

## The St. John Standard

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ST. JOHN, N. B. MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 1921.

## GOVERNMENT ADMITS DEFICIT OF \$156,000

But for having to provide the money to defray the expenses of the civil government of the province, and also for the repair of the roads and bridges, Premier Foster and his friends would have had a surplus of \$2,100,000.

But for lack of courage to curb Mr. Veniot's extravagance, Dr. Robert's follies, Mr. Mage's Vocational Training fund, and a few more altogether unnecessary expenditures, Premier Foster might have had a legitimate surplus of \$250,000 at least.

As it is, the annual statement of the finances shows, to quote the exact phrase used—"deficit on current account, \$156,000.31."

The attempt to show a surplus but for the expenditure on account of the St. John and Quebec Railway, is the boldest fake imaginable. It is so utterly childish that one can only marvel that any reasonable mind ever contemplated making use of it. Its absurdity is apparent on the fact of it. This railway is just as much a portion of the provincial assets as is the bridge over the Reversing Falls, or any other bridge in the province. It was built almost wholly out of provincial money, the bonds which secure the payment of that money are issued by the province direct—or almost all of them are at any rate—the provincial treasury receives the money derived from operating it, less the proportion that is paid to the C. N. R. for doing the actual work, and the provincial government appointed the directors who had its affairs in charge until the C. N. R. took over the actual operation. Why try to wriggle out of recognizing it as provincial property? The government built the bridge over the Falls, and receives rent for the use of it from the Street Railway Co., which rent is duly credited in the revenues, as a set-off against the interest on the bonds which represent the money borrowed to build it. Why not credit the St. John and Quebec Railway with the \$59,552 received out of its earnings in an honest manner?

The province does not own the Southampton Railway, it only guaranteed its bonds; yet the earnings of that railway are included in the revenue, and are set off against the interest on the bonds.

One of the apologists for the Government's action in not including the St. John and Quebec accounts in the ordinary account declares that "if such a burden, amounting to a quarter of a million dollars charge per annum (which is the result of the unfortunate policy of the late government) must be a charge upon the ordinary provincial receipts, then some special form of taxation must be imposed upon the people generally to meet such a serious obligation." Just what does our contemporary mean by the unfortunate policy of the late government? Does it mean to contend that the railway should never have been built? Was this policy anywhere near so unfortunate as the policy of some of Mr. Foster's friends and predecessors in office in regard to the Central Railway, from the funds of which \$134,000 disappeared and could not be traced, and in respect to which some of the Premier's political friends did some special work for which they had not prepared themselves, and consequently their performances were in accord with their preparation? Was the late government's policy in regard to the Valley Railway any more unfortunate than their predecessors' policy in regard to the Beersville Railway?

The financial statement as presented by the Comptroller General and certified by Chartered Accountants as being in their opinion "a correct view of the financial position of the province at 31st October, 1920, according to the best of our information and the explanations given to us" is a story of the most appalling extravagance ever heard of in the annals of this province. With a revenue nearly \$1,000,000 greater than ever before, a revenue that was beyond the wildest dreams of those in charge of provincial affairs five years ago, there is again the old story of not being able to make ends meet. The expenditures in 1919 reached the high water mark of nearly \$2,500,000, and last year's revenue exceeds that amount by some \$200,000. Yet the Premier Government not only spent every cent of this \$200,000, but finished up with \$156,000 in debt. What is the public to think of each management? When the Budget was brought down last year the estimated expenditure was under \$2,400,000; the actual expenditure is shown to have been over \$2,500,000. This shows one of two things; either that the estimates were deliberately put at very much lower figures than it was known they

ought to be put at, or else that, having the additional money to spend, the government entered on a wild orgy of spending without any regard to the consequences.

The people of New Brunswick can only regard the condition of affairs as shown by the financial statement with the deepest regret. Premier Foster was put by them into office because he promised them that as a business man he would conduct the public affairs on business principles, and would not only keep the expenditure within the income, but would practice strict economy in all cases. With such a revenue as he had this year, he should have been, as we said before, at least a quarter of a million to the good. Why he did not have it must be left for him to explain to the House; but the accounts as published evidence one of the most appalling examples of incompetence and inefficiency this country has ever witnessed. The zeal for economy that Mr. Foster made such a great show of before he got into office, seemed to evaporate altogether as soon as he found himself in charge of affairs. He promised the House that the 1920 revenue would not only be sufficient to wipe out the 1919 deficit, but would more than suffice to meet the 1920 expenditure as well. He could have carried out his promise—but he didn't. The people will know now just how much faith to put in his statements for the future.

