

engaged the attention of the legislature and the government since the province was first established. Up to the year 1835 each county had its own highway act. In that year all the highway acts of the various counties were consolidated. Evidently the intention of the legislature of that day was to cast the cost of opening and maintaining the roads of the province upon the counties. At that time, and for many years before, all the rivers and streams of the province of any size were crossed by ferries, the control and management of which, by law, was placed in the hands of the sessions of each county, which sessions corresponded to the municipal councils of the present day. The legislature from time to time made special grants to each county to assist them in opening and keeping up the roads. After a time it appeared by the acts of those years the province proceeded to construct bridges over those rivers and streams previously traversed by ferries. Later another highway act was introduced, amending the previous act so as to put upon the various counties the cost of maintaining these bridges also. For many years the performance of statute labor became in some parts of the province a dead letter. There was a general impression existing that the responsibility of keeping up the roads and bridges of the province should be borne altogether by the government. At first the counties received small and desultory grants, and then it grew into a custom for the government to make larger appropriations for the different counties.

First Permanent Bridges.

Some dozen or years ago the government purchased from the New Brunswick Railway Company four railway bridges, and these were converted into some fourteen or fifteen highway bridges and placed in various parts of the province, the whole being done by days work, and under the superintendence of Mr. Alfred Haines, of the board of works department.

This, I may say, so far as I am aware, was the first attempt on the part of the government at permanent bridge building in this province. At that time the government had the active and enthusiastic support of the present leader of the opposition, who could see nothing wrong in having the bridges erected by days work. The government were so well pleased with these steel and iron highway bridges that they decided to embark in the building of permanent bridges, feeling satisfied that the undertaking would result advantageously to the province. The result was that the government obtained authority from the legislature in 1891 to issue bonds to the extent of \$350,000 for the erection of permanent structures. We advertised for tenders for the erection of the Hampton bridge, the Trout Creek bridge at Sussex and the Salisbury bridge. The contract to build the Hampton bridge was awarded to the Canadian Bridge and Iron Company, and the contracts for the other two bridges were awarded to the Dominion Bridge Company.

Other Bridges Cost More.

What was the rate per pound charged by these upper province firms? Did they tender to construct the bridges for 3 or 3½ cents per pound, as the sensational opposition papers would have us believe the Dominion Bridge company is now willing to erect permanent bridges in this province for? No! Nothing of the kind. The Dominion Bridge company charged this province at the rate of 6 cents per pound for the erection of the Salisbury bridge. They charged the province at the rate of 7 cents per pound for the Sussex bridge, and the Canadian Bridge & Iron company charged and were paid at the rate of 7½ cents per pound for the Hampton bridge. The government were then new at the work of building permanent bridges, but they were not long in discovering that while they had paid the upper province concerns fair prices for the bridges named they had not obtained a fair return for their money; that the bridges, while handsome in appearance, were not likely to endure to a much greater period than well constructed wooden bridges. They found, particularly with respect to the Hampton bridge, that the material

was too light for the length of the spans, and that, although the bridge when erected was supposed to last upwards of fifty years, it required important repairs one year after its erection. The strain rods had broken because of being too light, and I may say that the same bridge has had to be repaired a second time, and the opinion is general among competent bridge builders that the bridge will not last half the time that we had hoped. The Sussex and Salisbury bridges have given somewhat better satisfaction, but neither of them begins to compare with the bridges that have since been erected by our own New Brunswick concerns. The bridges built by the Record Foundry and Machine Company give evidence of better workmanship, engineering capability, capacity of strength and much better quality of material. One of the difficulties we found in connection with the building of the Hampton, Sussex and Salisbury bridges, by upper Canadian firms, was that we had no engineer who could prepare plans and specifications for these permanent structures and could not have proper inspection at the point of construction and that we were obliged to accept bridges from plans prepared by the companies themselves. When we went into business on a larger scale, and obtained authority for a bond issue of \$400,000 for the purpose of building permanent bridges, we determined on a different policy. We decided that if it were possible, having regard to quality of workmanship and fair prices, we would have the work done in our own province, and as far as possible

Give Employment to Our Own People.

