

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATURE

### BOTH THE LEADERS SPOKE ON ADDRESS

#### The Government Scored for Breaking Its Anti-Election Pledges—John Oliver's Vigorous Attack.

Victoria, Nov. 30th.

The sitting of the legislature was taken up this afternoon with three speeches delivered upon the address on reply to the speech from the throne. The occupied all the time up to 6 o'clock, when the House adjourned. Attorney-General Wilson moving the adjournment of the debate. The leader of the opposition, Jas. A. Macdonald, made his motion for the legislature, impressing both sides with his fairness. He took the government to task for advocating the readjustment of the two per cent. mineral tax before election, and providing themselves to a change in that connection, and then leaving it as it stood. He dealt with the Fernie ballot box scandal in a judicial and practical manner, also scoring the government severely for the position taken.

Premier McBride followed. His speech was among the best that he has ever delivered. After depicting the financial situation in the most deplorable light, he called upon the opposition to assist the government in getting the loan bill through, as the only measure of redress possible, and an absolute necessity in order to save the province from a lamentable position on December 15th, when they were obliged to meet liabilities in London. Drifting then from provincial politics he attempted an attack upon the Federal government in connection with the Grand Trunk Pacific, devoting considerable time to it.

John Oliver showed the utter weakness of the position taken by the Premier in his attack upon the Federal government, and exposed the attempts made by the leader of the government to glorify himself for election purposes. He removed all the glamour which Premier McBride endeavored to surround himself and exposed him to criticism from a practical standpoint. Finally he dealt with the Houston episode, proving that the member for Delta was correct in describing the Premier as "tricky and treacherous."

J. A. Macdonald.

Mr. Macdonald congratulated the mover and seconder of the address upon the way in which they had acquitted themselves. He only hoped that his own maiden effort would be delivered as well. The seconder, the member for Fernie, spoke under peculiar circumstances, but he (Mr. Macdonald) would take occasion to state that in any severe criticism which he might make regarding the Premier's action he would do so in a personal way to the member for that riding.

He referred to the marked difference which characterized the introduction of the loan bill. He hoped that ability would be given to the governments in the province in consequence of this. The speech itself was summed up in the two words—taxation and borrow. He did not wish to speak of it disparagingly on that account. It was perhaps necessary that money should be borrowed and that taxes should be increased.

The plan of borrowing was somewhat different to that in other years. The government in general admitted that it was a bad time to borrow money. If this were true, would it not have been better to have effected a temporary loan of \$1,000,000, if necessary, for three years? At the expiration of that time the stringency in the money market might then have passed away and a loan might then be floated in the regular way at a rate of perhaps 3½ per cent., when a temporary loan might be satisfied, and not the rate of 5 per cent. paid as proposed.

Coming to the mineral taxation he said that it was a plank of the Conservative platform that the 2 per cent. tax on the output of the mines was now in existence should be repealed. The tax should be levied upon the profits of the mines.

Members of the government in the last parliament described the tax as working infernally to do something to meet the liabilities. It was out of the question at the present time to propose to do away with taxing the mining industry. If the opposition could evolve a scheme which was better than this he would only be too glad to accept of it.

This tax had been in cases severely criticised without justification by those mining men. He wished to life the load off the prospector and miner as far as possible. He would be glad were it possible to lift the taxation upon these pioneers of the mining industry. But it was impossible to do this now. Immediate relief was levied upon the industry in the province they found themselves affected against it.

If the opposition did not support the government in this loan bill he would begin to lose faith in the patriotic intentions of the opposition. The country was passing through a financial crisis. Among the causes which had brought about this crisis was the building of the Westminster bridge at a cost of about \$1,000,000. That was a needed work, however, giving the commercial metropolis of the province access to the various other parts. Within a few years he believed that that bridge would be giving a revenue which would pay the interest and sinking funds necessary for paying it off. He did not attribute the financial conditions to the weak majorities which past governments had had. As an instance of this he referred to the Premier's decision to build the bridge with a majority of 16 in 1900. Financial depression was not confined to this province alone. It was felt in various parts of the world.

