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SAINT JOHN, SATURDAY MORNING, FEB. 25, 1911.

PROVINCIAL ROADS.

The Telegraph has frequently attacked the highway policy of the Hazen Government. No defence of the Robinson Government in this particular is ever attempted, the Leader of the Opposition himself admitting that the Highway Act under which the roads of the country were maintained by his own Government and of his immediate predecessors was a dire failure. During the campaign of 1908 Mr. Robinson told the electors whenever he addressed a rural constituency that he would amend the road law. He did not say how, nor has he offered any suggestion since he became Leader of the Opposition that would be worthy of consideration by anyone having the slightest knowledge of road conditions in this province.

Mr. Hazen during the same campaign promised to repeal the existing law, if he were returned to power, and his first official act was to carry out this pledge. While the House was considering the bill in 1908 and other amendments in 1909, Mr. Robinson and his party put up a purely technical and political fight. They had no suggestions to make. They did not defend the old law, but they criticized the new law without in any way suggesting any change that would be an improvement. In short Mr. Robinson admitted that the law which Mr. Hazen repealed had worked badly, but he had no suggestion to offer by which conditions could be improved.

There are over 13,000 miles of highway in New Brunswick, the maintenance of which is a partial charge on the treasury of the province. It will be readily seen that it is not possible for any government with only limited means at its disposal to macadamize such a stretch of road. The best that can be done is to keep the roads in such condition that transport will be made as easy as possible. New Brunswick is a hilly country, and this makes it all the more difficult to keep the roads in repair or to haul as heavy loads as are possible in level countries.

But it is not so much for transportation of freight that large expenditures are demanded on the roads, as by those who seek enjoyment in automobiles. It is the wealthy owner of this new class of vehicle who is crying out about the roads. The farmer knows that he must go down in his pocket if he is to have dustless roads. The automobile owner does not have to consider ways and means to the same extent, and his voice is being constantly heard in what was once known as the "good roads" movement.

To comply with the demands of those who want even the trunk roads of the province macadamized would call for a capital expenditure of \$12,000,000, and to maintain such roads would require practically the whole revenue of the province. Such roads can only be secured by direct taxation and while it would be right for the Government to assist in their building, it is impractical to think about it under existing conditions.

Where politics have not interfered with the administration of the Hazen Highway Act, it has proved a much better law than its predecessor. At least the people know that the money appropriated for road work has been spent for that purpose. Political interference, fortunately, has not been very widespread, but has been confined to comparatively small areas. The result is that today the roads of the province show a very decided improvement over three years ago, and no doubt will continue to improve, as the people practically have the whole matter in their own hands.

As in every other department of the administration the expenditures of the Hazen Government on the roads have been larger than those of Mr. Robinson and his friends. Not because, as Mr. Robinson claims, the Hazen Government is extravagant, but because it has had the money to spend and has spent it where it would do the people the most good. Instead of extravagance, the Hazen Government has practised economy where there should be economy. The travelling expenses of its members have been reduced about \$2,000 below the figure expended for this purpose by Mr. Robinson. The departmental contingencies have been greatly cut down, and the extras which were constantly being demanded by members of the old Government have been cut out altogether. This with an honest collection of the revenue has given the Hazen Government a quarter of a million more to spend on useful public services, to say nothing of the increase in the Dominion subsidy which began in 1907.

To make good the charge of extravagance which Mr. Robinson has so frequently made against Mr. Hazen he must prove that the Government has expended beyond its income, and this he has entirely failed to prove. Mr. Hazen has not added to the taxes of the people of the province in any way. He has placed in the treasury what formerly went for political purposes to keep Mr. Robinson and his friends in power. It is because of this that Mr. Hazen has more to spend on roads and bridges than any other government of this province.

In 1905 the old Government spent \$79,487.60 on the roads. In the following year their expenditures were \$75,134.61. These were years preceding the Highway Act which Mr. Hazen repealed. In 1907 the old Government had to provide for the whole road expenditure of the province as the assessment which they levied through the municipalities was not collected until the fall, when the road work had all been done. The cost of the roads for that year was \$194,213.58. The year following the Government expenditure on the roads was \$167,981.83. This was the year of the change of government, and to some extent the conditions were the same as in 1907, although there had been a change of government meanwhile.

The Highway Act brought in by the Hazen Government went into operation in 1909, and that year the Government spent \$60,021 on the roads. Last year, when the confusion which always follows in the radical change of a law had disappeared, the Hazen Government spent \$93,617.32 in road repairs, an increase of over \$12,000 on the average expenditure of the old Government for this purpose.

In road making, as in all other important branches of the public service, the Hazen Government has proved its wisdom and liberality. The province has a good Highway Act. It has been, generally speaking, wisely administered, and the provincial contributions for the repair of rural roads increased. Up to the present time neither the Telegraph nor Mr. Robinson has suggested any improvements in the law, or what their policy is concerning road improvement in New Brunswick. The people would rather hear something along this line than listen to the continuous fault-finding, which seems to be Mr. Robinson's only policy at present.

PLACING THE RESPONSIBILITY.

The refusal of the Dominion Government to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the affairs of the Farmers' Bank, has brought prominently to the front the alternative now being considered by the shareholders—an action charging negligence against Hon. W. S. Fielding, members of the Finance Department, and the Treasury Board, who took part in granting the charter. A review of the correspondence in regard to the Farmers' Bank, recently presented by the Monetary Times, leaves no doubt as to where the responsibility rests.