We decided that we would have the new bridges erected under the supervision of a competent engineer and inspector of large practical experience, from working plans. The chief engineer of the department, Mr. Wetmore, who had some experience in connection with railway bridges, and who had the advantage of instruction under Mr. Edward Shaw, an engineer of almost world wide reputation, was authorized to take charge of the work. It was first proposed that these bridges might be constructed by a company, to be organized in Charlotte county for the purpose of undertaking bridge construction. My predecessor in the premiership, Hon. Jas. Mitchell, took a very active interest in the effort to have the work done by a company organized in his own county, but, through some hesitancy on the part of the Charlotte county promoters, the department of public works was obliged to look elsewhere within the province for parties who would undertake to have the work done under the supervision of Mr. Haines in much the same way that he had operated with respect to the first iron bridges constructed in the province. The Record Foundry and Machine Company constructed several bridges in this way, at prices about the same as paid the upper Canadian companies. Before the government gave the Record Foundry and Machine Company a contract it required of them to produce memoranda showing their basis of business, showing the actual cost of labor and material, before any profit could be expected on the work to be given. To this was added a small percentage of profit, and the government agreed to give the Moncton concern the building of a number of bridges at prices a little less than paid the upper province firms. The Record foundry people invested a very large sum of money in a plant necessary to carry out the work. A little later Mr. J. M. Eaddock, of Chatham, went into the permanent bridge building business, and as chief commissioner of the province I took occasion to invite tenders from New Brunswick concerns for the construction of bridges, and

Two Bridges Were Built Under Tender, one at Port Elgin and one at Petitcodiac. After our experience with the tender system, both in dealing with concerns in the upper provinces and with New Brunswick firms, we came to the conclusion that the work could be done in the best interest of the province in the way we have been doing recently, and we have

been paying the New Brunswick firms at the rate of about 6½ cents per pound. There is no secret about this rate, as all the accounts in connection with the construction of bridges have been before the public accounts committee every year, and there has never been the slightest disposition on the part of the chief commissioner or any other member of the government to withhold any information with respect to the cost of these or any other bridges. If there be any virtue in the argument that the erection of permanent bridges is a wise policy, then the bridges must be what they purport to be, and no bridge whose life will be less than the bonds issued to cover its cost could properly be classified as a permanent bridge. It is not my desire to reflect upon the bridges, either constructed within our own province by upper province firms, or upon the bridges erected in the neighboring province of Nova Scotia by firms either within or without that province, but I am willing to stake the existence of our government upon the verdict of a committee of reputable engineers that the bridges built in this province by our New Brunswick firms will outlive by from 50 to 75 years the bridges erected by outside firms in this province or the bridges constructed in Nova Scotia at a much less rate than we are paying.

I have made no complaint over the fact that the charges which the Sun and other opposition newspapers have been publishing during the last several months have been put into shape by a nameless civil engineer, but I am going to ask this audience tonight and I am going to ask the people of this country if they consider it manly that charges should be hurled against a government when the author of the charges was unwilling to appear in the open. I may be permitted to conjecture who this gentleman was, and I might not be far astray if I located him in the person of an engineer who for years was a dominion public servant, and who, by reason of his unrestricted dealings in a species of the public property of the dominion, termed, for the purpose of deceiving, "shingles," was dismissed from a position of trust. How far that dismissal has actuated him with respect to this matter I will leave it for the public to conjecture, but I am bound to say that a gentleman who laid himself open to a criminal charge for the misappropriation of valuable property of the dominion to the uses of himself and those with whom he was associated, is not entitled to that recognition which would result in condemning me in the eyes of the constituents of the province, in the face of my own statements and denials to the contrary. While this has been my conjecture regarding the nameless engineer, I notice that within the last few days the name of Mr. A. R. Holmes has been put forward as the engineer who had furnished the opposition with the material for their campaign documents; and who is the Mr. Holmes? a young man who from 1895, until the 15th of last September was, I am informed, an apprentice in the engineering department of the Intercolonial railway at Moncton, and who, when he left the department was an engineer of such eminent ability that he was receiving the munificent salary of seven dollars and a quarter a week. The young man is now undergoing instructions at a Boston school of technology, and I trust may become at no distant day an engineer, whose opinion will be valuable. In the meantime his name seems to have been used for the purpose of drawing away attention from the gentleman, whose wholesale dealing in "shingles," cost him his position as chief engineer of the Intercolonial Railway.

