

OTTAWA LETTER.

"I William Mulock" Have Made Two Great Savings.

He Has Cut Down the Cost of Mail Transportation by the Wagon Routes,

And Has Deprived Letter Carriers and Subordinate Clerks of Their Statutory Increase — But Has Not Cut Down His Own Salary.

OTTAWA, June 28.—The discussion of the Intercolonial railway situation yesterday was full of interest to those who have been following the history of that railway. Mr. Blair spoke an hour and a half in continuation of his two hours' speech the day before, making altogether three and a half hours' discourse in his behalf. The gist of the situation that between the two speeches there were various complaints on the government side that the opposition had been obstructing public business. Mr. Blair's three and a half hour speech was pretty well examined by Mr. Powell in less than an hour, and when the member for Westmorland had finished his criticism there was very little left of the minister's boasted financial gain. Mr. Haggart spoke briefly between them, but the speech of Mr. Powell pretty well covered the ground taken by the ex-minister.

Mr. Blair claims that the Intercolonial has gained \$900,000 in income between 1898 and 1899, with another \$700,000 of prospective gain in the current year now approaching a close. As to the current year there are no details open for examination. Mr. Blair is always to have everything his own way, because no one else has access to his returns. As to 1899 there is the report of the minister of railways, of the auditor general, and of the general manager and chief engineer of the line. With these returns Mr. Powell was able to subject Mr. Blair's figures to investigation.

The minister claims that the whole gain in traffic was due to the acquisition of the Drummond railway. There was equal gain in the other railways of Canada and a good deal more in some of them, though they acquired no Drummond railway. Moreover, Mr. Powell was able to show by the station receipts that one-third of the additional traffic was obtained in Nova Scotia, nearly all of it in Pictou and Cape Breton, and was not traceable in any way to the Drummond road. The Montreal office did not take in any more money than in previous years. The receipts on the Drummond line itself, which Mr. Blair at the time of the purchase declared to be \$100,000 for the year, did not exceed \$80,000 for the whole line after the government took it over. This, according to Mr. Powell, did not show a falling off in traffic on the Drummond line, but only showed that the claim made by the concern which sold it to the government was bogus. There were additional receipts in Metapedia and many other points, on account of local circumstances and the general revival and extension of traffic. At the end of Mr. Powell's examination of the sources of increased revenue there did not appear to be much left for the Drummond road and the Montreal extension. Not more than the additional mileage would call for.

The next important feature in the examination was the fact that the additional \$800,000 of business cost at least \$700,000 on the minister's admission. As a rule when a road has a fair trade and a fair profit, it is a source of business to the government. The fixed charges being the same, the management and many other expenses not keeping pace with increased business, the gain of traffic frequently represents 50 per cent. profit, but that Mr. Blair gained seems to have cost from 90 to 100 cents on the dollar. That is according to the minister's own showing. But the minister's own showing does not stand examination.

The minister gave his own case away when he accused Mr. Haggart of degrading the railway from 1893 onward and of obtaining his surpluses in that way. Mr. Blair was able to show that the maintenance of the road, the repairs and the replacements of rolling stock, and general maintenance expenses, were reduced by Mr. Haggart by \$300,000 to \$400,000. He argued from this that Mr. Haggart allowed the road to run down. Mr. Blair, as was pointed out in yesterday's letter, did not even claim to have restored the cost of maintenance to what it was before Mr. Haggart's time. He admitted that he only spent \$50,000 more than Mr. Haggart on the same services, though he had a larger mileage. Mr. Powell by a more thorough examination, taking in a larger number of elements in the case, showed that the minister had not spent as much even as Mr. Haggart, though he had the additional Drummond railway to maintain. Mr. Powell's comparison was between the last year of Mr. Haggart's management and the year 1899, which Mr. Blair himself brought into the comparison. Had Mr. Blair maintained the same scale of expenditure for maintenance per mile of road as Mr. Haggart did in 1896, he would have had no surplus but a deficit of some \$200,000.

Mr. Powell conceded even too much. With 25 per cent. additional traffic the minister might have been expected to spend more in maintenance, especially in the maintenance of rolling stock. Having more rolling stock on hand and using it more, the depreciation would naturally be larger.

The minister made something of the fact that his wages bill had increased since 1898. What could the minister expect? No doubt he could have made very large profits if he could have done \$800,000 more business without hiring any more men.

Now we come to another element in the case. Mr. Blair is asking for \$400,000 for steel rails for the Cape Breton railway. He is not charging that to the expenses of operating, but to the cost of the road. This may be legitimate railway book-keeping. But when the minister compares his returns with those of his predecessors the comparison should be made on some basis applicable to both.

