

The Standard

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ST. JOHN, N. B., THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 1912.

PUBLIC WORKS EXPENDITURE.

A very vigorous effort was made by the Telegraph yesterday, both in its Fredericton correspondence and editorial column, to prove that the Government of the Province was endeavoring to hide away the details of its expenditures, particularly those for Public Works. Last year the Opposition used the report of the Auditor General as a whip to misrepresent the expenditure of the Public Works Department made through their structural superintendents. These officials of the department are employed to make repairs to the small bridges in the different districts to which they are assigned. They also exercise a supervision over all the bridges in their respective localities. The result is that the name of one or the other of these officials is constantly appearing in the accounts. The Auditor General in his wisdom, or perhaps to save time, did not specify what all the expenditures of the structural superintendents were for, but charged up to each bridge the total of payments in a single item irrespective of whether these payments were for labor, supplies purchased, travelling expenses or other services. It has not been a part of the policy of the Opposition to deal with any great degree of fairness with the expenditures of the Government and it would be putting it mild to say that they made an exception in this instance. They were not even content to accept the report as it was, but misrepresented the facts by every means in their power.

Without in any way consulting the Government, the Auditor General has apparently made a change in his method of reporting on these expenditures. As implied in the public accounts committee last year it was the wish of the Government that a full and complete statement of all the items expended by the structural superintendents should be made public. The Chief Commissioner stated that he had nothing to conceal, that the accounts were all sworn to and that if it could be shown that perjury had been committed the offenders would be dealt with in the proper manner. Instead of giving all the details as suggested by the Chief Commissioner, the Auditor General furnishes even fewer particulars of the money spent by structural superintendents than he gave last year. Last year, according to the Opposition, the Auditor General was a very valuable official, because his report was so constructed as to enable them to make unfair and untrue statements concerning the cost of various public works and to assert that these statements were not theirs but those of the Auditor General of the Province, an official of the Government. Now that the Auditor has deprived them of this privilege he is referred to as "dumb," and it is charged that he "has changed his ways." The Auditor seems to have got himself between two fires; by withholding the details of the expenditures he has pursued a course which is not in accord either with the Government or its supporters in the Legislature, and the change he has adopted in making up the accounts is apparently displeasing to the Opposition.

So far as the expenditure is concerned, the Public Works Department has taken every precaution within its power to secure value for the money spent. Practically every payment in this department is made under oath. The structural superintendents do not pay the men they engage, but send in a certified pay sheet and individual cheques are then forwarded to the persons who earned the money. There could not be any great improvement on such a system and if the Province is being cheated it is by men who have no respect for an oath and who are guilty of perjury.

When it comes down to the concealment of expenditures the less the Opposition have to say on this question the better. For seven years prior to the change of Government the Public Works Department of this Province was run entirely on "suspense" accounts and nothing could have been more unsatisfactory than the audit of these accounts if they were ever audited, which is doubtful. The financial position of the department was continually misrepresented by Chief Com. LaBillois, and the public kept in ignorance of the enormous over-expenditures that were taking place in the department year after year. Without going further back than 1905 the effect of this vicious system on the finances of the Province is painfully evident. In the Public Works Report for 1905 the expenditures for the year are given as \$218,611.42. The over-expenditure of the previous year had been \$7,500.50. Added together the total was \$226,111.92 or \$25,928.41 more than the appropriation.

This was the statement submitted to the Legislature by Mr. LaBillois of the payments by the Board of Works between the close of the fiscal year and February 8, 1906, as laid before the House and were as follows:

Vault fittings, Crown Land Office	\$ 1,450.00
Public Buildings	1,888.36
Government House	18.75
Normal School	516.88
Rent St. John Rooms	75.00
Provincial Hospital	7,657.88
Highway Act	33.00
Great Road Special	1,349.46
St. John Bye Roads	964.86
Ventilation System, Normal School	100.00
Great Bridges	50,588.42
Road Superintendents	17,758.39
Steam Service	8,250.00
Printing, etc., Contingencies and Travelling Expenses	845.66
Total	\$91,596.66

