

## THE HERALD

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## The National Debt.

From time to time we see recorded in the Liberal newspapers, glowing accounts of surpluses secured to the Federal treasury by the wonderful financing of Mr. Fielding. A little research and some slight examination of the public records easily reveal the fact that these surpluses exist only on paper, or in the exuberant imagination of the Finance Minister and his admirers. It does not require any very extraordinary knowledge to understand what a surplus is. A surplus is that which remains after all requirements are satisfied. In the case of the Government finances a surplus, we must suppose, is the money left over after the public services have been provided for. In simple language, when you place on one side of the account what you receive and on the other side what you pay out, whatever remains after all the claims are satisfied is the surplus. Now, if the Dominion Government, with Mr. Fielding as Finance Minister, have had any genuine surpluses, the national debt would there by be reduced. Let us apply this test to the surplus question. If we find, on examination, that the debt of Canada has been reduced since Mr. Fielding became Finance Minister, then we have had a real genuine surplus; but if the records show that the debt has not been reduced, or has been increased, then we must conclude that the surpluses we have heard so much about have been surpluses only on paper.

When the Liberal Conservatives were in office, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his present colleagues were greatly distressed over the national debt and the increasing obligations of the country. At the time of the charge of government the net debt was \$258,497,432. The increase in the previous ten years had been \$31,000,000 or \$3,100,000 a year. In the six years preceding 1896 the increase had been less than \$21,000,000, and the Government in that time made reductions in taxes relieving the people of burdens to the extent of \$21,870,000. Had these taxes been retained the debt would have been less in 1896, when the Conservatives left office, than it was in 1890.

The Laurier Government took office in 1896. In ten years they took from the people in taxation through the Customs and Excise departments \$142,398,430 more than would have been paid on the basis of 1896. No great national work was carried on during that period. The Conservatives had completed the Canadian Pacific Railway and deepened the canals. Expenditure on the Grand Trunk Pacific had only begun in 1906. From the pledges given, the country might have expected a great reduction in the debt out of this enormous taxation and the Finance Minister's boasted surpluses.

But this is what happened:  
Net debt, June 30th, 1896 \$258,497,432  
Net debt, June 30th, 1906 289,042,977  
Increase 30,545,545

In the short fiscal year 1906-7 the taxation was still further increased, and the debt was diminished by \$3,117,117. But in the fiscal year 1907-8 ending March 31st, according to Mr. Fielding's statement, the net debt increased no less than \$12,000,000. In round numbers, therefore, we have the following:

Net debt, June 30, 1896 \$258,497,432  
Net debt, March 31st, 1908 270,000,000  
Increase 11,502,568

And this in the face of \$229,000,000 added to the proceeds of taxation in 11 years and 9 months. For the year beginning April, 1908, Mr. Fielding anticipates at least \$14,000,000 increase of expenditure over the previous year. He expects a loss of \$6,500,000 in the revenue. If these things happen there will be in these twelve months an increase of \$32,500,000 in the debt. In any case the increase must be much greater than that of the previous year. Last year's increase in the debt was the greatest for more than 20 years. Yet it was incurred by a party which "viewed with alarm" an increase one quarter as large, which was caused by a removal of sugar duties and other taxes.

Quite lately, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his friends seem very anxious to have it understood that Federal and Provincial politics are quite distinct and apart. It is really wonderful how quickly this change came over the spirit of their dream. When the Provincial elections, which concluded on the 8th of June, were going on in Ontario and Quebec, Sir Wilfrid and colleagues in the cabinet were very emphatic in their declarations that there was no distinction between Federal and Provincial politics, so far as voting for candidates was concerned. Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament supporting the Government toured Ontario and Quebec, and besought the people not to give their votes to candidates supporting the Government of Ontario or the Opposition in Quebec; because every vote cast in this way was one against Sir Wilfrid Laurier. These campaign-besought the electors to vote for opponents of the Conservative Government of Ontario and supporters of the Liberal Government of Quebec, and thus show their confidence in Laurier. They were particularly to impress upon their hearers the fact that there was only one Liberal party in Canada, and that all calling themselves by that term should disregard all other considerations and by their votes show their confidence in Laurier. When the elections were over the emissaries who had gone forth from Ottawa discovered that their appeals had largely been in vain and that the electors exercised their own good judgment in the matter of voting. They discovered that where they pleaded strongest, there was polled the largest vote against Laurier and his followers and admirers. When Laurier and his friends found that the Conservatives of Ontario and Quebec took no stock in their hypocritical appeals, they suddenly turned a right about face and now try to persuade the public that a Conservative victory in a Provincial election can have no bearing on Federal politics; that it is without significance from a Dominion point of view. The conversion of Laurier and his friends is a little too late and is altogether too palpably insincere. Had the Provincial elections in Ontario and in Quebec, too, resulted to the liking of Sir Wilfrid and his friends, we should now hear proclaimed from the house tops the political doctrine that Liberalism was one and the same, whether in Federal or Provincial elections. This volt face of Laurier and his friends is characteristic of the deception and hypocrisy

which seem to be a basic principle of our opponents' political creed. Deceive the people in some way or another. Pull the wool over the eyes of the electors; evade the truth and misrepresent the facts. Divert attention from the real issues before the public. These seem to constitute the elements of the political faith of our Liberal opponents. Is this the kind of politics the electors of this Province would like to see perpetuated?