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE  
 Having raised the stampage since they came into office from \$1.50 to \$5; having created and imposed the Wild Land Tax and the Forest Fire Tax; having almost doubled the fees from moving pictures, and from all incorporated companies doing business in the province; having doubled the succession duties; having put on the amusement tax; having had the benefit of a ten fold increase in fees from motor vehicles; having made a legitimate profit (irrespective of campaign funds) from prohibition; and having taxed every other conceivable source of income that the ingenuity of the ex-Food Controller could suggest, the Foster Government has found itself in the enjoyment of a revenue greatly in excess of anything heretofore experienced in this province. To most business men, that is prudent business men, the possession of this increased income would have suggested the thought that it might be well to put a little by in case of any unforeseen contingency. But the idea apparently did not occur to the Foster Government—or if it did, they cast it behind them as an evil thought. Mr. Veniot, who having spent \$738,000 in 1919, told the Legislature that as a result the roads and bridges and other public works of the province were in such an efficient state that he would only need \$482,000 in 1920. Yet he spent \$511,000, that he owns up to, and goodness only knows how much more he charged to capital account.

The Government estimated that the expenditure on Motor Vehicles Account would come to \$185,000. They must have known beforehand almost to a dollar what would be wanted, because almost the whole amount required is made up of fixed charges. Yet they only debit themselves with \$142,950. What item have they covered up or otherwise camouflaged? Here is a discrepancy of \$32,000, which saves the deficiency that much at least. For service cost \$30,000 more than was anticipated. What a little knowledge those charged with the preparation of the estimates seem to possess of the possible requirements. The statement is made by one government apologist that the difficulty in making a close estimate of what the expenditure might be was owing to unsettled prevailing conditions. No reasonable man expects a government to make any close estimate; no man who knows anything about conditions would complain of an excess in expenditure of anything up to \$10,000 or so in the large items, and so on in a lesser degree in regard to the smaller items; but Mr. Veniot exceeded it to the tune of \$325,000, and the Forest Service to \$30,000. The inference is that the estimates were deliberately under stated.

According to The Telegraph, Mr. Veniot says that with regard to the expenditures in his department, he was up against a situation in which it was a case of "he would be damned if he did, and he'd be damned if he didn't." Increase them. If the effect a Mr. Veniot was to have been the same in any case, he had no excuse for spending the money. His damnation would have been no particular loss to the province and it would still have had the money in hand. According to that telephone conversation Mr. Veniot handed on the damnation to the Premier.

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## ECONOMY WANTED

The Globe which usually endorses everything that the Foster Government says and does, be it good, bad or indifferent, is evidently viewing with some alarm the prospect of a heavy falling off in the revenue for the current year, which will involve "drastic cuts in the public expenditures or the 'impost of new taxes if revenue and 'expenditure are to balance." There are not many new sources of taxation left open to the government; about all there were to be found, short of a direct income tax, have been seized upon and are now paying almost to the limit. And the people won't stand another income tax. We all have been painfully reminded recently that we are already paying two income taxes, one to the Dominion Government, and one to the city, and the public is in no mood to pay a third one to the Provincial Government. What is needed is greater economy in administration, or as The Globe puts it, "drastic cuts in the public expenditure." No government ever had such an opportunity to save money as the present Government has had during the last fiscal year, but it let the chance go by. But Mr. Foster and his friends were too busy buying votes to care very much how or where the money went, provided only that by some means or other it got into the pockets of the prospective voters. The Globe's appeal to the Government "in its own and the public interests to endeavour to inaugurate economies in every department" will fall on deaf ears.

The three Government organs in this city have each seized upon the St. John and Quebec Railway as the scapegoat to bear the onus of a financial deficit, and they each condemn the late Government for constructing the road. Yet a road down the St. John Valley never had a more earnest or enthusiastic advocate than the Hon. William Pugsley. He offered to provide \$15,000 a mile towards its construction at a time when that amount had a greater purchasing power than \$25,000 a mile had at the time the road was actually built.

The Rev. Kennedy Palmer calls Lindsay Crawford a "self-determined monkey." This, says the Toronto Telegram is causing loud cries from certain cages in Toronto zoo, where an indignation meeting is being held.

## WHAT OTHERS SAY

"Pontius Pilate's Story."  
 General Storrs, the present governor of Jerusalem, has described himself with a certain amount of humor, as the "successor of Pontius Pilate." But there the resemblance begins and ends. The Roman governor was essentially an opportunist, a man moving along the line of least resistance. He had the Roman contempt for the population he administered, but this feeling was mitigated by a desire to achieve and maintain a cheap popularity and to prevent any reports forwarded to Rome such as might lead to his actions and policy being called in question. As long as he could dump responsibility upon any one else he was ready to render any complaisant decision.

