

Mr. COAKER SCORES THE GOVERNMENT

Their Inconsistency and Extravagance Receive His Just Censure

False and Revolting Promises!

Asks For Something More Substantial Than Empty and Rosy Visions

COAKER—Mr. Speaker, I suppose, as leader of the Union Party, it would be in your power to allow the Address to pass without a few remarks.

I was exceedingly amused to hear the Premier's remarks yesterday in connection with this question of economy. I agree with the speakers on this side of the House when they say that they believe he was not sincere, and that he really and truly could not mean that to economize was a crime.

Now, if he believes that, I would like to know why he has not dismissed 500 of his employees—turning them out in the dead of the winter to exist as best they may—and putting up the plea that he did it because of war conditions.

We find the Government who had authority last year to raise \$2,000,000 to complete, or partly complete some of those branch railways, coming back from London with one million temporary loan in order to aid the Reid Company to complete some work on those railways during the past season.

Might Have Aided the Country
Now, if they got one million dollars they might have got two million, because the Premier then certainly knew the condition of the finances of the country so far as Customs returns were concerned, and might have aided the Colony by giving labor had he secured the other million dollars.

Although he went over in March, he knew from the statements made here that the revenue would be very short; and when he found that he could not raise a permanent loan, he ought to have done his utmost to raise a temporary loan of one million dollars, but not of two millions, and then he would have had an extra million to help tide the people over the present crisis caused by the war, but he did not do so.

He states now that the Water Street merchants have millions of dollars laid by from profits made in connection with their businesses during past years, and he calls upon these men now not to be timid, but to be venturesome.

Well, the Reid-Nfld. Co. who have accumulated so many millions from work done in this country since they have been here, might have done something in that direction.

After all, they have contracts to build certain branch railways, to complete them and to operate them, and it certainly would not have been too much an effort to tide the people, which they had in their employ, at any rate, over the winter; but we find that these were the very men who led the way in the dismissal of their employees.

The Branch Railways

Last year the Government promised in the Speech from the Throne on the opening of the Trepassey, Heart's Content and Bay de Verde would be in operation during the year. They are not in operation to-day. I presume because there is not sufficient rolling stock and locomotives to operate the line; but here is what the Government said last year:—

"Railway extension during the year has been rapid and eminently satisfactory. The equivalent of sixty-four miles of railway has been completed. The Trepassey branch has been all finished, and is now being operated to Renew's on schedule time. The early summer months ought to be sufficient to have this line brought up to contract specification, so that the

autumn may see the entire branch operated."

Now, the Trepassey branch is not yet completed, although the statement here is that it was all but finished at that date, and was being operated to Renew's on schedule time. The autumn did not see the branch operated.

The Speech goes on:—"The Heart's Content branch has also been practically completed, and will be operated early in the present year."

No Effort Made to Operate Road

The statement was made last January, and the Heart's Content branch is not yet completed, or at least if it is completed, it is not in operation; and if it is completed it is a very great reflection upon the Government that they do not make the Reid-Nfld. Company operate it. They have a contract to operate it.

The people on the south side of Trinity Bay do not know what the Government put the railway there for. They are using it now to haul wood over. No effort is being made to compel the Company to operate the road; and yet the Premier comes in here and tells us that we ought to get the second overcoat, if we have one, and to aid Customs returns.

The Speech of last year goes on to say that "The Bay de Verde Branch has been graded, the rails and ballasting far advanced, and some of the stations built. It should be ready for operation in the early fall. The Fortune Bay Branch has been graded for sixteen miles and rails laid to the fifteenth mile, but not yet ballasted. The Bonne Bay branch was commenced late in the season, and the work done to date is but preliminary."

When I was down in Bay de Verde district the people from one end of the district to the other were indignant because of the non-operation of the railway and wanted to know for what purpose this railway had been built.

Want Railway Operated

Stations have been built during the election campaign of 1913. That fall there were 1500 men employed on railway work in that district. Stations were built then that have never been used, that an operator has never been in; roads that have never been used were then built connecting these stations with various settlements.

As I have said, over 1500 men were employed in this work during that fall. For what? In order to secure votes for the Government supporters. Now, the people of Bay de Verde know that more than a million dollars have been spent on that railway, and they want it operated.

The rails are there, the stations are there; everything is ready; and they want to hear the sound of a whistle. Why have these roads not been operated as the contract provides? And yet the Premier wants to know why we have not bought a second overcoat!

I might say, though, that some of our men did have a certain amount of belief in what he stated, because three of them actually did go and get overcoats to-day. Now, they had the pluck to carry out the Premier's suggestion, and I hope the Government members will do likewise.