One is reminded of how beautiful it is to see members of a family living together in peace and harmony, by the manner of canvass reported to be employed by some Liberal candidates for the Provincial Legislature. If these reports be true, these candidates are taking a most extraordinary way of showing their loyalty and generosity towards their fellow candidates and colleagues in the Government. One candidate is reported to be asking for support on the plea that he is to be Commissioner of Public Works; for the reason that Mr. Cumiskey will be defeated; another is said to be canvassing for votes on the ground that he is to be Attorney-General; because both Premier Hazard and Attorney-General Palmer are to be defeated. No doubt, the Premier, the Attorney-General and the Commissioner of Public Works will be defeated when the election comes; but who would ever think that their brothers in arms, the members of their own political household would thus be heralding broadcast their political destruction? Surely, "this is the most unkindly cut of all." With the Premier, the Attorney-General and the Commissioner of Public Works defeated, the remains of the moribund Government would be worth very little. But these three pillars of the Government, thus about to be sacrificed, must not be too dispondent. They will have one consolation in their misery, when the rotten fabric shall have tottered to its fall. When they gather themselves up from the debris consequent upon the general destruction that shall have overtaken them all, they will be sure to see among the political flotsam and jetsam around them, in the same sorry plight with themselves, the mangled forms of those now fostering the unhallowed desire to step into their official shoes.

It is stated that the Conservatives of Ontario expect to carry 80 out of the 92 seats at the next Dominion election. This prediction is based on the fact that a large percentage of Liberals who supported Sir Oliver Mowatt because of the honesty and economy of his government abandoned Ross and will likewise abandon the Laurier Government because of its reckless waste of extravagance, and particularly for the deception practiced as to the cost of the G. T. P. Railway.

## In the House of Commons.

(From Hansard.)

When the question of branch railways was up for discussion in the House of Commons on the 10th, inst., the following occurred: Mr. A. A. McLean. Some time ago I put some questions on the Order Paper with reference to the New London branch of this railway, and they were answered by the Minister of Railways. In the year 1904 a survey was made of the New London branch and the hon. Finance Minister, then acting as Minister of Railways, promised to do everything in his power to build that branch.

Mr. Fielding. No, my hon. friend is not serious when he talks of the Minister of Finance promising to build railways.

Mr. A. A. McLean. I will just read a copy of a return dated 1904, and I think the Finance Minister will change his mind.

Mr. Fielding. No, I did not promise anything.

Mr. A. A. McLean. I believe the present government do promise anything, especially when an election is coming on. Here is a letter dated Moncton, N. B., the 1st of August, 1904, and signed by D. Pattinger, an officer of the government, with reference to the New London branch, the Elmira branch and the O'Leary branch. This letter states that \$1,500 would be the cost of a survey of each of these branches, and at the end it reads as follows:

All these amounts will have to be expended before the 30th June next, so it is important that the

works should be got ready for tendering as soon as possible.

Why did they want these works to be tendered for before the 30th of June, 1904? Because they intended to issue the writs for an election, and wanted these tenders to be out to deceive the people. They did not intend to go on with any of these works, and they do not intend to-day to have any contract for the Elmira branch any more than they did for these three branch lines. This letter goes on to say:

If you require any more people to attend to this, please let me know, and I will ask Mr. Schreiber to give me the names of some that he says he has on his list here.

He wanted some men to go out and tell the people that the government were going to build these branches, but there were never any contracts issued for that purpose. In March, 1908, I asked the Minister of Railways this question:

1. Did the government receive petitions from inhabitants of Clifton, Stanley and Hope River, Prince Edward Island, praying for extension of railway from the main line of the Prince Edward Island to Stanley Bridge or vicinity, and for the placing of a sum sufficient for the purpose in this year's estimates?

The answer was: Yes. He received those petitions, and he received petitions also in 1904, and the Minister of Finance said in 1906 that he would appoint a competent engineer, an independent man, to go and make a survey of these branch lines, but no survey has been made up to the present day. The next question was:

Is it the intention of the government to grant the prayer of the petitions?