General Storrs possesses none of these characteristics. There is little chance of the latter day governor of Jerusalem "washing his hands in innocence." On the contrary he is fully prepared to assume complete responsibility for all his acts and to rue the city firmly according to his lights. His Scottish name suggests the stern Presbyterian, brought up in the faith, to whom Jerusalem is really the Holy City, to be preserved intact and protected from all sordid contact with the outer world. One of the first things he has excluded is the national beverage of Scotland. No bars are to be allowed and the sale of whiskey is strictly prohibited.—Washington Post.

The First Negro Legislator.  
 On January 5th, Mr. W. M. Moore, elected a member of the Legislature of the State of Missouri, from the Sixth Legislative District in the city of St. Louis, took the oath of office and his seat in the Legislature. This event has occasioned a political sensation as Mr. Moore is a negro, and his gaining Legislative honors marks the first real break in the Southern policy of according their negro citizens taxation without representation.

It had to come, as a powerful aggressive movement for political rights has been organized since the war. Men who went overseas to war, refused to be deprived of their civil rights on returning and civil rights include political rights.—Washington Star.

A Good Substitute.  
 "German hands" have left the country, presumably for ever. There are two reasons why there does not seem to be much probability of their return. The first one is, of course, that we don't like the Germans, and we don't, therefore, want their hands. The second reason is that their place seems to have been taken by English ex-service men. It is quite a common sight to see a band of six or eight playing in the most crowded shopping districts of London. They are obviously men who picked up some knowledge of how to play a musical instrument while they were in the army. Many of them, too, equally obviously, must have played an instrument in their regimental band. Little did they think that a day would come when they would be seen and heard playing popular airs to London shopping crowds!—London Morning Post.

## THE LAUGH LINE

Chic!  
 Sub-Editor—"A correspondent wishes to know why they whitewash the inside of a henhouse."  
 Editor—"Told him it's to keep the hens from picking the grain out of the wood."—Boston Transcript.

## Benny's Note Book

BY LEE PAPE

Saturday afternoon my cousin Artie came around and me and him was arguing about what to do to have the most fun and ma came in saying, Boys, I'm going to take you to a concert this afternoon. Mrs. Hew's just stopped and left 3 tickets and there's no use waiting them.

Aw G, ma, what kind of a concert, will there be anything funny in it? I sed.

There will be some nice music, and singing and things of that sort and it's sure to be very enjoyable, sed ma, and I sed, Aw well gosh 'ma, G, wat goods music and singing? Ain't there going to be anything funny? and ma sed, O there mite be, there mite be, hurry and put your things on or well be late. And she took us down town to a big place with a stage but no curtain and a lot of people was setting there waiting for something to happen, which we sat down and did too, me saying, I bet there's going to be something funny, you'd better see all these people hear if they didn't expect something funny to happen.

Wares the curtain, how are they going to be funny without a curtain? sed Artie. Which jest then some lady in who came out with a violin and started to play it with a sick expression, and after a while I sed, Aw heck, wat's funny about her, and Artie sed, She ain't funny, she's jest funny looking.

Shh, shh, sed ma. And some man in front of us turned around, being a man half bald headed and half not, saying, Shh, shh, were do you boys think you are? Which I felt like saying, At a funeral, only I didn't out of politeness, and then another lady came out and started to sing in a forin langwige, being worse than if she'd had a violin, Artie saying, Gosh good nite who sed she was funny? and me saying if I wasn't any funnier than that I'd go and live in a cemetery.

Shh, shh, sed ma, and about six other people sed Shh, shh, as if they thawt they was getting in a game, and some man in back of us leened over and sed to ma, Madam, if these boys don't keep still I'll call an usher. Being a skinny man looking even skinnier, and ma sed, If this is all the better you boys can appreciate music you better go home, come on.

Which we did, and if anything funny happened after that we missed it, only nothing properly did.

## Stands on Four Legs Anyway.

The class was all attention. "Now, Johnny Smith, what is a quadruped?" asked the teacher.

"A quadruped is anything with four legs."

"Yes. Now give me an example."

"An elephant."

"Now, can you tell me of any feathered quadruped?"

"Yes, sir. A feather bed."

Force of Habit.  
 A young mother asked her butcher to weigh the baby.

"With pleasure, madam." Then having examined the scales, "thirteen and a half pounds, with the bones!" Cincinnati Inquirer.

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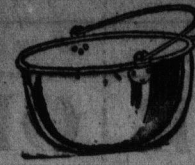
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CHURCHILL GETS FOR

London, Jan. 29.—Winston Churchill, secretary for war, inherits the estate of Lord Herbert Temple, his cousin, who died of injuries received in a railroad near Abernethy, Wales, Jan. 29, 1920, the Daily Mail.

## PILES

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