

THE DEBATE CONTINUES

Following Mr. Brewster, The Liberal Leader, Premier McBride Is Heard In A Lengthy Reply

GOVERNMENT'S LAND POLICY

Provincial Leader Outlines The Course of Government Regarding Land Settlement—Legislation Introduced

Yesterday's sitting of the Provincial Legislature witnessed the continuance of the debate upon the Premier's Speech to the Legislature, Mr. Brewster and the Premier, the latter appearing virtually being occupied with their respective addresses. Mr. Brewster acquitted himself very creditably in his natural criticism, speaking with moderation and dignity—certainly with no violation of the decencies of debate such as marred the preceding day's debate. Mr. Tisdall, the floor leader, and may be expected to give one of those concise, clear-cut business addresses for which he has won an enviable reputation.

In addition to consideration of the speech yesterday, several measures were introduced, including the Provincial Secretary's series to which reference has already been made—the University bill, the bill providing for the safeguarding of the health of men employed in logging and construction camps, and the bill for the amendment of the Civil Service Act.

Attorney General Bowser also introduced his measure for the regulation of automobile traffic throughout the Province.

Petitions were received from the promoters of the Grouse Mountain scenic railway, the Victoria Stock Exchange, the Municipality of Oak Bay, and the Crow's Nest and Northern Railway Co. The report of the Chief Commissioner of Lands regarding the creation of the Strathcona Provincial Park was presented by Hon. Mr. Ross, and certain papers relating to the selection of the University site, by Hon. Dr. Young.

Leader of Opposition.

The member for Alberni's contribution to the debate was characterized by temperance, and while in his province as leader of the opposition, it was necessary for him to attack the government policy on several points he did so without acrimony or rancor. His utterances were listened to with close attention, and though he failed to bring forward any new matter of criticism which might have made political capital for his party, he in no way detracted from that dignity which is essentially characteristic of the debate on the speech from the throne. Perhaps the principal point which he made was in expressing regret that there was no allusion in the speech of any intended action on the part of the government in the matter of land settlement. In this connection he attacked the present law, which he alleged encouraged speculators to the exclusion of genuine immigrants. The government would, he said, adopt a plank out of the liberal policy in this matter and see that "the land was for the people, and the people on the land." The present land policy, if pursued, would eventually lead to the unsettling of the conservative government.

In opening Mr. H. C. Brewster congratulated the mover and seconder on the manner in which they had acquitted themselves. His congratulations extended to the new minister of lands, and to the honorable the president of the council.

Continuing, he referred to the death of the illustrious King Edward. It was in his power to pay a fitting tribute to that great man. His feelings were those of all loyal Canadians. In his death the British Empire had lost one of its greatest rulers. It was a loss to the throne there were evidences that he would follow in the lines of his illustrious father. He possessed in large measure his ability and his subjects throughout the length and breadth of his Dominions looked forward to his reign with sanguine feelings.

The house would recollect that the motion took place next summer and at this important function he understood that the honorable the first minister and the honorable the attorney general would be present. He hoped if he were spared to attend another session of the house he would have an opportunity of extending congratulations to Sir Richard McBride.

Songhees Reserve.

The first tangible question of policy in the speech upon the Songhees reserve question. He could not but congratulate the government in its action. The reserve had long been an sore and he was very glad to see that the whole problem was about to be swept away. Not only Victoria, but the entire southern half of Vancouver Island would benefit thereby. Another peculiar incident in connection with the settlement was the fact that the local members of the

legislature seemed to have taken part in the negotiations. They had been conspicuously by their absence, or rather by their lack of interest. One of these members had been self-exiled from the city, possibly said Mr. Brewster, lest he should be called upon to redeem a certain pledge which he had made in connection with the construction of the Canadian Northern Railway on the island. It was strange that a question so important, and of such a vital character to the people of Victoria should have been carried on without the assistance of the members who sat for this city.

Railway Policy.

In the matter of the railway policy of the government, Mr. Brewster expressed his satisfaction at the knowledge that active construction work had been commenced by the Canadian Northern Railway. But, while this work was going on on the mainland, there was silence regarding that portion of the undertaking which referred to Vancouver Island. When the question of entering into an agreement with the Canadian Northern Railway Company had come before the house he had fought the policy. He had considered it was not comprehensive enough; that it was not fitting to the needs of the country. He still thought so. His belief in this respect was in a measure sustained by utterances of the honorable member for Kamloops, who had pointed out the need for more railways in the northern part of the province. That need was exactly one which the liberal party had drawn attention to in the last provincial campaign. He personally was unable to see why the honorable member could not see the need to open up the country by means of other railways which would traverse portions where transportation was much needed.