Opposition Evidence Not Creditable.

There is a feeling in the breast of every fair-minded citizen of this province that no one should be accused without knowing the name of his accuser—without having a chance to meet him face to face. Think you that if the opposition thought they could sustain their charges they would not have produced their nameless engineer long ago? Then again, take the fact that the charge was not put forward by any member of the legislature, but by a gentleman not now in public life. Do you not think that the object of that

was so that if the house met before an election the opposition might have a chance of running away from the charges which had been published in their interest.

The Daily Record of Saturday, January 21st, referring to my statement at St. Andrews that the imputations in the legislature with respect to the bridge charges had been fully met by the government, said: "This Dr. Stockton emphatically denied, and, as a matter of fact the government's little dodge of proroguing the house when Mr. Pinder was speaking to the charges worked well. The member for York was about to unearth the double price scheme and expose the trickery of the boodle legislators when the usher of the black rod announced the arrival of the governor to terminate the session." I have not seen any denial of the truth of this report in the Record, but I would hope that politics in New Brunswick have not fallen so low that the leader of a party would be guilty of making such an incorrect statement as the one just quoted. As a matter of fact, as the report in the Sun newspaper of Friday, March 18th, last year, will show, Mr. Pinder finished an exhaustive speech and was followed by myself, Messrs. Dibblee, Osman, Sumner, Robinson, Stockton, Tweedie, Smit, Alward, Black and Lockhart, and the debate was concluded and the house concurred in the report of the committee of public accounts, after which the house adjourned until Friday forenoon, when, after considerable routine and no discussion, the governor prorogued the house. What the opposition can hope to gain from thus misrepresenting the actual proceedings of the house I leave it to Dr. Stockton and his party to determine.

Bridge Expenditures Approved Last Session.

Just before the close of the legislature last session there was a meeting of the public accounts committee. A report of its proceedings was telegraphed to one of the St. John papers by a member of the Gleaner newspaper staff. This is what he wrote: "Being disappointed with Mr. Emmerson's capable and honest administration of affairs in connection with the legislative buildings and lunatic asylum, the opposition scrutiny was next levelled at the expenditure on permanent bridges. The opposition felt sure that Mr. Emmerson, with all the multitude of other official duties the premier must attend to, could not expend \$85,000 upon 254 bridges, situated in every part of the province, in sums varying from \$150 to \$3,700, and having to deal with all sorts of men, without some misappropriation or unwise or excessive expenditure. Mr. Pinder, aided by Mr. Dibblee, made a most careful and critical search of all the accounts, papers and statements of permanent bridge expenditure. Mr. Emmerson and the deputy commissioner of public works, Winslow, were present to aid the critics in their investigation, and when a most thorough search was completed at 11 o'clock tonight the opposition members held a midnight conclave and made successful arrangements for obsequies of their blighted and blasted hopes. After a minute scrutiny of

Mr. Pinder's Practised Scavengering.

and Mr. Dibblee's professional acumen the opposition had not even a peg upon which to hang a criticism, nor a single item which could be by the most skillful manipulation construed into a charge of boodling." Without desiring to parade myself as a particularly honest man, I quote the above as the opinion of the news editor of the Gleaner, whose opinion, I am free to admit, does not appear to entirely correspond with that of the so called religious editor of that paper.

I would like to ask if there is any information now before the country to show any dishonesty on the part of the government than there was when the member of the Gleaner staff wrote the above report with respect to Mr. Pinder's imputations. It is quite true that a letter purporting to have come from the Dominion Bridge Company, and which, I have no doubt, did come from that company, has been published, in which it is stated that that company could furnish bridges at a considerably lower rate than paid by the government