It would not be to the benefit of British Columbia if the mines were exempted from taxation until they were on a paying basis. The present tax worked out so that mines which would not be sold under half a million dollars paid no taxes, and the revenue that was lost which were not worth more than \$500.

He did not know just what the framer of that speech meant when he made an appeal to the patriotism and loyalty to the members of the House. The appeal was not justifiable, as the patriotism of every member must be accepted until it was proved otherwise. Apparently the framer of the speech meant to call upon the members of the opposition to support any legislation which was introduced by the government, whether satisfied with it or not. The opposition was not there to play the mere game of politics, but it was there to see that the best legislation was put through the House.

He had no confidence in the government, not because it was a Conservative government, because he was not so strong a party man as to take that stand, but he did so because the government had not won a majority, and did not blame the present government for the present condition of affairs in any great measure. But he laid it to the blame of weak governments in the past. The present ministry was likewise weak.

The government required to be in a position to define its policy and carry it through, not being at the mercy of any one or two members. Another reason was seen for this appeal to patriotism in events which happened between October 3rd and the present time.

After the events in connection with the Fernie election an appeal might well be made to patriotism. He conceived it to be wrong for the government, having the instruments of government in its hands, to appoint the partner of one of the candidates as returning officer. He also conceived it to be wrong for the government to have its knowledge of the results of the election kept through the papers and otherwise that a recount was to be demanded, to return those ballots to Victoria. He could not approve of the attitude taken by the government.

Drifting then from provincial politics he attempted an attack upon the Federal government in connection with the Grand Trunk Pacific, devoting considerable time to it. John Oliver showed the utter weakness of the position taken by the Premier in his attack upon the Federal government, and exposed the attempts made by the leader of the government to glorify himself for election purposes. He removed all the glamour which Premier McBride endeavored to surround himself and exposed him to criticism from a practical standpoint. Finally he dealt with the Houston episode, proving that the member for Delta was correct in describing the Premier as "tricky and treacherous."

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In the province of Ontario Premier Ross had had to pay 5 per cent. on a loan of \$2,000,000.

The government had endeavored to secure a loan on better terms. It was outside of their power to do so. They had exhausted every means before they got a loan on as favorable grounds as that proposed. The government had exhausted every effort before they evolved as favorable a scheme as this one.

The financial condition of the province required the government to ask the legislature to support them in this loan bill or the result would be disastrous. On the 15th of December obligations would have to be met in London. If the means were not afforded it would be disastrous to the province, and attended by the gravest results. It was impossible, even if they were assured that better terms would result in eight months, to put this matter off. This was the only scheme the government had for getting the required money.

Coming to the Fernie ballot box case the Premier said that the government was not responsible in the matter. The statute was not altered, and the opposition knew well that no redress was legally possible, as otherwise an appeal would have been taken from the decision given in the court. The government should surely stand by the laws of the province. Would the leader of the opposition ask the government to break the laws of the province? No appeal was taken in this matter.

An appeal was taken, however, to the highest court in this province. It was true—an appeal to the electorate in the Vancouver bye-election—and it was decided against the opposition in spite of the eloquence of their leader on this very question.

And the leader of the opposition disregarded the voice of the ballot box in Vancouver? He had contended for the recognition of that voice in the one instance, but in the other disregarded it. There was a great gathering in Vancouver for the bye-election when the Fernie ballot box matter was used to its utmost. They gathered even from Ottawa for it.

Did they want the Attorney-General to violate the laws of the province? During the session he said it was likely that a measure would be introduced to amend this statute and do away with the difficulty met with in the Fernie election. "Will it be retroactive?" asked S. Henderson.

"If the member will say in what measure he wishes it made retroactive I will try to satisfy him," returned the Premier.

Continuing, the Premier referred to the trip of ministers to Ottawa to seek better terms for the loan. The report would be forthcoming in a short time. If the province were given proper recognition with respect to fishery matters alone it would not be likely to require the House to meet at this time this year. The Federal powers had turned a deaf ear to the demand for better terms first made three years ago.

