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Mr. KENT'S MOTION

For Address to Governor on Suppression of Information

The first question on the short Order Paper of the Day was the motion of Mr. Kent for an address to His Excellency the Governor looking for a postponement of the prorogation of the session for the obtaining of information asked for by members of the Opposition during the session and not yet furnished.

Mr. Kent spoke at some length and with considerable emphasis over the failure of the heads of different departments in their failure to supply information when asked for during the session. The questions asked dated from the opening of the session to the sittings of last week. Mr. Clift had asked the Minister of Public Works for information in relation to the District of Bay de Verde. A bundle of papers had been tabled to-day but no detailed statement was furnished as to accounts of expenditures. He strongly criticized the failure to supply the statement and could not accept the explanation of the Minister that the shortage of assistance in his office prevented the furnishing of the details asked for. That was no reply. His office was well equipped to supply what was required and if while the session lasted the office had not been sufficient to have in readiness the details when wanted, then extra help should have been provided. It was an

IMPORTANT PREROGATIVE OF MEMBERS

of the House to be provided with information when they asked for it; it was one of the safeguards of the public, and one of the means of criticizing the actions of the Government during their term of administering the affairs of the Colony, and it was certainly no answer to the questions of Honorable members in seeking information, to say that the Minister

lacked sufficient help in his office to do the work. He believed had the House been aware of this during the session, the Premier would have taken the necessary steps to secure the aid required to get the accounts ready. The next question was to the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, in relation to payments made for the construction, repair, alteration, material, supplies, etc., in regard to lighthouses, fog alarms and other aids to navigation. He had seen no answer for that question. It would be quite a large payment and if the statement had been sent in he (Mr. Kent) could not possibly have it in his possession and not know of it. Then there was a question to the Minister of Finance and Customs in connection with the amounts collected as duties on tea, sugar, etc., which he (Mr. Kent) thought, however, had just been tabled. Then there was one in relation to revenue and expenditure for the 8 months from July 1st, 1912, to February 28th, 1913. The next was one to the Finance Minister in relation to the

TRIMITY SPUR LINE.

He noticed in the returns just now tabled, there was no payment made for this. The next was put to the Minister of Marine and Fisheries re expenditure on the Carbonar Breakwater only answered this afternoon: The next unanswered question was put to the Minister of Public Works, for a statement and returns in relation to the District of Carbonar. Returns were tabled but no statement. Next was a question to the Finance Minister as to payments for lighthouses and marine works alone. Not tabled so far. The next question was to the Minister of Public Works for a statement in relation to roads and bridges in Carbonar district. The

statement was to-day tabled, but there was yet no returns.

The Minister of Agriculture and Mines was asked in relation to payments made to Mr. J. R. Goodison, as Government arbitrator. That had not been tabled.

Mr. Blandford here interjected that he had furnished this but Mr. Kent said it

HAD NOT REACHED HIM.

The next information asked for was from the Minister of Public Works for a statement in relation to the District of Placentia and St. Mary's. The returns were tabled to-day but no statement. There was also a question to the Minister of Public Works re certain payments as to work at Tilton Harbor. Statements tabled but no returns. The next had reference to payments on public works in the District of Placentia and St. Mary's. Returns tabled but no statement. The next was to the Minister of Public Works in re payments on public works in the Main District and also at Chapel's Cove in the same district.

Mr. Piccott said he had furnished information for the latter two questions, but Mr. Kent said though he had been in the House every day of the session, he had not received this. Mr. Kent reiterated that this information was important. It was absolutely necessary that they should have it and he begged leave to move the address, of which he gave notice yesterday. Mr. Piccott stated that he had answered some of the questions referred to by Mr. Kent, and if he had not received them it was not his (Mr. Piccott's) fault. Mr. Kent denied having received this information nor did any of his colleagues.

The Premier, Sir E. P. Morris, said there was no justification whatever for Mr. Kent's motion for an address to His Excellency the Governor, for the information sought by the Opposition. It was merely part of a game but was too thin not to be seen through. These questions were asked, he asserted, merely to satisfy the curious curiosity of defeated candidates. Some of the questions would entail work in departments which, if answered, would keep the clerks hard at it until next Christmas. By tabling the great volume of original documents they had to-day, they were doing more than any other Government had done in this respect, for an Opposition. The Opposition were inaugurating this session a new epoch of representation by question.