Conditions Hard With Them

It is a serious thing, Mr. Speaker, that we have not had a greater effort made by the Government in order to afford the people an opportunity to tide them over this great crisis. Many things could have been done. We are all aware that the Government just now have not a bed of roses to lie upon. We know that conditions are pretty hard with them.

But yet look at the wonderful things which are being done in England at the present time, and they are only being done because the Government is courageous and determined to do the utmost in their power to help the people out.

To-day, in England things are being done by Mr. Lloyd-George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which, if they were done by him two or three years ago, would have earned for him the name of being the greatest Socialist that ever existed. But he has done these things and come out on top. He had the foresight and the courage to carry out the suggestions which were made to him. I presume, by men who knew all about these various matters, and as a consequence Great Britain has not suffered to any great extent because of the war.

Now, we in Newfoundland have not seriously considered the situation of the country as it stands. I don't think that five men out of a hundred have seriously thought of what our position at the present time really is.

Excessive Profits

Last year we had a shortage of \$250,000 quintals of fish for the year, which at \$6 a quintal means a million and a half dollars; in addition to that there were a million quintals which were sold at a loss of 50 cents a quintal because of the conditions which prevailed at the time the fish was shipped; that is a half million more which the fishermen lost because of war conditions.

Of course, the money that was lost because of the shortage in the catch was not the result of war conditions, but at the same time it meant a million and a half out of the fishermen's pockets.

Then there is another half million that has been taken out of the earnings of the fishermen because of the excessive profits charged on provisions owing to war conditions. That makes a total of Two and a Half Million, which is quite a lot of money when you come to look into the earnings of the people.

It does not come as a surprise to me that the revenue is short. Anyone with common sense who looked around him knew that it must be so. They state that there were \$300,000 short last year, and the amount this year will be a great deal more. I am somewhat surprised at the figure for last year because when the House opened in September we were told that the shortage would be \$237,000, and the difference between that amount and \$300,000 is considerable. This was caused through the policy of the Government, and through lack of economy in administering the affairs of the Colony.

Were Out in Estimate

The Government last February put on taxation that permitted them to raise \$250,000 more than they otherwise would have received from the time that they put the taxation on until the end of the fiscal year. That meant \$550,000 that the Government were out in their estimate for the year 1913-14, if we add the \$360,000 covered by loans spent in 1913, it will total \$910,000.

Now Mr. Speaker, we are surprised that there was a shortage of \$300,000 last year and we are surprised to be told that the deficiency for the present year is going to amount to a greater sum than that. I have heard men who have been watching the revenue during recent months claim that \$500,000 will be the deficiency for the current year. Well, if \$500,000 is the deficiency for 1914-15, what is it going to be at the end of 1915-16?

We cannot expect any great improvement in trade, the seal fishery has been a blank—there is going to be a loss to the Government of from \$200,000 to \$250,000 on that account alone—and we certainly won't be able to make up in any way that I see any great amount of revenue from ordinary sources. I would like to know what is going to happen when the war ceases. A great sum of money will have to be raised in order to make two ends meet and enable us to live as an independent Colony.

More Money Needed

There is this million which the Premier got last summer; the other million that he did not get; there is a million which will have to be raised to meet the war expenditure; he will have to get at least two millions more in order to complete the remaining unfinished branch railways.

(Last year we were told that two millions would be about enough to complete all the remaining branches, but I dare say when we get down to facts and figures, we will find that two millions have already been spent and that at least the Government will want at least another two millions to complete the contract.)

That will be at least five millions that will have to be raised. Well, I would like to know who would want to be Premier of Newfoundland and have to face the London markets and secure this loan. Sir Edward Morris will certainly be entitled to our deepest gratitude if he can go across at the end of the war and raise \$5,000,000 at 4 per cent. in order to get us out of this hole in which he has placed us.

Loss a Certain Amount

A loan of \$360,000 was authorized last year to pay for expenditure incurred in 1913 that I suppose a cent has not yet been raised on, and there were several temporary loans from the banks that when added will probably come to another million; then we will have to lose a certain amount in raising the loans as we did on the other loans, and before we are through with these obligations, it will mean not less than 6-1-2 or 7 million dollars.

Then when we take into account the deficiency for 1915-16 and 1914-15 which will amount to \$800,000, I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that by that time there will not be fifteen men in the whole country who will know the right thing to do.

