite, would appear to be reduced to two. Firstly, they say that the additional fifteen per cent ought not to be levied, that the imports of this year will bear a more advanced price than those of last year. He (hon. Mr. R.) believed that there would be an increase in price, but not to the extent hon. members anticipated. They further say that the amount of imports will be greater. That is not his opinion, and for these reasons: the shore fishery of last year was a failure, the Labrador fishery only being a success. The prices being low and the foreign markets being indifferent, the merchants will not be induced to increase the importations. Petitions are daily presented to the House asking for roads, bounties increased, steam communication, and innumerable other public improvements. How, he would ask, are the Government to meet those charges if not by such an equitable system of taxation as they now propose? If there be extravagance in the expenditure it is the duty of hon. members to point them out in order that such a condition of things may be remedied. He agreed with him that in some things a little more economy may be practised. Under existing circumstances he considered the retention of the fifteen per cent as a necessity.

The Committee then rose, reported progress, and asked leave to sit again on to-morrow, the consideration of Ways and Means to be first on the order of the day. The House then adjourned till to-morrow at 3 1/2 o'clock.

THURSDAY, March 11.

At half past three o'clock, there being only two members present, owing to the weather, Mr. Speaker adjourned the House for want of a quorum.

FRIDAY, March 12.

The house opened to-day pursuant to adjournment at 3 1/2 o'clock.

Mr. Parsons presented a petition from Mar. in Kennedy and others, inhabitants of Torbay, on the subject of roads.

Mr. Watson presented a petition from Frederick Murray and others, of Heart's Content, in the district of Trinity, praying for the appointment of a Stipendiary Magistrate in that town. The petition is very numerously and influentially signed by the inhabitants of Heart's Content, and within the past few years in addition to having become the terminus of the Atlantic cable, grown considerably in commercial importance. It is the central port in the south side of the Bay, and people are compelled to go to Carbonear, a distance of eighteen miles, to obtain a magisterial intervention. There is but one Magistrate in Trinity Bay, and he resides at Trinity on the north side. He (Mr. W.) hoped that the Government would take this matter into their consideration without delay, and appoint some gentleman to discharge the duties of Stipendiary Magistrate at Heart's Content, as he was certain that every hon. member who was acquainted with the requirements

of such a largely populated and important part of the district, of which Heart's Content is the centre, would give this petition his earnest support. He earnestly hoped that the Government would see their way clear to make some provision in the supply bill for this necessary appointment. He would give notice that he would, on to-morrow, move an address of this House to his Excellency the Governor on the subject of this Petition.

Mr. Rendell had much pleasure in supporting the prayer of the petition just presented by his hon. colleague, Mr. Watson. The respectable and influential signatures to the petition were of themselves almost sufficient warrant for the House to accede to the prayer. The necessity for Stipendiary Magistrate at Heart's Content has been felt for some years. The growing importance of the place, the fact that there is but one Magistrate in the whole of Trinity Bay, that the nearest Magistrate is Mr. McNeil, J. P., who resides at Carbonear, some eighteen miles distant, are reasons which he was sure would influence the House in according to the prayer of the petitioners. As one of the members representing the important district of Trinity, it gave him much pleasure in supporting the prayer of the petition, and endorsing the views expressed and the hopes entertained by his colleague, Mr. Watson, that the Government would make the appointment without delay.

Hon. Mr. Shea presented a petition from G. W. R. Hierlihy, Esq., of Bay Roberts, praying for an increase of salary. When the general increase of salaries took place a few years ago this gentleman was by some unfortunate oversight, forgotten. The petitioner is a gentleman of high character and attainments and he (hon. Mr. S.) was certain that his hon. colleague Mr. Dawe would confirm his remarks and support the prayer of the petition.

Mr. Dawe was well acquainted with the petitioner and had much pleasure in giving his hearty support to his request, and in corroborating the remarks made by his hon. Mr. Shea as to the merits of the petitioner's claim. Mr. Hierlihy has been for many years a servant of the Government, and had during his tenure of office discharged his various and important duties with credit to himself and satisfaction to the public, especially of the district of which he is an inhabitant. Seeing that the Receiver General takes such an interest in the officials of Conception Bay who ably and honestly perform their duties, he would, he (Mr. D.) was sure give the prayer of the petitioner his support. He (Mr. D.) hoped that when the Supply Bill came up for consideration that the claims of this worthy official would not be overlooked.

Mr. O'Mara presented a petition from John Young and others, of Upper Island Cove, praying for the erection of a Public Wharf in that locality.

Also a petition from the Rev. William Gwyllm, and others, of Spaniards Bay and Bishops Cove, praying for the appointment of a Board of Education for those settlements.

Mr. Watson in the Chair.