Immediately after the issuing of the certificate to the institution, Sir Edward Clouston wrote to the Finance Department pointing out that there was every evidence of fraudulent practices being carried on, and urging that "if only for the protection of the public," the Treasury Board should exercise its right to refuse to issue a certificate until it had made a thorough investigation. The department's reply was simply that the certificate had been issued.

Sir Edward's letter was received on the very day, it seems, that the certificate had gone out. It could have been cancelled before the bank could start in business. After that there were six different warnings from responsible parties that dishonesty was rampant. One of these came from the manager of the branch at Milton, pointing out that his general manager was forcing him to do something which he held was clearly contrary to the Bank Act. But the bank, in the words of the Monetary Times, was allowed to continue its robbery until death came by its own actions.

There was a very widespread feeling at the time of the collapse that the larger banks were responsible to a considerable extent in forcing this small institution to the wall. It is clear from the letter of Sir Edward Clouston, as president of the Bankers' Association, that this is quite incorrect. He did all that was possible for him to do and at a time when the department could easily have acted on his advice. Once they had failed to take any notice of his warning, there was nothing for him to do, but let the looters of the money proceed to the inevitable end. The blame is wholly with the Government and it cannot be shifted to other shoulders.

A POOR EXCUSE.

The latest and most ingenious excuse for Mr. Fielding's acceptance of the \$120,000 gift from beneficiaries of the Government, and his concealment of the gift's names, is reserved for the Boston Transcript. It declares that he was justified in accepting this sum, and that he was justified in taking anything more that such good friends might choose to give him, and that the names of the donors were withheld and should be withheld from him for the protection of the donors themselves.

For, says the Transcript, so high a sense of honor dominates Mr. Fielding that if the names were known to him he would straightway proceed to demonstrate its compelling force by in the first place refusing any just demands made by them for legislation or other action in any particular, and would even be impelled to introduce legislation to deprive them of rights and privileges they now enjoy. Such action would be taken by Mr. Fielding to demonstrate to the people of Canada that the gifts did not influence his legislative or administrative acts.

That is an argument more ingenious than effective. Banned out it means that the Fielding conscience was so troubled by the initial gift-taking by the minister that it needed to be soothed by the commission of injustice against the givers. But the commission of an injustice to another would surely outrage a sensitive conscience. Wounded once, and bleeding, would the Fielding consciences be healed of its trouble by inflicting upon it fresh wounds? The Transcript, or some other of Mr. Fielding's new-found United States friends, must try again.

THE MEANING OF IT.

Just how the Reciprocity agreement is expected to work in the United States is well shown by the following extract from the Minneapolis Journal, which says:—

"We stand at the parting of the ways. One path leads to practical, if not political union with Canada, and the development of the entire North American continent as the heritage and the possession of a great and free people."

"The other path leads to the hardening into two distinct political entities, two hostile, or at least unsympathetic, peoples on this continent. It leads to a closer relation between Canada and Great Britain. It means the carrying out of Joseph Chamberlain's great dream of a British Imperial Federation, bound together no less by trade than by sentiment, with preferential tariffs on either side, with Canada taking the place of the United States as chief purveyor of food products and manufactured articles to Great Britain."

"Today England is our best customer and Canada our third best. But our foreign trade wanes, and that of Canada grows. If we push Canada into England's arms, the trade arrangements between the two will tend more and more to shut us out."

"How long will our trade with these two customers last if Reciprocity fails? Our Canadian trade must drop off as the West and East channels of her commerce are scoured by use, and Canada will more and more supply English needs in our stead."

Current Comment

(Montreal Star.)

Maryland has revived the whipping-post for wife-beaters, and now when the old man goes home and finds dinner an hour late, he sits down at the piano and sings "Blessed Be the Tie That Binds" instead of barking around the kitchen with a razor strap in his hand.

(Quebec Daily Telegraph.)

Curling is the ideal sport for ladies. They always look well handling an iron or a broom.

(Toronto Telegram.)

Are you a continentalist or a Canadian?

Commission Government Is Without Party Politics

There is no party politics in the campaign in favor of Commission government. The Executive of the Citizens' Committee is made up of the following supporters of both political parties, whose names are a guarantee that partisanship is entirely eliminated in the contest for good government in St. John.

W. H. Thorne.
M. E. Agar.
H. Colby Smith.
Dr. W. F. Roberts.
Frank H. Flewelling.
James A. Belyea.
W. D. Baskin.

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Will Be Retired.

Lt. Col. Andrew J. Armstrong, senior ordnance officer of military district No. 8, who has been in charge of the ordnance department here since its organization, has been granted three months' leave of absence commencing on Feb. 1st. At the end of the three months he will go on the retired list. His successor has not yet been announced, and in the meantime the work of the department is being carried on by Conductor Sully.

The Clifton House

A. H. Hanington, K. C., has purchased the Clifton House property from Thomas Dean. Negotiations for the sale of this property have been going on for some time, and the deal is now about completed, except for the drawing up of the transfer deeds. Mr. Hanington, when asked today about his plans, refused to discuss the matter, or disclose the purchase price. The purchase does not include the business and furnishings.

Supreme Court.

Frederickson, Feb. 24.—Judge Barry was the only judge present when the supreme court met this morning. There were no common motions made. The judge announced that he had received a letter from the chief justice asking him to adjourn the court until Thursday, March 2nd. The cases set down for hearing on Wednesday next will not be taken up until the following day, as March 1st is Ash Wednesday, and the court will not sit on that day.

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