

MYSTEROUS HANDLING OF PUBLIC MONEY.

Blair Says He Took Money With Knowledge of Premier Fleming; What Has Mr. Fleming to Say About these Irregularities?

(From The Carleton Sentinel.)

Fredericton, March 24, 1913.
Dear Editor: In the last days of the session of the local Legislature there were some developments, the seriousness of which is now beginning to be recognized. It has been the boast of the Hon. J. K. Fleming and his colleagues in the government that their system of accounting gave full and complete return of all moneys paid into the treasury and all moneys paid out. Answers to enquiries in the public accounts committee show that this is not the case; that instead the public moneys are handled more mysteriously than ever before and in such a way as to conceal the meaning and the cost of the transaction. Public confidence in the honesty of the government and in the righteousness of the much boasted system of audit got a rude shock when "the lid was lifted from the pot" in which the Birmingham refund moneys were manipulated. Mr. Black of Westmorland "lifted the lid," and before he put it back the public got more of a scent than they expected to get of the rottenness and dishonesty fomenting under that lid.

The Birmingham item as it appeared in the report of the public accounts was a false and misleading entry. It gave the amount paid in by Mr. Birmingham as one hundred and fifty dollars less than he paid. The money was sent, on the instructions of a clerk in the Public Works office, to H. M. Blair, (the clerk), instead of to the Receiver General, and after turning one hundred and fifty dollars into his own pocket, the clerk passed the balance over to the deputy Receiver General. The amount appropriated by Blair from these public moneys to his personal use does not appear in the accounts, and the amount paid in by Birmingham in settlement of the case is put down at \$150 less than he actually paid. These are the facts brought out in the Public Accounts Committee. What has Mr. Fleming to say in answer to these? What of his boasted system of accounting which was to put an end to misleading financial statements? If Blair could handle the Birmingham moneys in that way, what is there to prevent any other clerk who might be as officious as he in any of the other departments doing the same thing? Is Mr. Fleming sure that it has not been done in the other departments? Can he guarantee the public that in the handling of the public moneys there are no other such gross irregularities

as that brought to light in the Public Accounts Committee? He will not deny that Blair got the \$150. He will not claim that this \$150 of the public moneys appears in the Auditor General's Report in any form, although the law distinctly says that all provincial moneys shall be accounted for in the report. He cannot deny what I have set out, nor can he afford to beat around the facts. What position is he in to give public assurance that the whole system is not impregnated? There is a penalty for such irregularities as those of the character I have mentioned. Will he endeavor to satisfy the public and if possible to restore confidence by enforcing this penalty? I think not. First, Blair, the clerk, says he took the money with the knowledge of Mr. Fleming, and it was no business of his (Blair) if it was kept out of the Auditor General's Report or did not appear. Blair thus defiantly throws the responsibility upon the Premier, an unusual state of affairs, something that one does not often see in well governed families. Second, is the situation in all the other departments such that Mr. Fleming can take action without running the risk of exposing his own and the other departments to an independent investigation? I fear that things must stay as they are, even although to act is the only course left open for a government that is not hampered by departmental irregularities. The boasted system of accounting and audit is a thing of the past if it ever had an existence in fact. In getting at correct administration of the local finances we are apparently worse off, much more so, than ever.

Mr. Fleming, in his dilemma may try to hide behind the report of the Public Accounts Committee, which followed the example of all other Public Accounts committees and made the invariable report, "we find the accounts satisfactory." That committee is every year made up of a majority of members supporting the government, and their business is to make up a general report as they are told to make it. But the bald fact remains in the records that it was brought out in that committee that \$150 of the Birmingham money was never accounted for in the Auditor General's Report, and that the Auditor General, who according to law must be made aware of every dollar of public moneys paid in, was never officially fully informed of the Birmingham transaction. Mr. Fleming cannot get away from that. Blair says this irregularity was worked with the knowledge, and consent of the leader of the government, and that this washes his hands clear of the business. Where is protection to the public to come in? If Mr. Fleming is unfortunately not in a position to take action, the public have a right to hear something from him on the subject of the irregularities recently

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exposed. There are other matters affecting the same department and the same clerk to which, with your permission, I will make reference in a future number of the Sentinel, but for the present, dare Mr. Fleming act, and if he dare act, where dare he begin?

Yours truly,
THE COUNTRY.

THE CODERRE CHARGES IN CANADA'S PARLIAMENT

F. B. Carvell's Direct Statements—Sir Wilfrid and Mr. Borden Take Part.

When the Coderre case was under discussion in parliament last week, F. B. Carvell said that although the premier had declared that Emile Bourassa had never received a dollar from the government, the opposition did not claim he was, but would the prime minister say the man had not been appointed to office under the government after the charges in connection with the bye-election had been brought to Mr. Coderre's attention. The premier knew very well that the appointment was made.

Mr. Borden: "I knew nothing of the kind."

Mr. Carvell: "Give us a committee and we will prove it."

"Will the minister of marine say no letter was sent from his department notifying Bourassa of appointment to office?"

"I will say he was never appointed to office under the government," said Mr. Hazen.

"My friend is side-stepping again," said Mr. Carvell. "Again I say give us a committee and we'll prove what I have said."

Continuing Mr. Carvell urged that Hon. Mr. Coderre could not afford to lie under the imputation made against him by the charges. Nor could Hon.

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Mr. Nautel, whose name had been brought into the matter.

Amid some disorder Mr. Carvell referred to Hon. Mr. Rogers, who had been mentioned in the affidavits read by Mr. Gauthier. The minister of public works seemed, he said, to get his name mixed up with every shady election transaction. He had figured in connection with Macdonald, Richardson and Antigonish and now Hochelaga had come.

Hon. gentlemen opposite, Mr. Carvell continued, had argued that an attempt had been made to blackmail Mr. Coderre. Did an innocent man lie down under blackmail? As for the contention that the finding of a committee of the house might be looked upon as the finding of a body more or less of "titan" Mr. Carvell held that the important matter was not so much the finding itself as the production of evidence and giving that evidence publicity.

It had been argued also that no value could be attached to the evidence of men who perjured themselves by swearing to contradictory affidavits.

"Bring the man here," Mr. Carvell said, "who swears to one thing one day and after he gets a position from the government swears to another and he'll tell the truth before we get through with him."

In closing, Mr. Carvell declared that it was a singular coincidence that Mr. Gauthier had been asked to delay his charges in the house and in the meantime new affidavits and been obtained from men connected with the affair.

Hon. L. P. Pelletier at the outset of his speech took issue with the opposition statement, that Bourassa had been appointed to office. The leader of the opposition had stated that the man had been appointed to a position under the customs department, and now the member of Carleton (Mr. Carvell) said that the appointment was in another department. Mr. Pelletier was proceeding to emphasize these discrepancies of statement when he was interrupted by Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

"This is mere quibbling," said Sir Wilfrid, "I am now prepared to

state and to prove that this man was notified by an officer of one of the departments that he had been appointed to office."

Caribou, Me.

David and Arthur Shaw of Middle Simonds have returned home after spending a few days with their cousin, J. B. Kelly.

Rev. D. E. Brooks of Bristol was the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Walter over Sunday.

Mrs. W. T. Giberson of Bath was the guest of friends and relatives in town over Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Chas. J. Estabrook have returned from a visit with relatives in Bristol. —Caribou Republican.

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