

The St. John Standard

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ST. JOHN, N. B., TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1920

BIG PROVINCIAL DEFICIT.

In their financial statement for the year ending October 31, 1919, the Veniot-Foster Government admit a deficit on current account amounting to \$327,686. Last year the Government issued a statement claiming a surplus of \$30,951, and a little later they issued another statement, which they called a revised and amended statement, showing that instead of a surplus they had a deficit of \$134,656.98. If the same procedure is to be followed this year, and the same ratio of discrepancy is maintained, the second statement would obviously show a staggering deficit. Perhaps the present statement will not be followed by another, showing, as last year, that the Government were either bad bookkeepers or trying to deceive the public; the present statement is signed by Price, Waterhouse & Co., of Montreal, the same accountants who prepared the amended statement last year, showing that instead of a surplus there was a large deficit. An item in the present statement, however, requires explanation. The "condensed statement, cash, receipts, and expenditures, current account," starts with a credit balance carried over from October 31, 1918, of \$30,951. That dovetails with the Government's first statement last year, claiming a surplus of \$30,951. An attempt was made last year to explain that this balance was correct at the time; that the Provincial Treasury had that much money in hand on October 31, 1918; but that there were bills receivable for a considerable amount against the year ending at that date. But if the Government inaugurated a new system of accounting last year—"so simple," as the Provincial Secretary said, "that anybody could see the exact financial position of the Province at a glance"—why did it not start its new system on the basis of the corrected accounts for October 31, 1918? What was done about the deficit at that date? Probably it has been transferred to capital account? But if so, it should be shown in the statement. If, as last year, we are to have another revised statement, possibly the deficit of \$134,656.98 for 1918 will be added to the deficit of \$327,686 for 1919, which at any rate would show how the Province is running behind on current account.

The major portion of the big deficit is due to over-expenditures on the part of the Department of Public Works, and Hon. Mr. Veniot a day before the accounts were made public gave The Telegraph an interview of a rather dubious defence of the unfortunate position of financial affairs. The Provincial Secretary might with some propriety have attempted an explanation or defence of the worst financial statement yet submitted to the people of the Province; but evidently the Hon. Robert Murray considered the statement was indefensible and was not prepared to apologize for Mr. Veniot's extravagance. So Mr. Veniot, who is nothing if not courageous, and ready to handle any job in the Government, even that of Premier, if we may believe the stories going around, undertook to defend the over-expenditures which are mainly responsible for the deficit. The Minister is defiantly cheerful, but not convincing. He tells us he was compelled to over-expend, because "unheard of and unexpected conditions developed soon after the adjournment of the Legislature which made it imperative to either exceed the amount voted, or to turn a deaf ear to public demands and close the eye to a state of affairs in connection with the bridges of this Province which would render travel not only risky, but positively dangerous." After all the money Mr. Veniot has spent and all the boasts he has made about the improvement of roads and bridges it is rather disconcerting to find him declaring that travel in this Province last year was positively dangerous. Mr. Veniot adds: "In 1919, some 125 wooden bridges, principally on branch roads, which appeared on inspection in 1918 to be safe for some time to come, became so weakened by the ever heavily increasing auto traffic that it was apparent they must receive immediate attention." Mr. Veniot ought to re-organize his bridge inspection service. If that service was unrelaxing in the case of 125 bridges in one year, it must be on a par with his permanent road-making service, which as all the money knows is very inefficient in money-spending and very incompetent in the matter of road-making.

Mr. Veniot does not tell us what were the "unheard of and unexpected conditions" which caused him to spend so much money on current account, in addition apparently to the proceeds of a million dollar bond issue last year and probably other sums not yet specified on roads and bridges "classified," as Price & Waterhouse unkindly remark, "as permanent by the Provincial engineers." It may be surmised that Mr. Veniot was unexpectedly annoyed and alarmed at the clamor of the farmers over the inconspicuous

results of his so-called permanent road policy, and their angry determination to secure more consideration of the interests of those living away from his trunk highways. At any rate Mr. Veniot got very busy spending money on branch roads and bridges, a policy which, however, appears to have been too belated to make the farmers abandon their intention of turning out the present wasters of public monies.