There is abundant evidence that this was not a correct statement of the expenditures of the Public Works Department between the dates mentioned and that perhaps as much more was hidden away in a suspense account of which the Legislature had no knowledge. This view was sustained by the fact that in 1906 the Government obtained authority to issue bonds to the extent of \$197,065.97 on account of Public Works over-expenditures, a statement of which appears in the Report of the Board of Public Works for 1907, as follows:

Bal. ordinary account, Oct. 31st, 1906	\$ 47,122.24
Supts. of Roads	79,146.67
St. John Bye Roads	2,963.67
Ordinary bridges, wharves, etc.	52,994.66
Special expenditure on roads, etc.	6,255.12
Public Buildings	1,653.78
Government House	142.80
Normal School	1,114.96
Prov. Hospital Buildings	5,272.17
Steam Navigation	400.00
Total	\$197,065.97

The Legislature was of the opinion that this large

bond issue cleaned up the over-expenditure of the department, but from what occurred the following year it was quite evident that such was not the case. When the Government changed in 1908 it was found that there was another over-expenditure of \$157,879.69. This over-expenditure was not confined to any one particular branch of the service, but included them all, that for ordinary bridges, wharves, etc., alone amounting to \$85,147.06. So far as can be made out from the public accounts the total over-expenditure of the Public Works Department in the last three years of Mr. LaBillois' control amounted to \$354,945.66, which is considerably more than \$100,000 annually, every dollar of which was added to the permanent debt of the Province. More than half of this expenditure to all appearances escaped the Auditor General altogether and none of it was by authority of the Legislature until long after the bills were paid. Some sneering references have been made to the over-expenditures of the present Government by members of the Opposition, but there is nothing in their record that in any way approaches the administration of the Public Works Department under Mr. LaBillois. Even after such enormous expenditures the bridges of the country were left in such a wretched condition that the present Administration has been called upon to expend many thousands of dollars that would have been unnecessary had Mr. LaBillois done his work properly.

MR. BOURASSA.

We are not hearing quite so much about Mr. Henri Bourassa and his domination of the Borden Government these days. Only a week or so ago Liberal organs were proclaiming that this erstwhile follower of Sir Wilfrid Laurier was master of the situation; the French-Canadian supporters of the Government were declared to be in open revolt, and the fate of the Government was trembling in the balance. All this was prior to the debates in the House on the extension of the boundaries of Manitoba, involving the addition of the territory of Keewatin. The Government was to go to pieces on the rock of Separate Schools. Mr. Bourassa was vehemently insisting that a clause should be inserted in the Bill to secure privileges for the minority. There was a peck of trouble ahead. When the question came up the Liberal organs discovered that the Government was a unit on the policy to be pursued, that only five French-Canadian members voted for the clause "for conscience sake," and that all hope that the Government would be embarrassed had no foundation. Mr. Bourassa is still vehemently insisting, but no one is taking much notice of him.

The attitude which Mr. Bourassa has taken on this question is very clearly defined by the Toronto News. "He asks," says the News, "that our unhappy practice of violating the constitution should be continued in order to secure for a minority privileges that were never contemplated by the framers of the British North America Act. He favors continued infringements by the Federal authority upon Provincial Rights. Mr. Pelletier has correctly defined the extravagance of this demand by showing that, if it were granted, half of Manitoba would be under one system of educational administration, and the other half under one totally different—certainly an impossible situation."

"The education clause of the British North America Act declares that when in any Province (entering Confederation) a system of Separate Schools exists by law at the union or is thereafter established by the Legislature of the Province an appeal from any Provincial Act affecting the rights or privileges of the minority shall lie to the Governor-General in Council. The Act permits Parliament to make remedial laws after the Provincial authorities have failed to pass legislation satisfying the grievances of the minority. But it does not contemplate the passing by the Federal House of laws of instruction to the Province with respect to education."

The News recalls a debate on Separate Schools which took place in Parliament during the session of 1875, because New Brunswick had established a Public School system without providing for Separate Schools. Mr. Costigan moved that a humble address be presented to Her Majesty praying for an amendment to the British North America Act to provide that the Roman Catholic minority in New Brunswick should have the same rights to Separate Schools as those enjoyed by the minorities in Ontario and Quebec.

