

MR. F. D. SMITH REPLIES TO GRIT ALLEGATIONS

Gives Facts Concerning Potato Purchase Which Absolutely Refute Depicible Insinuations of Dugal et al.

Opposition Leader, Replying in French, Says he Did Not Charge Mr. Smith With Dishonesty.

Fredericton, N. B., April 28.—The house met at eleven o'clock. Capt. Tilly rose to a question of privilege. The official report of yesterday's proceedings in the house, as reported in the morning papers, made him say that in a town in Albert county there were six or seven places doing business there both day and night and paying \$55 a month for the privilege. He said no such thing about Albert county, but he did say that such conditions existed in a town in Charlotte county. Another thing he noticed that St. John Standard had left out half his speech altogether and credited the other half to the Attorney-General. He had no desire that the Attorney-General, who introduced the prohibition bill, should have to bear liability for any remarks that he (Tilly) had made, and he trusted the Standard, in the Attorney-General's interest, would see fit to correct the mistake made.

Mr. Allan presented report of the Public Accounts Committee. Mr. E. Frank Smith said he desired to take opportunity of making a few remarks arising out of this report. He said that no committee of house had a more important task than that assigned to Public Accounts Committee and committee had assiduously performed their task and were thus entitled to much credit. Today, work of this committee could be carried on much more successfully and expeditiously than when he was previously a member of committee, from 1903 to 1908, because much of the information which was then required by committee was not available. Today there was a different state of affairs and much credit was due this government for having placed on the statute books the new audit act, which placed the Auditor-General in the independent position which he now occupies, and made it so that the only way that money could be improperly obtained through public works department or other department of the government was by resorting to criminal practices. Illustrating the state of affairs which existed under the old administration, he drew attention to number of road commissioners who, in 1903, 1904 and 1905, failed to submit any account for their expenditures and which had to be marked in reports "no account," and also referred to amounts of interest charged against the county road grants as a result of methods which were then followed. He cited the case of Madawaska county which, in 1915, had fourteen out of twenty-eight road commissioners who failed to make any return for money which had been handed over to them to expend, and asked why it was that the hon. leader of the opposition, Mr. Dugal, in his splendid interest in the welfare of the country and his desire to find something to criticize, did not contemplate and place before the public that state of affairs which had existed in his own county. He (Smith) believed that fair and healthy criticism was good, and would be desired by the government, but the leader of the opposition seemed to have nothing to indulge in but criticism of a most petty nature, that was of no value whatever. He had made all sorts of charges and insinuations and when the government had thrown open the doors of enquiry the opposition leader had failed to make good anything more than the most trifling of his charge. That hon. gentleman himself was more guilty than many of men of whom he had complained, for he had endorsed and cashed a cheque given to another person for work that he knew very well had never been done.

Potato Purchase For Patriotic Purposes.

Another matter to which he wanted to refer related to the purchase of potatoes for patriotic and Belgian gifts. A good deal of criticism had been levelled against the department of agriculture and himself with regard to the matter. He had waited his opportunity to refer to it until the papers had come before the Public Accounts Committee. He could not be blamed if he got what he could for his own county, every member desired to do that. Carleton county was the leading potato county in the province, and he (Smith) was one of the largest potato dealers in it. Mr. Dazett had come to him and he was not at that time a member of the house—to consult him as to the best means of getting the potatoes required, and he (Smith) had undertaken to procure half the quantity. The department desired to have the matter carried through with as little delay as possible as a special ship had to be chartered to take them to the old country, and it was necessary to have them ready for shipment as soon as the vessel was procured.

Taking up the financial arrangements which had been made, Mr. Smith claimed that it would have been necessary for almost any individual to have sought assistance of the department to finance a deal of such magnitude. However, the province's interests had been well safeguarded, as bills of lading had to be submitted to drafts before they could be accepted by the department and paid, and this served as an official receipt for stock from the railway company which did the shipping.

In the bye-election which had taken place in Carleton county, upon the resignation of ex-Premier Fleming, the matter of this potato transaction had been made an issue by opposition party managers and the outcome had been that he had been elected in face of a scurrilous campaign against him on January 7th, 1915, by the largest majority ever rolled up in that county. Since then the St. John Telegraph, Fredericton Mail and some other papers had taken the cue from the Carleton Sentinel and had been publishing statements which were so much at variance with the facts that there should be something done to suppress publication of such untruthful statements, just as undesirable moving pictures were censored before they could be shown.

That interview of Carvell's in Toronto. He had noticed an interview by Mr. Carvell, the federal member for parliament, in a Toronto newspaper recently, in which Mr. Carvell had been quoted as saying that he admitted that the Liberal party had been guilty perhaps, when in power, of many things which should not have been allowed to occur, and further admitted that perhaps he (Carvell) was responsible for helping to keep the lid on, so to speak, but now Mr. Carvell advanced in this interview his belief in the policy of a political regeneration. So this as it may, he believed that that same old hypocrisy would always be evident on the part of Mr. Carvell.

Returning to the potato matter, Mr. Smith said he had purchased 45,831 barrels of potatoes for the department of agriculture on a basis that he should receive a commission of ten cents per barrel for buying, loading, shipping and otherwise handling the transaction and he defied anybody to point to one cent more that he received than ten cents per barrel to which he was entitled under this arrangement. On the other hand it was well known that loading potatoes cost at least five cents per barrel for labor, and inasmuch as he had paid back to the department an amount which was equal to 5½ cents per barrel because of cut and culled potatoes when the shipment was finally sorted for export, this showed that there could not possibly have been any profit for him on the transaction. There had been a slight loss to government over the transaction which amounted to three cents per barrel, or a total loss of some \$1,500 on the whole shipment, not a very serious matter on a transaction of such magnitude.