Mr. Clift, in supporting the motion for an address to the Governor, made by his friend, Mr. Kent, took strong exception to the remarks emanating from the Premier. He had said that the motive behind the asking of these questions "was part of a game," and Mr. Clift wished to take issue with the Premier on that observation and to assure him that as far as any questions he (Mr. Clift) had asked, were not asked as "part of a game," but for the purpose of obtaining information which he (Mr. Clift) had desired in relation to matters of public importance. His questions were couched in proper language and he was entitled to a courteous and prompt reply. He saw no object in asking questions for the sake of "playing a game." So far as he knew the same applied to his colleagues and he believed they were asked for a genuine purpose and to acquire information into important public matters. He thanked the Colonial Secretary and Premier for courteous and

prompt answers to questions, but several questions were not answered so promptly and courteously by others and they

HAD A JUSTIFICATION

for the address moved by Mr. Kent; it was well evidenced in fact, by the answers which had been brought in, and in such great bulk—as all could see from the pile of literature on the table—from the Public Works Department. This all comprised original documents from the Public Works Department in answer to questions asked during the session. He had advanced the plea that he was unable to answer the questions through illness, which all deplored and which he (Mr. Clift) was glad to see had been succeeded by the Minister's restoration to his former health. But his illness had not been delayed the information, and if it were necessary to bring down this original pile of papers, it could easily have been done earlier in the session, so that members could examine them for the information sought. Now as the House was closing there will be no time for members of this side of the House to examine the documents and make such comment as their contents would call for. He (Mr. Clift) did not know now whether the information received from the Minister of Public Works in these documents tabled, was what he required. He denounced as unfair and unjust, the Premier's suggestion that he or his colleagues asked these questions as "part of a game." He (Mr. Clift) would not be mixed up in any "game."

HE DENIED THAT THE NUMBER OF QUESTIONS asked this session had been abnormally large. All the questions he had asked had been framed for some particular reason and purpose upon matters as they arose and he had no occasion as the Premier had also unfairly and unjustly said of "haunting through old journals" for the purpose of finding questions. Mr. Kent was entitled to an answer to the questions advanced as to expenditures in the District of St. John's East. This was the time and place and the only place for the people's representatives to have the opportunity of examining public vouchers and statements and if this were denied them then the public were left without any examination and without their representatives having seen the necessary vouchers. That was part of their duty, of the duty of every man representing a constituency whether he sat on this side or the other side of the House to examine the public accounts, to make himself acquainted with their contents and, if by asking questions they could lead to better acquaintance with the accounts, that was the proper way to do it. He knew members could visit and get such information from the departments, but if they did not see fit to do so, they could exercise their undoubted right to ask questions and get the copies of these accounts tabled. He did not think that in asking the House to adopt the Address they were in any way bringing the House or the

GOVERNOR INTO RIDICULE.

That had been suggested by the Premier. It was a respectful address to His Excellency asking him that before proroguing the Legislature certain information be supplied to its members, and this course was fully justified yesterday as evidenced by the answers they had obtained to-day. He excused the Premier for handling in

information which he held since March 13th and had overlooked. Up to yesterday he charged the omission to the Public Works Department. It had reference to the expenditure on a public building in Harbor Grace and he was not playing a game in asking it. He had also asked the Minister of Agriculture and Mines on March 14th, as to the vote of \$40,000 for encouraging agriculture. This vote had been largely exceeded in the year 1912. The information which lay before them was given the last day of the session, too late to be examined or its contents commented upon, and Mr. Clift in concluding scored the Government on their remissness.

The Colonial Secretary replied and charged that Sir Robert Bond had denied him information when he (Col. Secretary) sat in opposition in 1903-4. Mr. Howley condemned the Opposition's tactics, saw no necessity for Mr. Kent's motion and in a halting, laborious speech of some duration made the mistake of his life in taxing the East End representatives with neglect of their district, for Mr. Dwyer, member for St. John's East, got after him and figuratively

WIPE UP THE FLOOR WITH HIM.

He reminded Mr. Howley that not so many years ago he grossly neglected his district (Bay St. George) for a lengthy period and that he (Mr. Dwyer) had to be sent forward to look after his interests. He (Mr. D.) had to excuse the member to his constituents who had a cant phrase which they often used: "Where is Howley?" The Premier had declared he had been 30 years in Parliament. Well, if he had, he (Mr. D.) noticed that he always took care to be with the Government and he benefited generally by the knowledge he possessed of the parliamentary tricks learned in that time. Before concluding Mr. Dwyer charged Mr. Howley with interfering in the district matters of St. John's East and giving out work at Bell Island and Portugal Cove. Mr. Howley denied this but Mr. Dwyer held to the charge and it was quite evident to all that Mr. Howley was greatly relieved when Mr. Dwyer concluded.