Mr. Mackenzie, the Premier of that day, amended the motion to say that legislation by the British Parliament encroaching on the powers reserved to any one of the Provinces, would be inadvisable, and that it would be inexpedient and fraught with danger to the autonomy of the Provinces for the Dominion Parliament to ask for such legislation. It was understood perfectly in 1875 that any interference in educational affairs either by the Federal House or the British House would be improper. The Government has taken the same view of the question today.

EAST AND WEST.

Mr. Molloy of the Manitoba Legislature has suggested that the West may secede from Eastern Canada, and form a separate Dominion. His reason for advocating this course is the refusal of the country to ratify the Reciprocity programme. Mr. W. H. Trueman, a Liberal lawyer in Winnipeg, and formerly of St. John, has delivered an address indicating that the position of Ontario on the tariff and rejection of Reciprocity must sooner or later bring about a breach between the East and West.

This, as the Vancouver News-Advertiser remarks, is great foolishness. The secession orators seem to have forgotten that the West is not in favor of Reciprocity. A majority of the representatives from the West are supporters of the Borden Administration. These were elected against all the influences that the Laurier Ministry could bring to bear on constituencies swarming with its own officials nearly all engaged in the campaign. If the vote were taken today it is doubtful whether the Reciprocity party would return one member in three west of Lake Superior, or would come anywhere near carrying a single Province.

The separation addresses were delivered in Winnipeg where the majority against Reciprocity was away up in the thousands. Manitoba elected only two supporters of Reciprocity out of ten members. It is great nonsense to talk of the Manitoba people revolting because they have their own way. British Columbia sent a solid delegation to condemn Reciprocity. The secession would therefore be confined to Alberta and Saskatchewan, which have on one side the staunch Canadian Province of British Columbia and on the other the satisfied Province of Manitoba. But the chief city of Alberta, which gave Mr. Bennett his majority of some three thousand, would revolt against the secessionists.

(London Free Press.)

Alexander would have some justification for weeping today. Even the explorers are left without other worlds to conquer.

(Springfield Republican.)

The deplorable news comes from a Kansas City stockman that so far from meat becoming cheaper this year it is to become dearer: "It costs us forty cents a day to feed a steer, and the weather has been so severe that they don't fatten." In California stockmen have voted to ask for the use of public lands to save their cattle from perishing on account of the drought. Altogether, it seems to be a good year to be acquiring vegetable habits.

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Brig. Gen. George R. Smith, the newly appointed paymaster-general of the army, has a real job. To begin with, he pays monthly about 75,000 officers and men scattered all over the world. He handles about \$50,000,000 a year. He succeeds Brig. Gen. Whipple, who has just retired.

HOTEL ARRIVALS.

Victoria.

John Hayes, Miss S. C. Kelly, Mrs. W. W. Bice, Miss N. P. White, Fredericton; B. D. Utter, Columbus; H. J. Walker, Fredericton; W. A. Jones Apohaqui; L. G. Crevier, E. G. Nagle, Montreal; W. A. Comeau, Weymouth; Wm. H. Roebuck, Ottawa; A. L. Hoyt, McAdam; J. C. Levesque, Fredericton; W. H. Gray, Campbellton; J. L. Chisholm, Halifax; G. W. Gerow, Fort Fairfield; H. B. Belva, Boston; John S. Hughes, Clyde River; A. McDonald, city; Hugh R. Lawrence, Se George.

Dufferin.

E. S. Coffin, Charlottetown; A. E. Marquette, J. B. Lambkin, Halifax; Chas. E. Heustis, St. Stephen; G. L. Spence, Montreal; J. P. Ryan, Fredericton; Ross Thompson, Fredericton; M. P. Trits, Woodstock; W. R. Finson, Bangor; J. D. Snyder, Moncton; Z. Garneau, Quebec.

Royal.

Miss A. H. Woodcock, Miss E. Park, Miss L. McCauley, Fredericton; A. Lealie, Jas. Robertson, T. P. Birchall, F. M. Soltan, R. S. Cottage, Montreal; Miss E. H. Cushing, Caledonia; Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Tompkins, Woodstock; B. C. Moore, Charlottetown; A. P. Seena, J. T. Sullivan, St. Andrews; F. Jones, Halifax; T. F. Butler, L. Cushing, P. H. Bruneau, G. L. Clinton, J. H. Pelletier and wife, Mrs. York, R. Reay, Montreal; Mrs. FitzRandolph, Fredericton; M. J. Slater, N. Y.; Mrs. H. L. Begg, Sussex; J. T. Hallisey, Truro; A. R. Jones, Moncton; R. Smeall, Montreal; A. J. Webster, Shediac; W. J. Chapman, Newark, N. J.; Mrs. Gilbert Fugle, Miss J. P. Steves, Toronto; Mrs. R. C. Randall, Fort George; B. C.