Speaking of the island section of the Canadian Northern, there is a change of route. This could not fail to benefit his own constituency, but in spite of this fact he believed that the policy of not adhering to original intentions and promises was a bad one. It was his duty, however, to make the best of a bad business. On behalf of his constituency he must ask the Hon. the Premier to implement the promises he had made prior to the last election and see that the construction of this island road was commenced.

Island Road

"I want to point out," he said, "where in British Columbia, there is a difference between political and practical honesty." He alluded to the premier's pledge to resign if construction was not undertaken within three months after the contract between the government and the railway company was ratified by parliament. The people of Victoria had been bunched in railway matters before. That was the reason that the premier had come out with such a strong statement, and to show that he meant what he said. In a subsequent speech at the Victoria theatre he had gone even further, and said: "I will carry out to the letter everything that I have promised." To-day he wished to ask the Hon. the Premier to explain to the house and to the people of Vancouver Island how he had carried out his pledge. The other members for this city had been equally in earnest in the pledges they had made. The matter was one of the great deal of importance. There was something of more importance to the youth of the province than even railroad building. That was the inculcation of honesty into public politics. He would ask the premier if his successors in that house would look up to him as an example because he had broken away from a solemn pledge. He personally believed that the people would point to him as a successful premier, who did not have to live up to his promises.

Continuing to deal with the railway policy the speaker drew attention to the fact that the government had to pay large sums to keep the Victoria and Sidney and Kootenay and Skeena railways in operation, and he believed that the same condition would make itself apparent when the Canadian Northern was running through the province. He further knew of many settlers who had nothing but fault to find with the bargain which the government had made with the C. & N. railway. He believed that the time would come when the people of the province would have nothing but praise to bestow on the government which had not had to say of the bargain made between the government and the Canadian Northern.

Mr. Brewster had nothing but praise for the excellent showing made by the provincial government's fiscal handling in the old land. The prizes taken, he said, showed what could be done, and the Hon. the Minister of Agriculture deserved credit for the work which had been undertaken.

Mining Disasters

Mr. Brewster gave some attention to the number of deaths which were taking place through mining disasters. It is destruction of life he characterized as one of the saddest features in the record of the past year. He would ask the premier to go into this matter, thoroughly to look at it from every standpoint, to pass sound and wise legislation, which would safeguard the lives of those who were working underground. Another phase of the mining industry with which he desired to be known as "wild catting." In speaking of this phase he quoted instances on the west coast of Vancouver Island where people purchasing stock had lost their money, and the coast generally had got a black eye. It was time, he considered, that the minister of mines should regulate this system of "wild catting," which was such an insidious factor in the development of the province.

The university site commission, the speaker merely of a method of the government's to sidestep its own responsibility. It had proved a wise political move. But there had been some points which called for investigation in connection with the commission's report. He alluded to the interim report, which he understood had been handed to the provincial secretary. This report had been handed back to the commission if being stated that owing to local jealousies the gov-

ernment would prefer not to receive a report until the commission had reached its final findings. Then the attorney-general speaking to his constituents in Ward Five in Vancouver had said just prior to the publication of the commission's report: "I do not know if I promised you a university; I believe we did. Whether we shall redeem our promise will soon be known." It is now the duty of the attorney-general and the first minister to explain to the people of the province what was meant by this utterance. A very thorough explanation should be forthcoming of the manner in which this matter of choosing the site was undertaken. Feeling ran high over this question in Victoria; feeling ran high also in this city over the non-fulfillment of the government's promise regarding the commencement of construction of the island section of the Canadian Northern. He believed that it was on account of these two reasons that the government had got busy and settled the Songhees reserve question.

Public Buildings.

The policy of providing additions to the parliament building was a wise one. The present buildings were not of a sufficient size to meet administrative requirements. But he would ask that the government would further build appropriate buildings for courts of justice in this city. These should be situated on the parliament square. There was no province which he knew which exacted such high fees and gave such a poor service as the province of British Columbia, and this was especially so in Victoria. The various local offices were not safe. They contained valuable papers which were liable to be lost through fire or burglary.

Land Policy.

Mr. Brewster gave a considerable length with the land policy of the government. For years he said the liberal party had been endeavoring to hammer into the heads of the people of British Columbia the necessity of an extensive land policy. This was a question on which he believed that the government would eventually meet its Waterloo. He alluded to the number of speculators who had taken up the land. He said he had been taken up simultaneously with the advent of the explorer and the prospector. The actual spirit of the land act was being defeated in this province today. He instanced the case of a man of whom he had heard just waiting until he could get 400 acres when he intended to take up 300,000 acres of land, which would be purchased by English capital at \$2.50 per acre. The names were got here, in Vancouver, in Seattle, any place, and those who lent their names were perhaps paid \$50 for the privilege, and possibly a drink might be thrown in to make the bargain more agreeable. The recent Conservative convention held at Nelson had passed a resolution strongly urging the government to adopt a general land policy. The speaker said that if it would measure his statement with more regard for moderation, with more regard for what is true, he might in the end find more acceptance even from his own followers than he may if already adopted in this debate.