The Government say in their Speech that "Negotiations are in progress between my Ministers and a corporation which proposes to establish in this Island and on Labrador, an industry of exceptional magnitude, involving the expenditure of many millions of dollars in the development of our water powers and the utilizing of some of our valuable natural resources in the manufacture of a variety of commodities. The enterprise promises to be one affording new avenues of employment for great numbers of our people, and serving as an auxiliary for our staple industry. To this and other measures dealing with undertakings of lesser scope your attention will be invited."

Always Something Wonderful

Isn't it peculiar that every time the House meets there is a paragraph similar to the one I have just read in the Governor's speech. There is always something wonderful going to happen in a few months time. Last year we had this in the Speech:—

"My Ministers have also been for some time, and are at present, engaged in negotiating with British capitalists for the construction of a railway from Notre Dame Bay to Bay of Islands, and for the establishment of a train ferry service between bay of Islands and the Eastern Seaboard of Canada, for the purpose of establishing better transport facilities and of developing the fishing industry of the Island."

"When that was put there they knew very well that nothing was going to come of it, and do they think that there are twenty men in the whole country to-day who believe that anything is going to come out of that paragraph in their speech this year?"

Here is another one:—
"It is encouraging to observe that your efforts to attract the attention of outside capitalists to the varied and natural resources of the country are gradually bearing fruit. My Ministers are at present in negotiation with the representative of a large group of British investors with a view to the utilization of some of the vast water powers of Labrador and the establishment of very large industries calculated to afford permanent employment to numbers of our people, and to reproduce in that land the transformation that has been effected in our own Island in recent years."

Never Seems to Learn Anything

Now, what do you think of that? Last year we were going to have a man come down here and take charge of Grand Falls in Hamilton Inlet, and establish a tremendous industrial undertaking; put up tremendous machinery, and all that sort of thing. The whole country was going to get blossoms as a rose.

The wonderful thing about this is that the Premier never seems to learn anything; he does not appear to get wise from year to year; surely he ought to know by this time that he cannot cut the House with this sort of thing any longer.

Now we are going to have more great machinery, great mills, great dams. Mr. Downey told us that there is a company going to spend eleven millions, only eleven millions, and that within two years they are going to have all the machinery in operation.

Well, now is the time for these great things to come along. What we want is something material, something to work on. We have all we want of great promises, pretty speeches, bright phrases.

Now, I hope, if I have the pleasure of sitting here again another year I will not hear any more such paragraphs as that in the Speech.

If the Premier will take a suggestion from him he will leave them out in the future. Do the best you can in those matters, and if your negotiations come to anything, then tell us about it, and we will give you all the credit that you deserve.

Combines and Monopolies

Now, I would like to know whether the Government intend to bring in any further legislation this year to strengthen the Act in connection with combines and monopolies, which was passed here at the last session. Up to the present the Act has been inoperative because of the fact that there is no penalty imposed for the breach of it.

There were a number of cases during the last year in which a Commission appointed under that Act might have been called upon to investigate certain combines which were believed to exist, but an investigation would be useless because even if it were found that any wrong had been done there was no way in which the guilty parties could be punished. They would only laugh at us.

We know of and perhaps lots of things that we do not know of in this respect, but we do know this, that there have been combines existing in St. John's for many years.

During the past fall there have been several combines in existence, but there was nothing which we could do to prevent them from operating. There was no use in calling the attention of anybody to what was going on, because the Act was inoperative so far as getting after the people responsible was concerned and the matter had to be overlooked.

Now, there is a chance for the Government to do something, if, as they say, they really and sincerely wish to aid the common masses against the injuries that result from those combines.

The Debates

Now there is another thing that I wish to call attention to. I hope that the Supervisor of Debates, or whoever is responsible for having the debates published, will see that the speeches from this side of the House are correctly reported.

The reports of our speeches last year were simply an abomination. There was no sense in them. It was a case of simply putting in a sentence here and there. On the other hand, I noticed that all the speeches of members on the other side were splendidly reported; so that we were not given a fair show.

If you are going to publish the speeches, then publish them correctly; if you cannot do it correctly, then don't do it at all. As I have said and I don't know whether the Supervisor is responsible or not, but if he is not then I think he ought to see that whoever is responsible is brought to book and that there will be no repetition of what occurred last year.

Bonaventure Under Fire

The Minister of Finance and Customs is not present. I was going to ask him why he permitted the Bonaventure to sail from Channel on the 10th instead of on the 13th. The law as passed here last session, provided that steel ships could not sail south or west from St. John's until the 13th of March under a fine not exceeding \$4,000. The ship sailed on the 10th.

The Act provides that any three members of any crew may take action against the owners of the ship for sailing before the time. And that is what is intended to be done. But the Customs people should have been more alive to their duties, and should not have permitted the ship to sail.