Mr. Dawe.—Before the House took up the consideration of the subject before the chair, he would like to make a few observations in reply to a statement made by the hon. member for St. John's West, Mr. Scott, a few nights ago, to the effect that the outport members knew little and cared less about the public accounts. He rose to give that statement his unqualified contradiction. He (Mr. Dawe) was of opinion that he and outport members were as competent to judge, and were as well acquainted with the matters connected with the financial affairs of the Colony as any hon. gentleman on the other side; and notwithstanding any assertions to the contrary, he (Mr. Dawe) and the other port members supporting the Government cared just as much, and perhaps more, for the sound financial condition of the colony as any member of the opposition.

Mr. Kent did not desire to approach this question in a party spirit, though he differed from the hon. Mr. Shea on the subject of this budget. The question of how much taxation the Government to or is prepared to lay on the shoulders of the people is amongst the most important that comes or can come before the House. It affects the whole colony, and every man, woman and child of all classes. It would therefore be approached coolly and dispassionately, and having regard to the large quantity of figures placed upon the table by the hon. Receiver General, we should not hurriedly and without due consideration rush through this debate. The Receiver General opened his budget speech with the information that the revenue of the year had been \$979,602, and that the expenditure had been about \$955,000, leaving a balance to the credit of the colony of \$24,602. He (Mr. K.) would have liked the Receiver General to have explained to the House how that \$24,600 had been expended. It is a large sum of money, and the largest local Chancellor of the Exchequer had in the colony. But can

we say the country has received a proportionate benefit, or can we say the material condition of the colony has advanced and received an adequate return for this immense revenue, the bulk of which has been contributed by the labouring classes. He (Mr. K.) thought that every one in this House and this country who gave even the slightest thought to the matter must think not, especially when we look back at the enormous revenues received by the present Administration since its advent to power. During the past six years they have received the enormous sum of \$5,384,000, and in addition to that have increased the public debt by very close upon \$200,000 within the same period, and this inclusive of \$218,000 taken from the Fishery Award to pay off floating debt last year, and 102,000 from same source to pay for telegraph extension. The hon. Receiver General should be prepared to show the House and the country what he has done with all that money. Has he justified the expenditure of this enormous sum? He (Mr. K.) submitted that a bolder statement was never made in this House than the budget speech of the hon. Receiver General. He points to the building of a few light houses to the North and one or two other minor matters as the milestones by which the progress of the country is to be marked, if he forgets that the money for these undertakings was raised upon loan and did not come out of the general revenue. He must admit he must receive for these purposes the sum of \$600,000, but what has he done with the sum \$5,384,000 he has received within the past six years. Where has it gone? Has it gone in salaries or how? We are at a loss to conjecture how such an enormous amount of money could be spent in such a short space of time with the public seeing some benefit derived from it. Hon. gentlemen opposite are fond of telling the House that their predecessors in office left them very heavy charges to provide for. Let us see what sort of defense of his largely increased demands that statement affords to the hon. Receiver General. When the hon. gentleman took the reins of power he was, of course, aware of all the fixed charges entailed upon his predecessors. With a knowledge of every single item of official expenditure in March 1875, he stated that the sum of \$775,000 would be sufficient to meet all charges and carry on the affairs of the government. To-day he asked us for nearly \$200,005 more. It is claimed that the increased annual charges amount \$200,000. What has the colony to show for it? We fail to see anything beyond the increase of official salaries which has caused an additional expenditure of \$17,000 or \$18,000 per annum. But on the other hand to meet this additional outlay for increase of the Road Grant to the extent of \$17,000, and the Special Grant to each district had been reduced by \$700 per annum. These matters the hon. gentleman should explain. Before we assent to an increase of taxation the hon. gentleman should inform us in plain words and figures what the taxation is for.

Mr. Kent had asked for but could not get them, and was not aware that they were upon the table. The hon. Receiver General had last year a surplus of \$14,000 and it was difficult to discover any reason for demanding an increased revenue by reason of the requirements of any public service. There are, no doubt, great services in contemplation, but they are after all, merely substitutes for services, the estimates far which were this year dropped out of the accounts to such an extent, as to counterbalance the requirements of the new services in relation to former expenditures or estimates. Coming down then to the question of the 15 per cent. It was well understood the last year, though it was not distinctly stated that this was to be imposed to meet the necessities of the one year only, and the reasons given for imposing this 15 per cent was gone. By men of technical knowledge and experience, it is now claimed that without this additional 15 per cent the alteration in the cost of "ad valorem" goods, and increased importations will give a sufficient revenue to meet all the legitimate demands of the public service. The petitions presented to this House have been signed by mercantile men who would not put their names to any statement unless they knew it to be correct, and who say that that 15 per cent will not be required. If you ask the honorable Receiver General he will tell you that owing to his exertions in—

See fourth page.