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ONE SCANDAL THAT MET SUDDEN DEATH

Such Was the Fate of the Efforts of a Manitoba Tory

TRIED TO MAKE ALARM AGAINST INDIAN DEPT.

The Address by Mr. Oliver Put An End to it All

Ottawa, April 20.—Two important aspects of the policies of the Liberal government and of the Conservative opposition in the house of commons were brought into conspicuous contrast before the Canadian public by the debate in the house Wednesday and Thursday of this week on the resolution of censure of the government embodied in an amendment to a motion to go into committee of supply, offered by George H. Bradbury, member for Selkirk.

One illustrated the extremes to which the opposition as at present constituted, being practically disorganized, is willing to go for the sake, or in the hope rather, of gaining party advantage. Although the movement was disguised under the mantle of solicitude for the welfare of the Indian, the character of the debate on the opposition side, its seemingly manifest insincerity as denoted by the obviously crocodile nature of the copious tear shedding and heart bleeding indulged in by fervid orators, stamped upon it the unmistakeable imprint of a play at politics pure and simple in an effort to create in the east where, quite naturally, the people know little or nothing of Indians or Indian reserves, sympathy for the Indian who was depicted as suffering gross neglect of his interests by the government through its department of Indian affairs.

The other brought into distinct outline the wisdom of the policy of the government in dealing with the Indians and Indian reserves of the west in the best interests of the spirit of progress which animates the government and which supplies the actuating motive when dealing with such problems, while at the same time safeguarding the interests and promoting the well-being of the Indians who are its wards.

The exposition of the policy of the government relative to Indian affairs, as delineated by Minister of Interior Frank Oliver, was specially clear cut and convincing.

The contrast between the two policies but once again reveals the reactionary tendencies of the opposition as compared with the attitude of progressive advancement conspicuously displayed on the government side of the chamber when important questions are being dealt with. In this instance the unfavorable light in which the opposition placed itself was given special emphasis by the fact that the resolution of censure was lost by the largest majority the government has had this session.

The debate was precipitated Wednesday evening when Minister of Finance Fielding moved that the house go into committee of supply. Mr. Bradbury moved as an amendment his resolution censuring the government for the manner in which it had dealt with the matter of procuring the surrender of the St. Peter's Indian reserve in Manitoba, disposing of the land of the reserve and establishing the Indians on another reserve.

Mr. Bradbury proceeded to deliver himself of the record speech of the session, both as to length—he spoke over four hours—and as the minister of the interior put it later, as to the number of baseless and untruthful allegations and insinuations made against the government.

The principal contentions raised were with respect to the manner in which the surrender of the reserve was procured, the methods employed in advertising the sale, and the prices realized for the land. It was insinuated by innuendo rather than charged, as is characteristic of the present opposition when fabricating charges against the government, that the procuring of the surrender and the conduct of the sale were carried on in a manner designed to enable alleged favorites of the government and speculators to secure the land at prices much below its real value, and the term bribery and other extravagancies of imaginary wrong doing were freely bandied during the protracted oratorical effort of the member for Selkirk.

Minister Oliver replied to the assault on the interior department Thursday morning. In his opening remarks he said:

"The member for Selkirk has the honor of making not only the longest speech of the session, but I believe that never since this chamber was erected has there been delivered within its walls such a persistent and sustained tirade of unfounded assertions and unwarranted insinuations, a tirade which in its gratuitous inexactitudes is an offense to the privilege of parliament and an insult to its intelligence."

The chamber shook with tumultuous applause, and Mr. Bradbury jumped to his feet with the point of order that the language was unparliamentary. The speaker ruled the point was not well taken, and Mr. Oliver came right back. "I say," he continued, "that in my estimation the tirade of gratuitous inexactitudes of the honorable member constituted an offense against the privilege of parliament, in which he excelled even himself. I have no means of expressing higher appreciation of the peculiar talents to which he owes the larger measure of his fame."

Mr. Oliver then went on to say that the matters dealt with by the member for Selkirk were not, on his statement, of sufficient importance to warrant his claiming the attention of the house to any great length, but that certain policies were involved which were worthy of attention. The first was the policy of the surrender of Indian reserves, and the second, the good faith of the government.