Duty on Molasses

There is a lot of talk about a duty going on molasses. I notice that nothing has been said in the Speech regarding this, and I hope that the Government does not intend to do anything in this connection.

The cost of molasses is really 10 cents a gallon higher than last year, and if it is intended to put 4 or 5 cents more on it, then it will merely mean that the poor people will be compelled to use less sweetening.

You must not increase the price of molasses for if you do, you deprive the fishermen of one of their most used commodities. I ask the Government to take this matter into consideration.

Our friend, Mr. Clift, has suggested that there be a decrease in expenditure. Something must be done to prevent this outrageous expenditure now going on. Do not try to meet increased demands by taxing the people of the Colony any greater. If the Colony is in such a desperate condition that you must find money do not increase taxation but reduce expenditure.

I find that there are men standing around at many places who are Government officials doing nothing. You have a man at Moreton's Harbor, holding a Government position there, who gets a salary of \$400 or \$500, and is not earning a fifth of it. There is another at Lewisport getting \$900, and another at Exploits getting \$500, with nothing to do. If these men are not earning their money, they are not wanted.

Poor fishermen have to bear the burden imposed upon them, as a result of paying these idle Government officials large salaries. There are three Custom officials in Twillingate District, and don't earn \$200 for the work they could easily be done.

Wrongdoing at Post Office

With regard to the explanation given by the Hon. Colonial Secretary, in respect to the matter of wrong doing in the Registration Department of the Post Office.

Now, we look upon the Colonial Secretary as a man who is honest and reliable. He admitted that

there were irregularities in the Registration Office of the General Post Office. Why did the matter not come before the Government? He might have said: "Well, I did not know of it until now, but I will do everything in my power to get at the root of the matter."

The books in that department are short by \$130. I do not care who is offended, but this kind of thing must not go on. If I were head of any public department I should punish any one who did any wrong. Is the Government going to allow that sort of thing to go on? Put the pruning knife into all those matters and try to administer justice to all.

The Price of Fish

There is another matter of which I wish to speak. I was very sorry to read in a paper to-day a report from one of the members of the Upper House, who talked about the price of fish becoming lower in the future. I think that the hon. member ought to have refrained from speaking upon that subject. It is very poor encouragement for our toiling fishermen to hear such utterings. Times will be hard during the coming year. We ought to encourage our men instead of discouraging them by saying that the price of fish will come down in value.

Why should it come down? If the war continues why should the price of fish be any lower than it is now. If they buy cheaper the fish will be in the buyers' stores when the price advances again, and they will again make big profits. The price must keep up.

I am sorry that this statement was ever made and I hope that the Government will do all it can to remove that impression from the minds of our fishermen. As it is, salt will be fifty cents dearer than it was last year. In fact, supplies generally will be very much higher in price.

Something Must be Done

The Government ought to try to give a little advance to the fishermen of the country, and give them a chance to get to the fishery this year. If there were no men to prosecute the fishery, it would be a sad state of affairs.

There are men in Bell Island who have not a chance to work; and over a thousand men in Conception Bay who are looking for something to do. Something must be done. There ought to be some way of arranging supplies for those men the coming spring.

Our men are anxious to work. If they can only find work to do. If the Government does not do something to aid those men it will be very injurious to the finances of the Colony, and there will be very little work at the mines or mills, hence the men must fish or starve.

Discrepancy in Relief

There is a lot of discrepancy in the relief given to our people. I hope the Government is not responsible for that. Relief is being given to some and denied others just as badly in need. Men are refused, and because they are not Tories. The man asks for some assistance, but does not get it because he voted on the wrong side of politics.

No able bodied man wants pauper money. He desires work for aid given him, but work is denied him.

During the winter I suggested that the Government might take drums and hoops from men in Conception Bay. And if these men had the opportunity of selling such it would help many over the hardest time this Spring. Do not make paupers of those men. There are public works to be attended to in Conception Bay which would, if started, help these people out.

There is no destitution in Green Bay or Fogo District, and not much in Bonavista and Trinity Districts. The men in these bays can go into the lumber woods and earn enough to supply their pressing requirements.

I ask the Government to issue grants to parts of Conception Bay and supply employment during the next month. Put it in the hands of some public-spirited men; I do not care who they are. We ought to do all that is possible to ease the burden of the fishermen of Conception Bay during the next few weeks.

Transatlantic Service

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is another matter which I wish to mention before I take my seat.

The Allan people are getting \$20,000 subsidy for transatlantic service between here and the Old Country. The Government ought to see that they put decent boats on the service.

I think that the time has come when the Government ought to

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