

ROADS THAT BIGGS BUILT ARE WARMLY CRITICIZED BY WENTWORTH MEMBER

Alleged Reckless Expenditure of Drury's Minister of Public Works Is Under Fire in House—Serious Allegations Levelled At Hon. Frank Biggs.

(Special to The Advertiser.)
OTTAWA, June 1.—The obvious intention of Gordon Wilson of Wentworth tonight was to attack the Drury Government and Hon. Frank Biggs, its minister of public works, in particular, for "reckless extravagance" and "self-interest" in connection with the good roads policy being carried out by the province in conjunction with the Dominion under the Canada highways act.

In this connection it cannot be denied that the criticism of the member for Wentworth was of a highly effective nature, for he demonstrated, among other things, that the Toronto-Hamilton highway was costing at the rate of \$82,000 per mile, and that a single cutting in the vicinity of Dundas had been made at a total cost of \$120,000.

He further pointed out that many of the road improvements launched upon by the Ontario minister of public works ran past, around, or to his own home, that of his father, and that a blind concession or road allowance running between two portions of his land had been taken over and macadamized. At the rate at which money had been expended in the county of Wentworth alone, one-sixth of the total federal appropriation for the Province of Ontario would be absorbed there, said Mr. Wilson.

Attack Unfettered.

Nobody in the House attempted to defend Mr. Biggs. In all the history of Canadian railroad building few stretches of road have cost \$84,000 a mile—and this is not a railroad. On the other hand, the speech of Mr. Wilson gave opportunity for a general criticism of an act the soundness of which was questioned ever since its inception. It was not so much an abuse of the act which Mr. Wilson demonstrated, it was its own inherent weaknesses. The Canada highway act was first introduced into Parliament by Hon. Frank Cochrane, in 1912, in its original form it gave the Federal Government control of expenditures.

Opposed By Liberals.

As a consequence it was opposed by the Liberals, and killed in the Senate. On two more sessions it again appeared, but was again shelved. In 1919 it passed in its present form. The provinces under present conditions have charge of expenditures and the Federal Government undertakes to pay forty per cent.

Even in its present form it did not pass without very considerable opposition. That opposition would appear to have been amply justified by the disclosures which Mr. Wilson made tonight in the House. The moral of Mr. Wilson's address was that it is highly dangerous to override the principle that local needs should be met by local taxation.

Are Not Economical.

The charges (if charges they can be called) further demonstrated the simple fact that the knowledge that the other fellow is paying part of the cost is not conducive to economy, especially when the other fellow is the Federal Government. Knowledge of this fact may, in the present case, have encouraged Mr. Biggs to construct 60-foot highways with boulevards, when 20 feet, without boulevards would have sufficed, to construct speedways when roads were all that was needed, to cut through hills when he could have gone around or over them, and to parallel other highways a few miles distant. If he did improve his own standing well, that was another of the incidental temptations underlying the measure. The Dominion Government was paying 40 per cent of the cost.

Two-Edged Sword.

So that the speech of Mr. Wilson tonight, delivered from behind the minister of railways, in whose jurisdiction is the operations of the act, was something in the nature of a double-edged sword. Opposition members were not slow to take advantage of the fact. Mr. Master of Borne, and Clarke of Red Deer, brushed aside the attack of the honorable member upon the Ontario Government as an irrelevancy, and plunged at the root of the matter, which is the act itself.

In the face of the knowledge that it must pay 40 per cent of the cost, how was it that the federal engineers and the department of railways and canals had allowed such alleged "reckless extravagance" to go on unchecked? "The honorable member from Brantford," said Mr. McMaster scathingly, "has made some interesting disclosures, and has done a public service by so doing, but I wonder if he realizes that 40 per cent of his charges are levelled against the minister of railways, and the leader of the movement."

Has Not Been Paid.

Premier McPherson rose. "The 40 per cent has not been paid," he said. "The speech was directed against the Drury Government," said Dr. Clark of Red Deer. "We are not concerned here with the actions of the Drury Government. But it was also a most severe censure upon the minister of railways and his road policy, and in that we are concerned. This is par excellence the road policy of the minister of railways. The blame for it in the first place lies upon his head. In the first place by example and in the second place by inducement this expenditure was provoked, fomented and engineered by the minister of railways. The whole business is an illustration of the danger of federal incursions in the provincial arena. Dual control always leads to trouble."