In 1899 a large quantity of light rails were replaced by heavy ones. In 1899 125 miles of track were so replaced. There were 16 miles replaced in 1891, a large quantity in 1892, 30 miles in 1893, and nearly the same quantity in 1894 and 1895. Every pound of these rails was charged against the income of the year. But every dollar that Mr. Blair so spent in excess of the value of the rails taken up as running expenses for the year, but is wholly charged to capital. But Mr. Powell shows that the late government replaced bridges in 1889. In 1890 it spent \$2,000 on the Sackville and Restigouche bridges, and replaced some 40 small wooden bridges with iron or steel. It also strengthened five other bridges. In 1891 two large bridges were put in, and on 52 small ones, aggregating 3,000 feet in length, wood was replaced by steel. In 1892 there was a \$10,000 steel girder bridge between the Missequash bridge was strengthened, many Howe trusses were replaced by steel. In 1893 two new sidings were put in, there were 15 new steel girders and one station building. Every dollar of this expenditure went into the year's accounts as ordinary outlay, and increased by that much the expenditure for the year. If Mr. Blair had charged his bridges in the same way, his surplus would have been swept away at a stroke, and a deficit would have taken its place.

Mr. Blair is charging to construction the whole cost of strengthening railway bridges. This doubling up is not put down as running expenses for the year, but is wholly charged to capital. But Mr. Powell shows that the late government replaced bridges in 1889. In 1890 it spent \$2,000 on the Sackville and Restigouche bridges, and replaced some 40 small wooden bridges with iron or steel. It also strengthened five other bridges. In 1891 two large bridges were put in, and on 52 small ones, aggregating 3,000 feet in length, wood was replaced by steel. In 1892 there was a \$10,000 steel girder bridge between the Missequash bridge was strengthened, many Howe trusses were replaced by steel. In 1893 two new sidings were put in, there were 15 new steel girders and one station building. Every dollar of this expenditure went into the year's accounts as ordinary outlay, and increased by that much the expenditure for the year. If Mr. Blair had charged his bridges in the same way, his surplus would have been swept away at a stroke, and a deficit would have taken its place.

Again the minister of railways has charged to capital not only all the additional rolling stock purchased by him, but has also charged to construction a large quantity of rolling stock to replace old stock. Last year he threw away over 200 freight cars which were condemned, bought 250 to take their place, and charged them all to capital account. It is fair to say that Mr. Blair objected to this item when Mr. Powell mentioned it, and protested that these cars were no good when he took office. But Mr. Powell exposed this excuse by showing that the same officers were on the road now as in 1896. In 1896 only 158 cars were condemned, and 246 the year after. The officers condemned 523 cars in 1899, showing that the rolling stock had not been replaced as well under this government as before. Where the stock has been replaced the minister has not allowed it to be done as part of the regular expenditure, but has borrowed money to pay for it.

Mr. Powell showed that it was easy for a minister to make surpluses if he claimed all the income of the year and charged as much as he liked of the outlay to capital. All that the minister has to do is to reduce the outlay by borrowing money to make purchases of rolling stock, or of bridges necessary to replace the original plant. He can make a surplus of a million a year if he desires it, adding the million to the construction expenditure. The criticism as to cars applies also to locomotives. Mr. Powell showing that in one year under the late government four new engines were purchased additional to the former supply, and all charged to the running expenses of the year. It makes very little matter how these charges are made. The people have to pay for them anyway. But it is important that a minister in making comparisons with his predecessors to his own advantage should make them fairly.

Mr. Powell added an interesting chapter of history. He showed that the Intercolonial of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick before the extension into Montreal and Quebec had paid a substantial surplus. Under Mr. Mackenzie, when the road was pushed forward to Riviere du Loup, the deficits began, and in the last year of Mr. Mackenzie's government they reached \$700,000. Sir Charles Tupper then took charge. In his first year he brought the deficit down to \$32,000. The next year he brought it a surplus, and for the next two or three years he kept it a surplus. This was until an attempt was made to do a large through business by this longer route. Then the deficit began again. When the government tried to carry coal from Nova Scotia to Quebec or to transport grain for export they did it at a loss, and in this way, together with the large expenditure for improvements on the

line and rolling stock, the deficit went up to \$800,000. Mr. Haggart gave up this unprofitable through trade to a large extent, allowing it to take the shortest route, and as a result that anything else reduced the deficit.

Mr. Blair was now struggling against geography once more and was trying to compete with a railway hundreds of miles shorter. He could do it and could increase the nominal revenues of the road, but the inevitable result must be a return of deficits so soon as honest book-keeping after the former style was resumed. Mr. Powell does not object to the extension to Montreal. He is quite in favor of it, but holds that the course adopted only makes one more competing line where there were already too many. The same connection could have been obtained by the North Shore route and the Quebec bridge which the government was already pledged to assist.

The senate had an interesting afternoon with Mr. Pineau. The minister of justice does not know Pineau. Nobody here knows him any longer. A few months ago when he was in this city, and thought he was going to Paris, he had lots of friends here, and their supporters do not even know that he was here, though Mr. Ferguson produced an affidavit of the proprietor of the Brunswick house, where Mr. Pineau stayed during the last of his negotiations. A member from Tignish left Ottawa on the same day with Mr. Tarte, whose acquaintance he seems to have made, and whom he hoped to accompany.

