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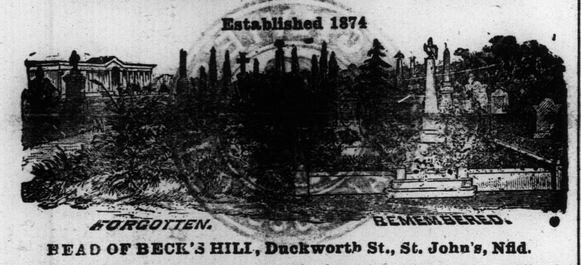

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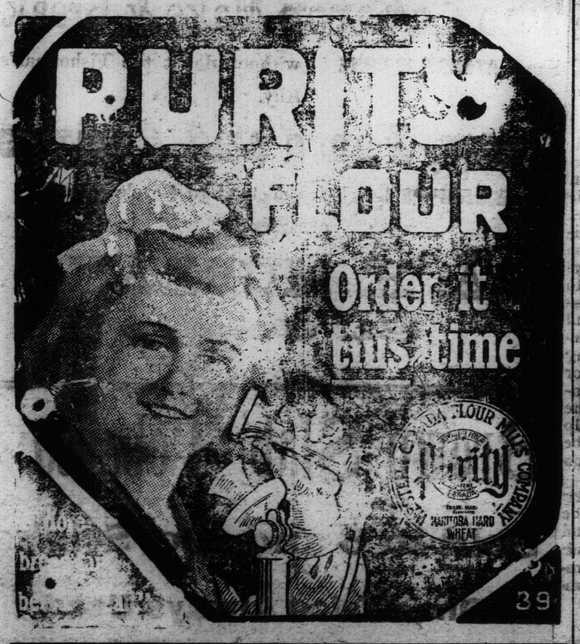

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House of Assembly, 1917

Official Synopsis of Debates

THURSDAY, June 21.

MR. COAKER noticed that there were less than twelve members present, and demanded that the rules be adhered to.

The Chairman of Committees sent out, and, sufficient members coming into the House, the debate proceeded.

MR. JENNINGS, referring to the Premier's visit to England, asked whether the Imperial Conference had considered the question of preferential tariffs with Newfoundland and other colonies. He was not sure whether it would be practicable or not. We should require to raise revenue from some other source, if we reduced tariffs. He hoped, however, that something might be done to develop our trade with other parts of the Empire, instead of with foreign countries. He then turned to the Estimates, and discussed the bay steamer services, including that performed by the "Earl of Devon," and the St. George's Bay Service. He referred to the report of the Inspector of logging camps. He thought the Inspector must have let it be known that he was coming, with the result that the camps were prepared for his visits. He should start work earlier in the season. He said that the Horwood Lumber Company, though a subsidiary concern, and also another neighbouring mill, had been taking timber from Thwart Island, in the Exploits, which was supposed to be reserved for fishery purposes; and desired to know what the Government intended to do in the matter. He thought the Reid-Newfoundland CO., ought to be compelled to keep the spark-arrestors and fireboxes of their engines in better order. It appeared from the Fire Patrol Report that 91 fires had been put out behind Engine No. 21 in one day. It was sad to see the amount of splendid timber land along the railway which had been burnt over. He hoped the herring fishery in Green Bay would be supervised better than in the past.

MR. LLOYD said it was an outrage on the Opposition members that they should be kept in the dark as to whether there was to be an election or not. Why was not the Colonial Secretary doing his duty by preparing to take the voters list? He said the Colonial Secretary had no right to be in the House while he was receiving pay as Deputy Chief Censor. He considered that a salary ought to be paid to the Prime Minister. It was not in keeping with the dignity of the House that the Prime Minister should be doing its work without a salary. He, Mr. Lloyd would vote for an adequate salary for the Prime Minister. He also considered that the Ministers ought to be paid more than $2,000.00. This amount was very small compared to those paid in other Colonies of our own size. Ministers ought to be paid adequate salaries and forbidden to take any other payment. The officers of the Department depended on the ability of the board and if the Government wanted competent heads they must pay for them.

The committee rose until to-morrow.

The House adjourned until to-morrow at 3 p.m.

FRIDAY, June 22nd.

The House met at 3 p.m., pursuant to adjournment.