Tries To Explain.
The minister labored heavily to clear his own skirts in the matter. He explained the system under which he worked. In the first place the provinces

submitted plans showing the roads projected. Then they selected the particular roads on which the federal subsidy was to be asked. Engineers were then sent out and a report was made. Thereupon an agreement was entered into, and the province submitted an estimate.

After that the minister floundered somewhat in his explanation. But what he meant to say was this: That the Federal Government was protected by the act to the extent that it need pay 40 per cent only of what was a fair and reasonable cost of the road built. Nothing had been paid so far.

Another Weakness.

Here is another palpable weakness of the act. The federal engineers have presumably approved of the plans of Mr. Biggs. Mr. Biggs has gone ahead and built his roads at the costs mentioned. And there is no record that the federal engineers complained. He has apparently been allowed to go ahead in a career of "reckless extravagance" until found out by Mr. Wilson of Wentworth. And even Mr. Wilson who lives in the county where the extravagance charged was the worst, permitted Mr. Biggs to go a long way before he thought it worth while to inform the junior partner to the transaction, and the representatives of the people who have to pay forty per cent.

Was Complaint Made.
"Have the federal engineers lodged any complaint in connection with these expenditures?" asked H. B. Morphy of Perth pertinently.

"Well, they have made complaints from time to time," answered the minister, who, however, failed to specify the nature thereof.

Now the question arises as to what portion of the bill the federal authorities will consider themselves called upon to foot. In view of the temper of Government members tonight the Government engineers may conceivably be called upon to assess the value of 60-foot macadamized highways for purposes of federal subsidy at the cost of 20-foot dirt roads, and the cost of 60-foot rock cuts at the value of 100-yard detours. Then Ontario will rise up and say that she is through with the Canada highways act, and other provinces which have not provided so violent an example of the unsoundness of the measure, will voice the opinion that the Canada highways bill should be relegated to the scrap heap, where it belongs.

Wilson Is Opposed.

When the House of Commons tonight went into supply on the estimates of the department of railways and canals, an amount of \$53,000 for organization and payment of the staff of the commissioner of highways was first taken up.

Gordon Wilson (Wentworth) announced himself as opposed to the dual control of road building. He cited the Hamilton-Brantford road as a case in which there had been inexcusable extravagance.

The portion of this highway already completed, said Mr. Wilson, was 9,100 feet, and it had cost \$141,253.46, or at the rate of \$15,412 per mile.

"No," Mr. Wilson commented, "the streets are not paved with gold." And after all, this, Mr. Wilson proceeded, Hon. F. C. Biggs, minister of public works and highways for Ontario, proposed to widen this road. If such extravagant schemes were permitted it was inevitable that other portions of the country would suffer by neglect.

A Humorous Case.

Last Sunday, said Mr. Wilson, he had been called to attend the bedside of a constituent of his. This sick man's wife explained that he had been worrying over the road question. (Laughter.) The man explained that just recently the Ontario Department of Public Works had moved his fence back fifteen feet and offered him a check at the rate of \$1,285 per acre. It seemed that Mr. Biggs proposed to use the fifteen feet for the purpose of a boulevard from Hamilton to Windsor.

Mr. Wilson then gave particulars of wages which had been paid last year on the road. Laborers received \$6 a day; teams, \$10 per diem; foremen, \$6.50 per diem; and board; roller engineers, \$7.50 and board; five-ton trucks, \$50 a day, with driver.

Accuses Biggs.

Further to illustrate the "generous manner" in which Mr. Biggs expended public moneys, Mr. Wilson said that a contract for trucks at \$117,500 had been awarded, on which the agent admitted he made a commission of \$13,000. No competition tenders had been called for, and Mr. Biggs had explained as a reason for his action that he wished to help a young friend just starting out in business.

The Hamilton-Kitchener highway was being completed in front of Mr. Biggs' own gate, and at points where the Ontario minister and his father owned property.

John Best (Dufferin) declared that the county of Wentworth had 64 miles of roads, which were being constructed at a cost of \$2,654,640. This single county was getting one-sixth of all the money which was to be expended in Ontario on roads under the Canada highways act.

Wants the Facts.

Deputy Speaker Bolvin asked the minister of railways to state definitely whether the highways under discussion had been approved by the department of railways and canals.