Parik.

A. Herbert, Shediac; H. J. Morgan, C. G. Clarke, Thos. Raymond, Harry Russell, Fredericton; D. M. Martin, Edmundston; H. S. Lee Hong, Chas. Hon Gouin, Charlie C. Quong, Vancouver; A. S. Hubley, Jas. Steele, H. M. Ross, A. McPherson, Halifax; H. B. McKinnon, Truro; S. Beyer, Halifax; Mr. and Mrs. Fred W. Harris, Annapolis Royal; Mr. and Mrs. H. J. Parke, Boston; J. L. Kinsman, New York.

"Don't you want to leave any footprints in the sands of time?" "I don't know," replied Senator Sorghum. "There's so much sleuthing going on that a man gets shy of a thumb-print, a footprint, and even of leave to print."—Washington Star.

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A FANCY.

Do editors look like their papers? Oh, dear! How wild and eccentric they all must appear.

For instance, imagine how surly and blue. The man who gets out The Westminster Review. A fellow who argues, denies every creed. Considers a Tory a withered-up weed. Whose hair is all bushy, whose eyes are white. Who sleeps half the day and gives lectures at night. Wild lectures, evoking ecstatic yells From Carnegie, Bryan, Win. Churchill and Fels.

Or think of the solemn Atlantic. Oh, gee.

What a tithe High-brow that person must be. A critical eye and a long, slender hand. Polite, but not lacking in courage and sand. With the nearest of coats, and the smoothest of hats. White cord on his waistcoat, and probably, spats. A man who is shocked at the common or low. Who reads Arnold Bennett, Steve. Phillips and Poe.

The Chief of The Forum. Oh, think of the guy. The Critic's acumen illumining his eye. His head full of Politics, Foreign and home. And endless statistics stored up in his dome. A Diplomat's cunning, a President's guile. A Senator's oily continuous smile. A man undecided just where he must stand. With question marks clogging the pen in his hand.

The Ladies' Home Journal. Observe Mr. Bok. Who probably keeps all his coin in his sock.

Does he know all the Fashions, whatever they be. Does he spend his spare moments a guzzling tea. And giving receipts for a Coconut pie. To Dear Mrs. Babbly or sweet Mrs. Bly? Does he tell Mrs. Witherby Green of White Plains. What to do when the infink has colicky pains?

Do Editors look like their papers? Dear me, How wild and eccentric they all must be.

Most Anything

Gibbs—"One gets no diplomas in the school of experience."

Dibbs—"I don't know; the marriage certificate comes pretty near being one."

The Three Shires Advertiser in an obituary says: "His widow predeceased him, some years ago."

Fun and Fiction publishes a story in which one of the characters remarks: "Married? Yes, but my wife doesn't know. I haven't the heart to tell her."

The Northern Daily Mail says: "It is customary for Americans to assert that the American girl is the highest type of Felinity."

The Daily News has the following gem in its editorial columns: "If Mr. Law persists in ranking among his literary pearls the brickbats which the humbler of political badmen have dropped, he will not intoxicate even the least fastidious of partisans."

Nipp, (flippantly)—"What pleasure are you going to give up during Lent?" Shipp, (savagely)—"Lending my friends money."—Baltimore American.

"Willie, why don't you let your little brother have your sled part of the time?" "I do, ma. I take it going down hill and he has it going back."—Boston Transcript.

"You say you can get me into society?" "Yes; but we must plan a campaign. Now which crowd do you want to get in with, the bridge set or the gasoline set?"—Louisville Courier-Journal.

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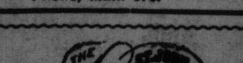
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"And what is the diplomatic corps?" "The diplomatic core," replied the man who takes a pun seriously, "is what the weaker nation is permitted to receive after the stronger one gets through eating the apple."—Washington Star.