The Legislative Council's amendments to the Death Duties Bill were read a second time and concurred in.

The House went into Committee of the Whole on Supply.

MR. LLOYD repeated that under no circumstances would the Opposition assent to any extension of the life of Parliament. He repeated also his remarks of yesterday, that the Premier ought to receive a salary and that Ministers of the various Departments should receive larger salaries, so that they may not be tempted to add to their salaries by obtaining money from other sources. The so called Department of the Prime Minister should be placed on a regular basis, like others, all of which are regulated by Statute. He said that the Colonial Secretary had no right to be in the House while receiving pay as Deputy Chief Censor; but that he, Mr. Lloyd, would vote for a Bill to legislate the Colonial Secretary's position, because it was rendered necessary by war conditions. He considered it very improper that the position of Judge of the Central District Court should be kept unfilled through a squalid party squabble. He was astonished at the large grant which had been given to St. George's District for repairs to washouts last Fall, in his opinion his own and other districts had suffered just as severely. He protested against the cutting of timber on Thwart Island, which was supposed to be reserved for fishery purposes; and against the cutting of pit props on the three mile limit contrary to law, with the consent of the Government. He expressed his satisfaction with the attitude the Premier had always taken in the matter of education; he had always been sympathetic and helpful towards it. He himself desired to say that he and the Opposition were in favor of denominational education; and he observed with satisfaction the growing tendency to co-operation between the denominations in this matter. He referred to a rumor that the Superintendents of Education were being well paid for their work in recruiting. He desired it to be known that they were doing this patriotic work for nothing; they were not receiving one cent beyond their out of pocket expenses. He spoke very strongly of the importance of education; given a good education our Newfoundland boys and girls could hold their own anywhere. With regard to the war, Lord Northcliffe, probably better informed than anyone else in the world, outside the War Office, seemed to see several years of war ahead. Did the Government intend to put off an election until the end of the war? The Opposition, including himself, had co-operated with the Government in everything that could be called a war measure ever since the beginning of the war. He threw back the accusation of partizanship in the teeth of those who made it. The Opposition had been willing to co-operate to form a Coalition from the outbreak of the war until last December; but after that the Government had come to their last days, and it was too late for them then to be willing to accept. The Opposition would not accept a death-bed repentance. What the Opposition desired was that the Government should resign, and that Sir Edward Morris should form a new Government on terms of absolute equality between the two parties, with an election to follow. The Government were leaving a number of questions of grave importance undealt with. They were exhausted, they required new blood. The Opposition had been willing to join the Government in handling war problems, from a sense of duty, and not because they desired to share the burdens of Government in these troublous times.

MR. TARGETT said there were 600 old men in the country over 75 who were not receiving old age pension.

THE PREMIER said that, speaking from memory, that there were only 1900 old men over 75 in the Colony; 1600 pensions were now being paid, while a certain number did not want and would not take pensions.

MR. TARGETT went on to refer to the pensioning of officials before they were past their work. This was not a fair charge on the revenue. He referred also to the inspection of codliver oil, and to education.

MR. HICKMAN said the Opposition were entitled to know whether the Government intended to extend Parliament or not.

The Committee rose until to-morrow.

The House went into Committee of the Whole on the Volunteer Force Bill and the Estates of Soldiers and Sailors Bill, passed them and rose.

The House adjourned to Monday at 3 p. m.

MONDAY, June 25th.

The House met at 3 p. m., pursuant to adjournment.

Petitions were presented by Min. of Marine & Fisheries, Mr. Currie, Mr. Lloyd.

Various questions were asked and answered.

The Bill relating to the Volunteer Force and Estates of Soldiers and Sailors were read a third time and sent to the Legislative Council.

The House went into Committee of the Whole on Supply.

MR. HICKMAN said the people were much dissatisfied with taxation and misgovernment, and were strongly desirous of having an election this year. He said that steps should be taken to have the Reid-Newfoundland Co. put the railway in proper order on account of the road-bed and ties. The freight rates charged were scandalously high and should be reduced. He went on to refer to the Post Office. This had not been an efficient Department in the past, and he was glad to see that it seemed likely to improve by the new Postmaster General. The Postal Telegraphs also required attention. He thought the Government should be doing more towards encouraging the production of foodstuffs, both from agriculture and from the fishery. He considered the Government should have taken a more active part in fixing food prices.