Dr. Reid replied that the Ontario Government submitted a program of the roads it wished to construct for his consideration. The estimated cost was also supplied, and if the Government agreed, it was bound to pay 40 per cent of this amount. So far he had approved the Hamilton-Brantford highway, the Dundas street highway and the Hamilton-Queensway highway. Three others, the Hamilton-Kitchener, the Hamilton-Jarvis and the Hamilton-Chatsworth highways had not yet been approved. The estimated cost of the Hamilton-Brantford road was \$658,907, or \$34,400 a mile.

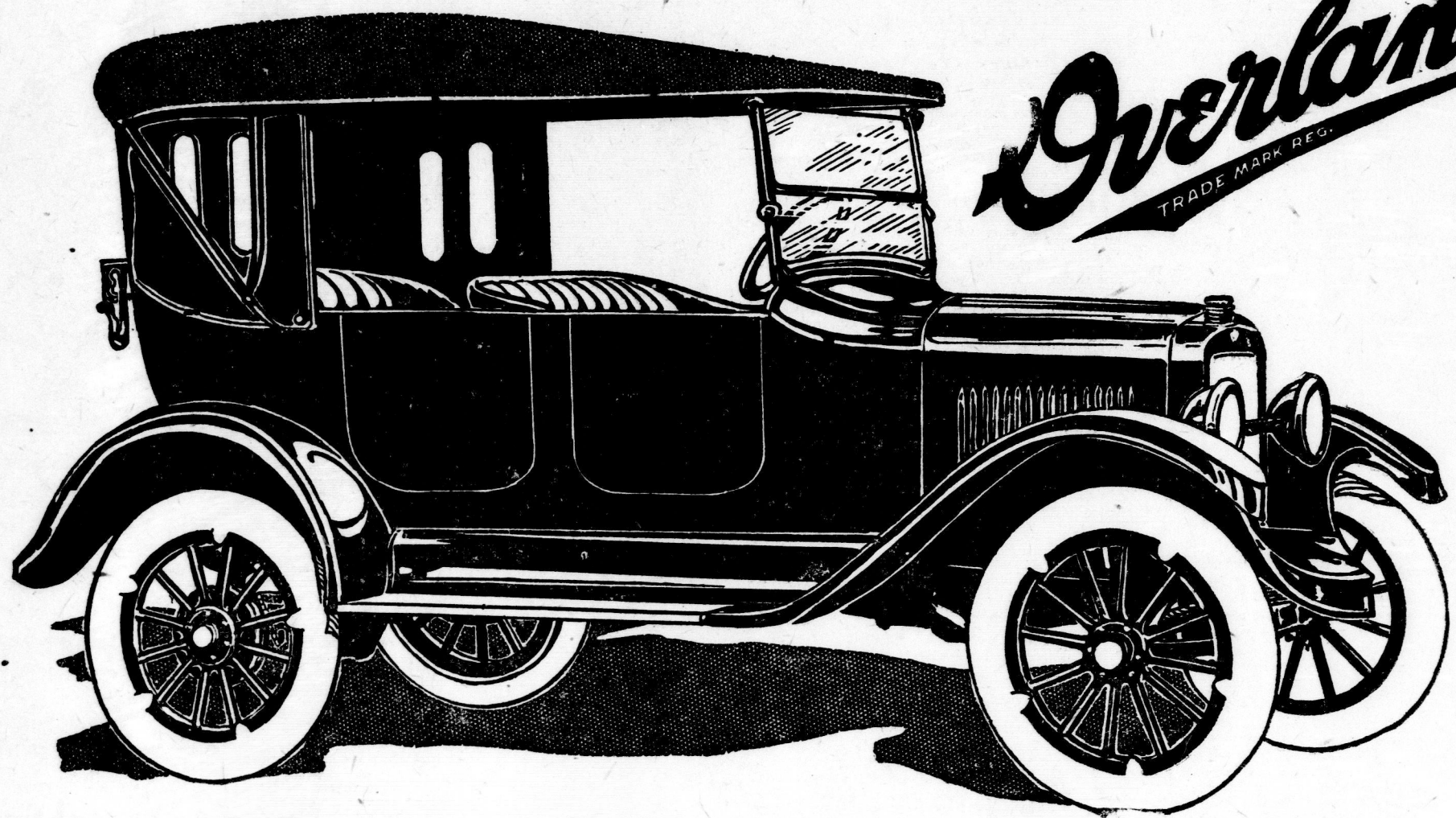
Mr. Orer said that if the Dominion Government suffered through extravagant expenditures on these roads the House was not required to discuss them.