MR. KENT replied to the remarks of the Premier which he thought most unjust and unfair. He simply did his duty to the country and his constituents in asking the questions he did. On the last day of the session the Public Works and other departments of the Government threw in their piles of papers and accounts and they had conclusive proof that not an effort had been made to prepare answers to the questions asked when they submit accounts and other information in the original while the statements asked for as to public expenditure had not been made. To obtain information of the kind the Opposition asked for was one of the greatest safeguards of the people, one of the greatest securities against improper conduct on the part of the Government, and one of the principles which kept administrators of public offices from abusing their positions. The questions asked were public ones, had reference to expenditures for railway construction and other matters of public import and interest and it was the prime duty especially of members of the Opposition to discover and lay before the country details of expenditures by the Government of the day. Before he concluded Mr. Kent satisfied the House that he played no "game" in asking the questions put by him. He pointed to the fact that he had asked at the Public Works office for information

as to expenditures on work in his District and received a letter from the Secretary of the Department telling him

HE COULD NOT GET IT

unless he asked for it in the House of Assembly. As to Mr. Howley's remarks about matters in the District of St. John's East, he would not come to him for a reference as to his work there, his constituents, he felt sure, were well capable of judging of that, and he would be satisfied with their verdict. He had tried to do his duty by his District while in the House. Mr. Howley's insinuations as to Mr. Kent's references to and appeal for justice to the police force, did not come well from him, and Mr. Kent stated that the few months he held the office of Minister of Justice, under the late ministry did not give him the opportunity to do for the police what he would wish, but said Mr. Kent, "If my turn comes again it will be one of the first things I will undertake, to see that justice is done the Police Force." He was satisfied that the questions asked were not answered. Original returns were piled on the table from the Public Works Department, but no statements accompanied them, and they had then no means of knowing whether all the questions asked were answered or whether such answers covered the information asked for in the various questions put.

Mr. Morison followed in pretty well the same strain as the Premier, and Mr. Earle made the last speech incident to the debate, and in it announced his retirement from active political life, though if he did re-consider the matter, and come forward next fall he believed he would, with his colleagues in the Liberal Party, hold the seats of the Government on the other side of the House.

On motion the Clerk read the following address and Resolution proposed by Mr. Kent and seconded by Mr. Clift:—

To His Excellency Walter Edward Davidson, Esquire, Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of Michael and George, Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Island of Newfoundland and its Dependencies.

May it please Your Excellency:

The House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, respectfully request that Your Excellency will be pleased to postpone the prorogation of the present Session of the Legislature until the information sought from several departments of Government by members of the House, by means of questions addressed to Ministers in charge thereof but not yet answered, be laid upon the table of this House for the information of the members thereof and in the interest of the Public Service.

House of Assembly, April 15th, 1913.

RESOLVED that the foregoing address be presented to His Excellency by such members of this House as Mr. Speaker may appoint for that purpose. The motion for the address having been put, was voted down by a Brute Majority, and the public will remember that the Government, by a strict party vote, knowing that their shameful extravagance and corruption would be exposed to the light of day, refused to give the public through the Opposition, the information sought for in the legitimate manner. If we judge the temper of the people of Newfoundland, this disgraceful proceeding

will not be forgotten when they are asked to go to the polls in November next. Here are the names of the men who voted against the motion for the address:—The Premier, Sir E. P. Morris, Speaker Warren, Colonial Secretary Watson, Finance Minister Cashin, Minister of Public Works, Woodford, Minister of Agriculture and Mines, Blandford, Minister of Marine and Fisheries, Piccott, Minister of Justice, Morison, and Messrs. Devereaux, Goodison, Whiteway, Squires, Parsons, Murphy, Howley, Kennedy, Moulton, Bennett, Frank Morris and C. Emerson.

Those who voted for the address, were, Messrs. Kent, Clift, Clapp, Earle and Dwyer. The motion was therefore lost on a vote of 19 to 5. The various other matters on the Order Paper, were then disposed of, when the Premier announced that the Governor would attend the House at 3 p.m. to-day to prorogue the Assembly.

McMurdo's Store News.

WEDNESDAY, April 16.

There has just arrived to us a shipment of Excelsis Shaving Sticks of which we have sole control in Newfoundland. This is an English shaving soap and is of the finest quality. We maintain that Excelsis Shaving Sticks outclass any shaving soap at present imported and that Excelsis will satisfy every one who uses it that it is the last word in shaving soaps. It would be no use for us to put another shaving stick forward in competition with the several good ones in the market if it had no distinctive claims to superiority over the others. But every one who tries Excelsis will at once agree, we think, that it is superior—superior enough to warrant the slightly higher price that it brings—35 cents a stick. Excelsis is a thoroughly pure superfatted soap, giving a full, thick, white lather that greatly assists the shaver.

Cape Report.

Special to Evening Telegram.

CAPE RACE, To-day.

Wind east light, weather foggy at intervals. S.S. Neptune passed in at 3 p.m. and S.S. Seal west at 9 p.m. yesterday; nothing heard passing to-day. Bar, 29.50; ther, 31.

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