If delegations from the province were not listened to, then it might become necessary to see that representatives from British Columbia in the Federal House were armed to see that recognition was given. This was not a question of political parties.

Referring to the statement of the leader of the opposition, that the speech from the throne contained little, the Premier said that he was not surprised at such speeches. He had used it himself when in opposition. But he was honest in it, and he did not wish to reflect upon the leader of the opposition in saying so. (Laughter.) He was not after the attention of the House was taken up with railway propositions inserted in the speeches. Hours and hours had been wasted in the House in debating the matter.

The criticism of the Premier on paper through the northern country. He disapproved of this "juggling" with railway propositions. When this government announced itself upon railway construction law could rest assured that the government was prepared to carry out its proposal.

There was need of a Coast-Kootenay line and also a railway to open the northern section of the province.

But the most important matter now was the solving of the financial situation. With liabilities pressing upon them on December 15th it was necessary that the legislature give its attention entirely to the financial situation until that was solved.

He wondered that no reference was made by the leader of the opposition to the Grand Trunk Pacific. He found nothing in it which was detrimental to British Columbia anything in the building of the section through the province. His government had pressed for recognition of the province with regard to business during construction days upon the Dominion government, but he had received nothing except the statement of two members from British Columbia that this would be done. It looked as though British Columbia was to be ignored in this respect.

The province would get nothing from it. The line would apparently be built across the prairies and then down through the province of British Columbia to the Pacific coast so that the benefits would flow in other directions than British Columbia. Another reason which prompted him to believe that the province was to be ignored in this was the fact that no reference was made to the exclusion of labor in line with the anti-Oriental legislation passed in this legislature.

John Oliver.

Mr. Oliver was surprised at the stand taken by the Premier on his 2 per cent. tax. After years of deliberation on this question the great Conservative party, no doubt guided in no small measure by the opinion of the present Premier, had decided against this 2 per cent. tax and put it in their platform that they favored a tax on the net profits of the mines. The Conservative party appealed to the opinion of the people in the province, and sought the suffrages of the people in the past election. He was surprised to find a party going back on their pledges in this way. It was no laughing matter, but a serious thing when public men make their promises no more than this. The Premier asked where were taxes to be got from if this was altered? He seemed to have no confidence in his Finance minister. Surely with a Finance Minister and an ex-Finance Minister the

government should be able to settle that matter.

The Premier said that he did not know at the time of the election that the financial conditions were so strained as they were. During the election the Premier had urged that that was the reason why they were being called to gether.

The Premier now asked the opposition to deal leniently with him on account of the condition of affairs. This was a most peculiar position to take. The Premier said that the money was necessary in order to provide for the Westminster bridge. Yet three million and a half was borrowed for the purpose of meeting the overdraft and paying for this bridge. What had become of that money?

The policy of past governments had been to give away the resources as quickly as possible. Thousands of acres of land were set aside for railways in the province. The Premier asked the purpose? No. Tracts were set aside for the construction of the British Columbia Southern, yet the land bonus did not accomplish that. The much abused Liberal government had given away the building of it. That government at Ottawa, which the Premier sought to discredit, had also forced the hand of the C.P.R. and brought on the construction of the Columbia and Western.

Referring to the weakness of past governments he said that the return of the Dunsmuir government by 16 of a majority was not a sign of strength. A government was strong not only by the numbers of its supporters but by the cohesion of the party and the ability of the leaders, and that was lacking in the Dunsmuir government.

The new conditions introduced in the proposed taxation scheme would upset conditions in the province. The taxation of 50 cents a thousand on single bolts would close all the shingle mills in the province.

Aluding to the coal taxation he ridiculed the disposing of coal lands at \$10 an acre. These lands were worth millions of dollars. He instance that claims in Southeast Kootenay being held at \$10,000. Was it worth while to save those lands in Southeast Kootenay to be disposed of for the paltry sum of \$10 an acre? It was as reasonable to give these lands away.

Taking up the statement of the Premier that this loan bill was the best financial arrangement which it was possible to make, Mr. Oliver said it struck him as appearing that the government had arranged with some one to take the whole of this loan at the fixed rate of 5 per cent. He denied that the province of Ontario had within recent years borrowed money at a rate of 5 per cent. It looked as though the Premier was exploiting the province in this matter.