COLONEL PEACOCK

SHOT BY FEINERS

HELFEST, June 1.—Two armed men today entered the garage of Col. W. J. Peacock of Innishannon, near Brandon, Cork, and shot him in the stomach when he tried to protect his property. The wireless telegraph school at Cahirciveen, County Kerry, was entered Tuesday evening, and twelve of the accumulators were stolen.

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REV. DR. GORDON NEW MODERATOR

Rev. W. J. Clark, Former
Londoner, Nominated,
But Withdraws.

TORONTO, June 1.—By Canadian Press.—Rev. Dr. C. W. Gordon, better known, perhaps, as Ralph Connor, the novelist, was elected moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada at the opening sederunt of the 47th General Assembly tonight in St. James Square Presbyterian Church here. Only two other names were placed before the assembly for a vote, those of Rev. Dr.

Ephraim Scott of Montreal, editor of the Presbyterian Record, and Rev. Dr. McLaren of Vancouver. Two others were also nominated, Rev. Dr. W. L. Clay of Victoria, B. C., and Dr. W. J. Clark of Montreal, but these two withdrew before the vote was taken.

When the nominations were called for, Dr. Gordon's name was the first presented, his nominator being Principal John McKay of Winnipeg and seconder, Sir Robert Falconer. Dr. McKay urged the choice of Dr. Gordon as a fitting honor and reward for the service he had rendered to the Presbyterian Church in Western Canada, for his work as chairman of the joint council of industry, for his services in the great war, and finally, as a tribute to his distinction as a Canadian writer.

FIRE LOSSES LIGHT.

STRATFORD, June 1.—Fire losses for May were larger than for some months, \$3,000. This was accounted for in a series of small fires.

SERIOUSLY HURT, BUT SAVED BOY

Lt. Hyslop Falls Thirty Feet
When Rope Snapped.

WINDSOR, June 1.—Lieut. James Hyslop, of the Windsor Fire Department, and his 10-year-old son were badly bruised in a 30-foot fall to the pavement in front of the central fire hall this afternoon. Hyslop was practicing with a life line rope swung from an aerial ladder.

FALL AND SHOCK MAY BE FATAL

Albert Holmes of Ingersoll Is
in Critical Condition.

(Special to The Advertiser.)
INGERSOLL, June 1.—From the effects of being shocked and falling from a pole more than twenty feet Albert Holmes, son of Chief of Police Holmes, an employee of the local hydro commission, is in a critical condition in Alexandra Hospital. While working on a pole at the corner of Carroll and Cherry streets he came in contact with 2,300 volts off a hydro line. He was alone at the time, and it is not known definitely when he was injured. He was

AUTOS BLAMED FOR INSPECTION DELAYS

WINDSOR, June 1.—Following an investigation into the feasibility of having customs and immigration inspections made on the ferry boats in order to save time, E. D. Lennie, special officer of the department of customs, Ottawa, stated to Mayor Wilson, who accompanied him on his inspection, that time was not wasted in passing the officers, but through the number of autos which had to be loaded and unloaded on the boats. Mr. Lennie informed the mayor that the arrangements for handling autos were clumsy, and that the tardiness of the service was directly attributable to this feature.

MARINE NEWS

SARNIA.
SARNIA, June 1.—The vessel passengers at this port today were:
Up—Peter Reiss, 7:50; Elmore, 10: Sonoma, 11; Porter, 1:50 a.m.; Grand Island, 2; Carl Bradley, 2:40; Steel Fitzgerald, 4:50; Shenango, 7:20; Hemlock, 7:30.
Down—Philbin, 10:20 a.m.; counting, 10:50; Wm. Roberts, 12:20 p.m.; Good-year, 2:40; Cornelius, 3:30; Sarvey, 4:10; Townsend, 4:30; Garrettsburg, 4:40; Corey, 5:40; Cletus Schneider, 6; Tomlinson, 7; McDougall, 11:50 p.m.; Wickwire Jr., 12:10 a.m.; Taplin, 12:20; Robinson, 12:30; Manistique, Smith, Sheadle, 8 p.m.; International Waterway, No. 191, 8:30; Angeline, 8:30.