"The government of the country," said he, "is charged with the responsibility of administering affairs of this kind in the best interests of the country, and the responsibility does not rest altogether upon the individual most intimately concerned. It has become the policy of the government that where Indians are holding lands which they are not using or beneficially occupying; where such land can be turned into money which will be of more value to the Indians than the land, it is best to have that land made productive and tax yielding under other ownership. That is the government's policy in relation to this matter and I ask, if an honest endeavor by the government to carry out an established policy is to receive only such consideration as the honorable member offers, can it be expected that such policy can be carried forward successfully? Such tirades as the one we have listened to are calculated to make a government hesitate before undertaking it."

Taking up the detail of the allegations, the minister created a laugh by suggesting that if he overlooked any large number of the insinuations made, he would be delighted to be reminded of it, and, continuing, said: "Now as to the facts, though my honorable friend has not regard for the facts," a remark which called forth another protest from Mr. Bradbury, but again the objection was not sustained. "The facts are on the table of the house. Every return asked for was laid on the table, and if the case is not complete it is the fault of the honorable gentleman, not ours."

Mr. Oliver then proceeded to detail the circumstances in relation to the whole matter. He stated that before the St. Peters reserve was created, a considerable number of people acquired land rights within the boundaries of what subsequently became the reserve. In 1874 a survey was made and a portion of the land was laid out in what were called river lots. Some of the occupants of these tracts were white people, some were half breeds and some were Indians. Subsequently some of those who were Indian or part Indian decided to enter treaty and the river lots were put into the reserve. Some however, decided to retain their citizenship and private ownership and did so. These tracts were scattered over the reserve and as the government could not control the sale of liquor on the individually owned tracts and disputes over titles arose, a very unsatisfactory condition of affairs grew up. Complaints were made from time to time by people wishing to get title to their property which was also claimed by the Indians and eventually, to try and get matters straightened out, Chief Justice Howell of the Manitoba supreme bench was appointed a commissioner to endeavor to adjudicate matters.

Chief Justice Howell was unable to effect a satisfactory settlement of these rights by themselves and as the proximity of the reserve to the town of Selkirk was unsatisfactory to the people of the town and it seemed impossible to effect a settlement of affairs on the reserve, it was suggested that the most satisfactory solution of the whole difficulty was to procure the surrender of the reserves, dispose of the land and create another reserve for the Indians elsewhere.

"These are the facts in relation to the surrender of the reserve" said the minister. "The insinuation has been made that the department deliberately planned it for the benefit of party friends but I submit it is ridiculous. The condition of affairs required adjustment in the interest of the town of Selkirk, of the Indians and of everyone else concerned and Justice Howell merely conducted the negotiations.

"In the settlement the Indians were granted land in their own right and as those who had occupied land in severalty at the time of the acquisition of the country by Canada might claim rights as settlers, it was decided to give them sixteen acres to each member of a family on condition that they surrender their rights as settlers and I submit that in dealing with men who were owners of land in severalty in 1871 and occupants in severalty ever since, that was not an improvident transaction."

Referring to a criticism of the fact that the government did not administer the land allotted to the Indians in severalty, the minister stated that the Indians refused to sign the agreement to surrender with that provision included and it had to be struck out. The lands when apportioned, were selected by the Indians themselves wherever they chose.

As to the assertion that the lands were sold at ridiculously low prices, the minister read a long list of sales showing that the price ran all the way from $4 to $17 an acre, a number of them being above $15, showing that the Indians sold at their own discretion, which they had insisted upon being permitted to do and at any price they chose to take.

Relative to a report received that the Indians were not being fairly dealt with, the minister stated he had sent the law clerk of the department to the reserve to investigate, instructing him not to interfere as to the price agreed on but that if they were not getting their money, that would be a matter to be dealt with. That officer had submitted a report showing the name of every Indian who had been given land and what disposition he had made of it, together with the price received. The member for Selkirk had had that report in his hand yet he tried to tell the house the Indians had not received $4 an acre for their land and that there was irregularity in connection with the sales.

The member had also laid strong emphasis on what he termed insufficient notice to the Indians as to the time the surrender was to be made. The minister stated that the negotiations had been in progress the greater part

(Continued on page 13.)

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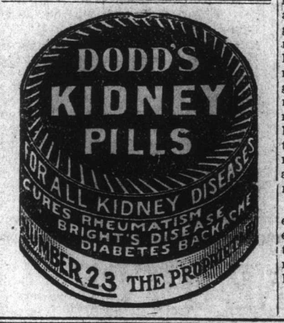

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