The answer was: The government has not so decided. The third question I asked was:

Is it the intention of the government to make surveys this year with a view to extend the railway system along the north shore of Prince Edward Island?

The answer was: No decision has been reached. Although the Minister of Railways gave this answer in March last, I presume that he has not considered the matter even up to the present time. I would ask him now if he has reached a decision with reference to the construction of a railway on the north shore of Prince Edward Island?

Mr. Graham—My hon. friend has named several railways. What railway does he now refer to?

Mr. A. A. McLean—The New London branch.

Mr. Graham—The hon. gentleman was complaining that no independent engineer has been sent to fulfill the promise of the Finance Minister to make a survey of that branch up to the present time. If he looks at the supplementary estimates he will see that there is an amount for that work.

Mr. A. A. McLean—Will the minister say that work has been done yet?

Mr. Graham—The hon. gentleman was asking me if it had been considered. I was replying to this question.

Mr. A. A. McLean—The question is this:

Is it the intention of the government to make surveys this year with a view to extend the railway system along the north shore of Prince Edward Island?

Will the minister answer that question now?

Mr. Graham—Yes it is the intention of the government to comply with the request of my hon. friend and to meet his complaint that no independent survey has been made of what is known as the London branch. Whether it will be built or not is a matter for future consideration, because I will not build any railway until I am satisfied that it is in the interest of the public and ought to be constructed.

Mr. A. A. McLean—Then I will ask the minister if he has read the report of the engineers who made the survey of the New London branch line in 1904?

Mr. Graham—I have not.

Mr. A. A. McLean—I do not think the minister takes very much interest in the construction of this railway. The railways which he now contemplates building are simply political railways. I do not object to the building of a railway from the main line of the Prince Edward Island Railway to Elmira. I think it is necessary in the interest of the people that railway should be built, but I think there is a railway which should be built in preference to that, namely, the railway along the north shore of the island. The people there last year, as I have stated before in this House, on account of the weather, which existed in the province, were unable to ship any of their produce until after the winter season came, and as a result they were put to great inconvenience and loss. If there had been a railway on the north

shore, they would have been able to sell their grain and other produce like other people in the province. You are building the Grand Trunk Pacific at a cost of \$250,000,000, and you contemplate building the Georgian Bay canal at a cost of \$90,000,000 and the Hudson Bay Railway at a cost of \$90,000,000 or \$100,000,000 where there is not one workman living, while in Prince Edward Island and in the settled portions of Nova Scotia there are people living who have been for a hundred years without any railways at all. Why does this state of affairs exist?

You go up here 150 miles north of the O. I. A. W. in some cases 200 miles, where there is not a man living, and you build a railway at the expense of the people where there will not be a white man living for the next ten or twenty years, and where no railway can get any traffic. Why do you build these lines? That is the question asked by every man in Canada and the government cannot give any answer. These places will never be settled except in some spots where the lands are good, but where we have land settled, on which people have been living over a hundred years—places which are the most thickly settled portions of Canada to-day, with fifty-five people to the mile—you will not give us any railway. Our songs out to the North-west. Why? Because they have not got the railway communication they should have at home. But when they go out to the northwest, they settle near a railway, and they will be very apt to go near where there is a railway, because they know the government are spending money for the few people living in the west in order that they may get their votes. At the next general elections however the government will be disappointed at the result of their policy, for our people are sufficiently intelligent and patriotic to know that their own homes should be provided with railway communication by the government and let those people who go out west take pot luck the same as those in the east have had to do up to the present. We are spending millions of dollars on Russians and Giletics out in the Northwest and the English to go along as best they can in the east without government assistance. Our people in the east have to haul their produce some twenty five or thirty miles to market, and in many sections in Prince Edward Island they have no markets in which to sell their produce at all which they can reach with any convenience. The policy of the government is unfair to the people of the east. The east is neglected in favour of the west. The west is getting it all. What has been the condition of affairs in this House during this session? Two-thirds of our time has been taken up with the affairs of the Northwest and of Ontario, and millions of dollars have been spent in the west compared with only thousands in the east. It is true that we have one hundred and seventy-eight items to-day in the estimates for Nova Scotia, but that does not amount to very much. That is only an election dodge. We have only a few items for Prince Edward Island, and the time will soon come when the First Minister will regret the stand he has taken with reference to the east. It is time for him to look to the east and leave the west alone. They have enough. Millions of dollars have been spent and mispent in the west, some of which should have gone to the east, and it is time the government realized that fact. It is time the government should take in the branch lines which the hon. member for Westmoreland (Mr. Emmerson) is interested in. I believe that probably we shall take in those branch lines, but we should build some railways for the people who have built up Canada. We should not concede everything that the people of the west ask for.

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(Sgd.) A. W. BROWN.

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