Some Transactions Under Grit Regime.

A comparison of some of losses made by late government in some of their transactions would be interesting.

In 1902 they imported six horses at a total cost of \$10,542 and made a loss of \$4,398 in re-selling them. In 1907 they bought ninety-five sheep at a cost of \$2,478 and lost \$1,328 on resale. At same time they bought forty horses at a cost of \$16,895 and lost

\$5,799 when they re-sold them. Altogether a total loss of \$11,524 on a transaction of \$30,015. Besides this they made considerable loss on some seed purchases they made. In this particular transaction there was nothing that the department should not be congratulated upon, and in view of that he considered that charges made against the department were very grave and serious. Insinuations were made that he had taken advantage of his position to take money from the government to which he had no right. That insinuation had been rung across the house by honorable leader of opposition, who caused indulgence of the house because of his inability to speak English. That indulgence had been granted and had been grossly abused and the time was now passed for any further favors in that line to be shown him. When he (Smith) set down he felt that the leader of opposition should stand up in his place and speak in his mother tongue and if he refused to do that he would stand before house convicted as a slanderer.

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stand for it. In whatever he had done he had only done his duty. He then proceeded to speak in French. Mr. Smith asked if Mr. Dugal would explain whether he found anything irregular in the accounts of the whole transaction as far as he (Smith) was concerned. Mr. Dugal, speaking in English, said that he was not at the public accounts committee when those accounts were being passed. He was not well enough posted in the use of the English language to be able to tell much about such a transaction, but he had been told by Mr. Plummer, a member of the committee, that if he wanted to see the accounts he could go to the department of agriculture and get them there. He (Dugal) had never made any charge against any member of this House, and when he had any charge he would be man enough to make charge.

Mr. Dugal concluded his speech in French.

Hon. Dr. Landry said that he felt that it was only fair that members of the House and people of the country should know what Mr. Dugal had said while speaking in French, and he was told by Mr. Plummer in English what Mr. Dugal had said in French. He would ask hon. member for Madawaska to follow him closely, and if he was not being correctly quoted to correct him. Mr. Dugal had, he said, been most fair in his statement, and it was only right that what he had said should be known to everybody.

Hon. Dr. Landry said that Mr. Dugal stated that he did not wish to be looked upon as making any insinuations against any member of the government or of the House. He had made certain enquiries upon certain matters upon which he was not clear, and upon which he wished to have information which would make matters clear in his mind. He did not wish to be understood as making any charges, and if he had any charges to make he wanted it understood that he was manly enough to make them.

The press, Mr. Dugal had contended were at liberty to take any interpretation they wished from answers which were given to enquiries in the House, and he (Dugal) should not be held responsible for what newspapers said, and he did not wish to be understood as casting insinuations upon any hon. member of this House.

Hon. Dr. Landry continuing said that he believed Mr. Dugal wished to be fair, and he (Landry) was sorry that hon. member for Madawaska had been unable to say in English what he had said in French, but he felt sure he was correctly quoting Mr. Dugal when he said that hon. member for Madawaska wanted it understood that

he did not charge that Mr. Smith had done anything that was not honorable. He would ask Mr. Dugal to say whether or not he had given the House the correct impression of what he (Dugal) had said.

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The report of the public accounts committee was then adopted as follows:

Committee rooms, April 27, 1916.—Your committee to whom was referred the auditor-general's report for the fiscal year ending October 31st, 1915, beg leave to report as follows:

"Several accounts in the report were carefully examined. The excellent and very commendable manner in which accounts in each department are kept very materially assisted us in examining them.

"We found that all disbursements were accounted for.

"The auditor was asked to appear before us, and he attended several sittings, thus giving an opportunity to each and every member of said committee to find out all particulars in connection with the several accounts.

"Our attention was called to some insinuating criticisms which appeared in the public press regarding the transaction in connection with the gift of potatoes to the Empire and to Belgian relief.

"At our request Mr. Dazett, secretary of the department of agriculture, and the auditor general appeared before us and explained to our satisfaction every transaction in connection with this business.

"All vouchers pertaining to this very important transaction were produced and examined minutely, and our finding is that the matter was transacted in a prudent and business-like manner, having in view the safeguarding of interests of the province.

"(Signed) W. L. Allan, chairman; George B. Jones, H. W. Woods, A. Culligan, G. Leverett White, James K. Fisher."

Dr. Bourque presented the report of the contingencies committee.

Hon. Mr. Baxter presented the report of the law committee.

Mr. White presented the report of select committee on the proposed taxation on wild lands, asking leave to sit again and report at the next session.

The House took recess at 1:05 p. m. until 2 p. m.

THE POLICE COURT.

Malcolm McLeod, charged with assaulting a soldier, deposited \$20 for his appearance in the police court on Monday morning next, when witnesses will be heard.

Thomas Sullivan, charged with drunkenness and interfering with pedestrians, was sentenced to six months in jail and \$50 or three months.

Two soldiers, who pleaded guilty to a charge of setting off fire-crackers on Charlotte street, were fined \$8 or two months in jail.

John Myers was again before the court on a charge of assault, interfering with the police, drunkenness, etc., and was further remanded.

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