The Government, like other corporations, have faced increasing cost of labor and materials during the past year, and increases in current expenditures would not necessarily condemn them with the people. But they are not getting results from current expenditures, and Mr. Veniot is wasting much money on roads that are more political than permanent, and charging the same to capital account. Last year the Government made a bond issue of \$1,000,000 to furnish Mr. Veniot with money to spend on his political highway adventures, and, in spite of that and the biggest revenue in history, the Province closed its fiscal year with bank over-drafts amounting to \$1,058,494. The \$2,000,000 loan floated some months ago will no doubt take up these over-drafts, and provide Mr. Veniot with more money for his extravagant experiments. Also the new loan may permit the transfer of deficits to capital account, a method of covering mismanagement which has been too extensively employed.

AN OFFICIAL MYSTERY.

Through the thoughtful kindness of the Powers-That-Be at Fredericton The Standard was spared on Monday morning the task of breaking the painful news regarding the sad state of Provincial finances. Although The Standard correspondent at Fredericton was informed by the Comptroller-General that the annual financial statement had been issued on Saturday, when he applied at the proper quarter for a copy of The Royal Gazette he was refused. Premier Foster when applied to told The Standard that the financial statement had been issued on Saturday, but said he could not tell this paper where it could procure a copy.

Possibly Hon. Mr. Veniot handed The Telegraph a copy of the financial statement; at any rate he is credited with giving that journal an interview about it on Friday, the day before it was supposed to be made public. It does not appear that Mr. Veniot has as yet openly usurped the functions of the Premier, but he may be doing so in a subterranean way. In any case Mr. Veniot's breach of official etiquette in giving an interview about a financial statement before it was made public is as interesting as Mr. Foster's strange ignorance as to where an official document, in which he might be supposed to be keenly interested, might be obtained. To keep track of what goes on in Government circles in this Province would apparently require the detective abilities of a Sherlock Holmes or a Nick Carter.

It is the first time that a Government of this Province ever permitted the annual financial statement to mysteriously disappear, when in accordance with official procedure an Opposition paper was entitled to view the remains. But then it must be confessed that the present Government is unique in a variety of respects, and particularly in its ability to make a mystery of a financial statement. Last year it performed the feat of causing a vaunted surplus of \$30,000 to mysteriously vanish, and reappear in the disguise of a deficit of \$134,000. Possibly it proposes to issue a second amended statement which, as last year, will show the correct position of affairs. If that is the idea it is possible to understand that the Government in withholding the present statement from The Standard was moved by the kindly desire to keep this family journal from being made a party to deception of the public.

Mr. Veniot says he needed the money. That is one explanation, which is probably as good as any the people are likely to get.

Hon. Mr. Veniot went to Boston before the public accounts were made public. He will probably remain away until the public get over the shock.

Anyway we have a business man's government at Fredericton, whatever the public accounts may say, or the people when they get a chance to vote.

Possibly when Mr. Veniot started out on his great programme of spend-

ing he was planning on an election in the fall. If so, the rise of the Farmers' movement probably decided him to hold on to office as long as he could.

The deficit of \$134,000 which the Provincial Government admitted in what they called their amended statement last year has followed the way of the \$30,000 surplus of 1918. It has vanished mysteriously.

Now that we have the statement of the Government's financial bungling and juggling last year, why not call a by-election in Carleton County, and ask the approval of the long suffering people.

WHAT THEY SAY

Is the Colonel Happy?
 (Galveston News.)

Also we wonder if Colonel House is as happy today as a citizen of the world as he used to be as a citizen of Texas.

Know More Now.
 (Canton Repository.)

Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman and their radical companions now know where Uncle Sam wants them to stay.

Record Prices.
 (Wheeling Register.)

Twenty-two articles of food reached record prices in December, showing that Attorney General Palmer's publicity cure is progressing wonderfully.

Slip Aside, Please.
 (Boston Transcript.)

Of course somebody will call President Lowell's attention to the remarks of President McKeljohn, of Amherst, proposing that college officials keep apart from world controversies.

Diamonds and the H. C. of L.
 (N. Y. Herald.)

As more than half of the cut diamonds in the world are in America, it is natural that there should be considerable interest here in the new mine in South Africa which has set part of the Dark Continent in an uproar. It looks as if the high cost of living was going to come down in one direction at least.

A BIT OF VERSE

A BUSY STREET.

I love a busy, bustling town!
 One day they put the paving down,
 All nice and smooth and sweet, and then

Next day they tear it up again.
 From one end of the street back to the other end, that's what they do;
 And then they get it smooth and flat,
 And give it its last loving pat.

And then there is a shriek of fear
 Comes from the City Engineer—
 He has mislaid his monkey wrench!
 And instantly they start a trench

And down the pavement all around
 Until that monkey wrench is found!
 And then they tramp the dirt in tight,
 And get it levelled off all right.