Referring to the Estimates, he did not see why the Deputy Heads of some departments got larger salaries than those of others. He thought the present system of giving mineral grants was unsound, whenever any mineral was reported, every claim round about was immediately taken up, and the holders asked such high prices as to frighten away capitalists. He referred shortly to the need of encouraging tourist traffic, and to the policy of appointing Trade Commissioners abroad. He quite agreed with Mr. Lloyd that the Heads of Departments of the Government should be paid better salaries. Good men cannot be got for poor salaries; and the Government Service requires capable officials. He objected, however, to the appointment of two or three men to do one man's work. He concluded with the hope that the Government would state whether it was their intention to prolong the term of the Legislature or not.

MR. HALFYARD referred at length to the question of a telegraph line to Musgrave Harbour, and read out lengthy correspondence on the subject which had been tabled by the Colonial Secretary's Department. He went on to discuss in detail the Bay Services, especially that serving Fogo District, which he did not consider was properly arranged. He referred to Hospital matters, and objected to the collection of fees by the Physician in charge of the General Hospital for his own benefit. Any fees collected should go to the Colony. He objected to the cutting of timber on Thwart Island, and regretted the extensive destruction of timber by fire caused by engines on the railway. He said that the press who said that it was not desirable to have an election in the fall were merely hirelings, and might be considerably discounted. The Government ought to go to the country.

The Committee rose until to-morrow.

The House adjourned to to-morrow at 3 p. m.

TUESDAY, June 26th.

The House met at 3 p. m., pursuant to adjournment.

Various questions were asked and answered.

On the motion to go into Committee of the Whole on Supply, Mr. Lloyd moved, and Mr. Clift seconded an amendment, calling upon the Government to state whether it was the intention to extend the life of Parliament.

MR. CLIFT said that if it were the intention to do so, he, for one, could not support it. He thought that even if there were unanimous consent, it would be a very doubtful precedent to extend Parliament, while, if it were done by a party vote, it would be unprecedented.

On a division, the amendment was lost, and the House went into Committee of the Whole on Supply.

Members discussed various items very shortly as they went through. Several members commented on the inequality of the salaries of Deputy Heads of Departments. Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Coaker, and others, repeated that the Prime Minister ought to receive a salary equal to that of the Chief Justice.

MR. COAKER suggested a salary also for the leader of the Opposition, as is done in Canada.

MR. CLIFT and MR. COAKER pressed for an increase of salary to Mr. Turner, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Mines.

MR. COAKER suggested that the Deputy Minister of Fisheries, and of Agriculture and Mines, should all receive $1,500, instead of $1,200.

HON. MINISTER OF FINANCE said these officials received a good deal in fees, which added to their remuneration.

MESSRS. JENNINGS, LLOYD, and COAKER referred to the question of taxation by way of royalty on sawmills, which they said bore heavily on the smaller mills.

MR COAKER spoke strongly on the condition of the railway line. A great many of the sleepers were rotten; they apparently lasted only about seven years. It would cost a million dollars to put the road in first-class condition, but it ought to be done, in case we should have to depend on the line for our imports of food this summer.

MR. LLOYD strongly endorsed this. The Opposition would support any measures necessary to bring such a result about.

MR. GRIMES was of the same opinion. He also said that the Government ought to adopt the principles laid down by the Postmaster-General in his report in relation to the salaries of public officials.

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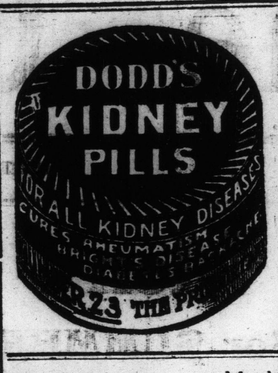

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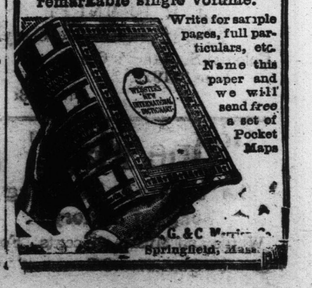

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