It turned out afterwards that the departure of Mr. Pineau was not enough to save Premier Farquharson. Mr. Wise could no longer be regarded as a supporter, and therefore it was necessary to have another vote. Accordingly Mr. Pineau was not sent to Prince Edward Island and vote in favor of the government which he was elected to oppose. Senator Ferguson read the affidavit of William Callaghan, who swears that Mr. Pineau told him that he was appointed by Dr. Wickham of Tignish and was offered an appointment to go to Paris as commissioner at \$5 a day. Also the affidavit of Jerome Friel, who swears that Mr. Pineau told him the same story. The senator told the story of the successful efforts of Sir Louis Davie's friends in Prince Edward Island to bring financial ruin on Mr. Pineau, and thus get him to some extent in their power. Sir Mackenzie Bowell denied the story of the affidavit of Jerome Friel on the record of the government.

But Mr. Mills and Mr. Scott know nothing about it, and Mr. Mills expressed a lofty disregard for local governments in general and the local government of Prince Edward Island in particular. He talked as if he did not think the Farquharson government was worth saving, and scouted the idea that the government at Ottawa would take any notice of a trivial matter as the Farquharson ministry. S. D. S.

OTTAWA, June 29.—If the government is able to render any service to Messrs. Belcourt, Britton, Russell and Campbell, the majority of the emergency food committee, that good office should be done at the earliest possible moment. No government is more ready to buy than the present majority has done. The astonishing bargain with Dr. Devlin, the purchase of 30 cent food at \$2 a pound, and the concealment of Mr. Hatch's warning and exposure, the whole record of mismanagement, or worse, completely excused by the majority report. The four gentlemen mentioned do more than excuse it. They commend it. They praise it. They give the minister honor and credit for his thoughtfulness and care. Only one member of the committee, Mr. McKinnon, who exposed the whole transaction. Him Dr. Russell's report condemns, and now he awaits whatever penalties the ministers and their majority may see fit to propose.

When one remembers what a neat swindle it was, recalling the fact that the government, instead of buying the genuine substitute, was tested at Kingston, bought a miserable substitute which had never been tested anywhere, purchasing it without even an analysis and paying for it after the minister had been informed that it was a spurious substitute when it is remembered that this food, falsely professed to be made in Montreal by the Vitallin Company at a certain address, whereas there is no such company in existence, and the goods were a spurious substitute when it is considered that the government analyst assured the department that it was not buying a concentrated food, or one worth the price paid for it, or entitled to its name; that the provision was sent out with the directions that one can of four ounces would sustain a man for a day, though the McGill professor cited by the minister himself swore that it would take eight times that much; when we recall that the contractor after watching the enquiry to the last day and declaring that he was going to testify, suddenly left on the hour he was to be called, announcing that he was going to New York, and then went off to Montreal—we must surely rather see tribute to the service of the majority who approve of everything.

Some tribute is due also to the department of militia and a department which produces as a sample of food tested at Kingston an old envelope containing a powder handed in before the Kingston test and only called half strength powder. A department which after procuring samples after the test of the food actually used in all its forms, succeeds in destroying before analysis every particle of these genuine samples, and then claims to know what the genuine articles would test, after this was done. The same might be said of the four majority members who refused to analyze in the government office a quantity of the genuine Hatch food remaining at Montreal of that tested at Kingston, but which they accept as evidence of the character of that food the statement of a coal merchant of what he remembers to have been told

him at the street corner by a man who swears the exact contrary. It is a great government, a great department of militia, and above all, a great quartette of white-washers.

In the house yesterday we had another exhibition of a kind which has become familiar. Mr. Bell of Pictou moved another motion asking for enquiry into certain allegations of misgovernment and fraud in the Yukon. Much of the matter set forth in his resolution is taken from Ogilvie's report, which itself shows that the Ogilvie enquiry was incomplete and inconclusive. Mr. Ogilvie himself asked for larger powers and scope for his enquiry, and his own report showed that statements offered in evidence were shut out though they were under investigation. Mr. Bell read other statements made by the Yukon press and by correspondents from that district, and closed with the same old request for a judicial investigation.

It is an old demand, often repeated, not only in the house but by the miners and residents of the district, but always refused, no matter what grounds are offered or what new allegations or charges are produced.

Mr. Sutherland, the acting minister, meets the charge in the "dase" can't give the language used by Mr. Sifton last year when the minister demanded a formal charge by a member on his own responsibility, and promised that the moment such a charge was made the matter would be given Mr. Sutherland threw out his fist in a most warlike manner, and promised Mr. Bell all the investigation he wanted if he would only dare make charges in some other way. The full emphasis on the "dase" can't give the language used by Mr. Sifton last year when the minister demanded a formal charge by a member on his own responsibility, and promised that the moment such a charge was made the matter would be given Mr. Sutherland threw out his fist in a most warlike manner, and promised Mr. Bell all the investigation he wanted if he would only dare make charges in some other way. 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