It was absolutely necessary that the loan bill should be put through before December 15th he would agree to pass it, on condition that the Premier would repudiate the debts of the province. Alluding to the Alaska award, he believed it would not disturb the spirit of patriotism in the province. That was laid to rest, and the Premier was to be trusted.

In the Fernie ballot box case the law had been overruled. The law provides that a recount within ten days shall be allowed, yet that was not given to a candidate in Fernie. The Premier said that the Vancouver episode gave the Conservative party support and thus endorsed this matter. But he would repudiate the government side that Vancouver was not the whole of British Columbia, and that the Premier under these circumstances persisting in retaining power. They had the name of His Honor used from end to end of the province in a connection in which it should not have been used.

The Premier had during the investigation into the Columbia and Western matter admitted that he had information relating to that iniquitous transaction. He took advantage of the oath of office to refuse to give this. Yet the Premier did not refuse to violate the confidential relations supposed to exist between His Honor and himself. The Premier's conception of these matters differed according to the circumstances.

The Premier was well open to the charge of treachery and treachery. Members of the late opposition would know that the Premier had violated his promise to the members of that party. That man was pledged to give members who had seats in the House positions in the cabinet when he was called upon to form a government. The present Minister of Finance had also made these promises, but he was not in a position to carry the pledges out. The Premier was, however, and had violated the promises given.

The Conservatives understood that position when they convened in convention at Revelstoke. It was agreed then that the adoption of party lines should not be introduced in the old parliament, but should follow dissolution. Yet Premier McBride violated this understanding and the pledges given to the then opposition.

It was important that the province prevailing in the district through which it passed.

What right had the government of this province to take a hand in this matter? It was outside their power. It had been raised by the Premier for election purposes. He was not to be trusted. The Premier might appear as of more importance than he was.

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In the Fernie ballot box case the law had been overruled. The law provides that a recount within ten days shall be allowed, yet that was not given to a candidate in Fernie. The Premier said that the Vancouver episode gave the Conservative party support and thus endorsed this matter. But he would repudiate the government side that Vancouver was not the whole of British Columbia, and that the Premier under these circumstances persisting in retaining power. They had the name of His Honor used from end to end of the province in a connection in which it should not have been used.

The Premier had during the investigation into the Columbia and Western matter admitted that he had information relating to that iniquitous transaction. He took advantage of the oath of office to refuse to give this. Yet the Premier did not refuse to violate the confidential relations supposed to exist between His Honor and himself. The Premier's conception of these matters differed according to the circumstances.

The Premier was well open to the charge of treachery and treachery. Members of the late opposition would know that the Premier had violated his promise to the members of that party. That man was pledged to give members who had seats in the House positions in the cabinet when he was called upon to form a government. The present Minister of Finance had also made these promises, but he was not in a position to carry the pledges out. The Premier was, however, and had violated the promises given.

The Conservatives understood that position when they convened in convention at Revelstoke. It was agreed then that the adoption of party lines should not be introduced in the old parliament, but should follow dissolution. Yet Premier McBride violated this understanding and the pledges given to the then opposition.

It was important that the province prevailing in the district through which it passed.

What right had the government of this province to take a hand in this matter? It was outside their power. It had been raised by the Premier for election purposes. He was not to be trusted. The Premier might appear as of more importance than he was.

Mr. Oliver was surprised at the stand taken by the Premier on his 2 per cent. tax. After years of deliberation on this question the great Conservative party, no doubt guided in no small measure by the opinion of the present Premier, had decided against this 2 per cent. tax and put it in their platform that they favored a tax on the net profits of the mines. The Conservative party appealed to the opinion of the people in the province, and sought the suffrages of the people in the past election. He was surprised to find a party going back on their pledges in this way. It was no laughing matter, but a serious thing when public men make their promises no more than this. The Premier asked where were taxes to be got from if this was altered? He seemed to have no confidence in his Finance minister. Surely with a Finance Minister and an ex-Finance Minister the