And surface it with hard concrete,
 And make a street as is a street
 By putting sand and brick on that,
 And the steam roller makes it flat.

Then they pierce that pavement through and through,
 And lay a line of pipe or two!
 Then they repair that, and it lies smoothly beneath our summer skies.
 For, it may be, a day or two.

Then there's a sewer to run through!
 Now, when someone you chance to meet
 Talks of the "busy city street,"
 That's what he means, in this man's town—

The street that's getting up and down
 And rolling over that way, till
 It just seems like it can't lie still.

A BIT OF FUN

He Knows.

Mr. Outertown—Did you ask the new maid if she had any experience with children?
 Mrs. Outertown—I didn't need to. I could tell by the way she glowered at them that she had.

Gone Forever.

"Gone are the happy days for the employer."
 "What do you mean?"
 "I mean those good old days when a boss could afford to get mad and fire the help once in a while."

Well Trained.

"So this is Leap Year."
 "Yes, but I'm not afraid. When I

HEART SO BAD

WAS NOT SAFE TO LEAVE HER ALONE

Miss Eva P. Yateman, Krugersdorf, Ont., writes:—"I feel that I must write and tell you of the great benefit I have received from Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills. About four years ago I was taken terribly bad with my heart, nerves and fainting spells, and was down in bed for about six months. I doctored with two different doctors and seemed to get better, although the fainting spells would not leave me. I would take such terrible falls, wherever I was, that it was not safe to leave me alone at any time. At last I decided to resort to proprietary medicine and took several different kinds, but seemed to receive little benefit from them. One day noticing the advertisement of Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills I decided to try them, and before I had taken more than two boxes I could see they were helping me. I have taken about ten boxes, and am almost cured of those terrible spells. I sincerely feel that your medicine has proved a blessing to me, and I advise any one troubled with their heart to try them, as I am confident they will find relief."

Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills are 50c a box at all dealers or mailed direct on receipt of price by The T. Milburn Co., Limited, Toronto, Ont.

Benny's Note Book

BY LEE PAPE

THE PARK AVE. NEWS.

Weather. Free for all but not appreciated by some.
 Enter! Enter! Sid Hunt Confined To His Bed! Sid Hunt was confined to his bed late Wednesday afternoon and was not allowed to either get up for supper or eat it in bed on account of sassing his father back during a argument about going to the movies.

Business Notes. Artie Alixander, who was in partnership with Leroy Shooster, to go wacky on everything each of them found, has dissolved partnership on account of him finding so much and Leroy Shooster not finding hardly anything.

Heave Ho!
 Pome by Skinny Martin.
 There was a ship a sailing
 A sailing cross the sea
 But did it ever get there?
 Serch me.

Sisley. A new girl with short brown hair has moved in next store to Miss Mary Watkins house, but nobody knows her name yet on account of Miss Mary Watkins saying No every time anybody asks to be introduced to her.

Wy be robbed wen its not necessary? For 10 cents a month we will watch your back fence and parlor windows for burglars going in or coming out. The Low Davis and Ed Wernick Bergler Insurance Company.

was a small boy my mother taught me how to say "no."

Looked Like It.
 The little boy was in church for the first time. As the surplised choir entered, he whispered to his father:
 "Are they all going to have their hair cut, daddy?"

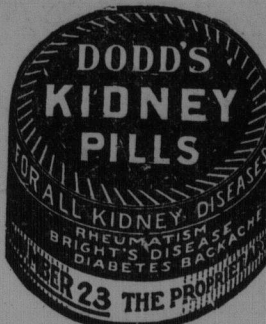
Applied Hydraulics.
 Mixie—A friend of mine fell asleep in the bathtub with the water running.
 Trixie—Did the tub overflow?
 Mixie—Nope! Luckily he sleeps with his mouth open.

Revenge.
 Dentist—I got even with that photographer who took my picture.
 eDntist—How, dear?
 I said, "Look pleasant, please."

Reassuring.
 She had recently engaged a new maid with whose appearance and manner she was greatly pleased. When the terms had been agreed upon, the lady of the house said:
 "Now, my last maid was much too friendly with the policeman. I hope

that I can trust you."
 "Indeed you can, ma'am," replied the new maid. "I can't bear policemen. I was brought up to hate the very sight of them. You see, my father was a burglar."

Within the Rules.
 Nervous Employer—Thomas, I wish you wouldn't whistle at your work.
 Office Boy—I ain't working str; I'm just whistling.



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Ho! Ho!
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