"I have already said that it is not fair, that unless a member has some specific complaint against an official of the civil service he should not make a general charge. I repeat that it has been our attempt to do so perfect the personnel of the civil service in the province, that when it is complete we shall have a civil service that would be credit to any country. Following the report of the commission we appointed to inquire into the working of the civil service, we are trying to place it on a basis above all party interests, and on a plane comparable with that of the mother country. That is the course we have been encouraged to follow, not only in this house, but in the country at large. We propose to live up to the spirit of the act, and have a civil service creditable to this province, but if we would do so we must in this house pay the respect to the civil service to which it is entitled, and therefore I think that this practice of making general, instead of specific charges, is one that should be discouraged. If my honorable friend has any specific charges to make against Mr. Shepherd, the chief inspector of mines, I can promise him an investigation that shall be in every respect impartial, and if the result of that investigation should show that Mr. Shepherd is not a fit man for that position, it will be my duty and that of this house to see that some suitable man is chosen to fill his place; but if it should prove that he is well fitted for the position, it is too bad that my friend from Newcastle should spread a rumor abroad, with all the solemnity that attaches to utterances in this house, that Mr. Shepherd is not fitted for his duties. I do not think it is the respect to a man who has not spared himself to give time and attention to his duties, and who has at all times proved equal to his task. As to his assistants, not one of them has been appointed because of political allegiance, and the same remark applies to Mr. Shepherd himself. Before he was appointed all the applications were referred to the manager of the province, and Mr. Shepherd was appointed on the basis of his own merits. His assistants have been drawn from a list of successful candidates who have graduated under my department, and no political scruples have influenced their choice.

Accident at Bellevue

"I think we are most fortunate in British Columbia in having such a man as Mr. Shepherd as Chief Inspector of Mines. Only a few days ago when that awful accident happened at Bellevue, no time was lost by our officials in

hastening to the scene and rendering the most efficient aid in saving life, nor have the press or the people of Kootenay been sparing in their praise of those efforts. I appeal to the fairness of my friend from Newcastle, that if he wishes the people of this country to listen to advice from his lips, he should say something in recognition of the bravery of these men. I may say in regard to Mr. Shepherd and his assistants, that the Province of British Columbia today is perhaps in advance of all the other provinces in securing the most up-to-date life saving equipment. We have installed the Draeger apparatus in all coal mines in British Columbia and have also taken steps to have each station equipped with men with the training and skill necessary should they be called upon to use the apparatus."

The Mines Department

The member for Newcastle was hardly severe in his remarks to myself and the department of mines. I would naturally expect that as one who had for some years engaged in coal mining in British Columbia, we should look to him for some counsel and advice, and I venture to say that when the new Coal Mines Regulations Act is brought down we ought to have the good fortune to enjoy his approval and assistance. But I cannot claim that we can count on the support of that kind, because in his remarks yesterday he strained himself in condemning not only myself and the personnel of the department of mines, but also reflected on the efficiency of the inspectors of mines in British Columbia. I can well understand that my friend, professing as he does Socialistic principles, could not fail to speak of us in general terms, but I am quite satisfied that if he would measure his statement with more regard for moderation, with more regard for what is true, he might in the end find more acceptance even from his own followers than he may if already adopted in this debate.

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The Deputy Minister and the Chief Inspector of Mines, I may have been justified. With regard to the other criticisms of my friend from Newcastle I do not think I need detain the House at any length. He simply criticised us severely for all the public business we have attempted. Those who have sat in the House with the honorable gentleman for a number of years know how difficult it would be for any Government to satisfy his criticisms. I regret that in his first speech in this session he has fallen so far below the reputation which for many sessions past he has sustained.

The Liberal Criticism

"Now with regard to the Member for Alberni, the Leader of the Liberal party in this House: I congratulate him on his address this afternoon. I can well understand that, situated as he is, it must be a most difficult task that faces him in meeting the House at every session with no following in the Province and none in the Legislature, but I do think he deserves con-

siderable credit for his attempt this afternoon. He is expected as leader of the Liberal party to find fault with everything that this Government attempts. There is nothing we can do that can meet the fancy of the Liberals. He closed his speech this afternoon with some reference to the great democracy, and what we must expect from the march of humanity in this Province and the conditions which we must presently meet. Well, if there is any organization in British Columbia that recognizes the potency of democracy it is the Government of British Columbia. This Government has always tried to be familiar with their needs, and well up with the advancement of their country. There is no better proof of this than the remarkable record that within the past six years it has appeared to the electors of the country not fewer than three times in order to discover whether the people approve of its policy. I do not believe that the political records of

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