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THE EVENING TIMES AND STAR, ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 1918

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## Hon. Mr. Veniot On Budget

Fredericton, N. B., April 19.—Hon. P. J. Veniot, minister of public works, held the close attention of the legislature for four hours today while he delivered a masterly speech on matters arising from the budget debate. It was an address of the highest order, dealing in striking fashion with matters of deepest interest in a clear and intelligible manner, and at times rising to heights of eloquence seldom surpassed on the floors of the house. The speech was marked at times by expressions of the deepest emotion as he dealt with such grave matters as the war crisis, the part that the men of Canada of both races are taking in it. It was marked by flashes of keen wit as he crossed swords with opposition members, and there were times when his subject matter was of a startling character as he revealed matters which previous governments had striven to keep concealed.

But the body of his speech was a straight-forward review of the work of his department and an answer to criticisms which had been directed at its administration.

An Able Speech. That the defence of a good administration is easy did not lead him to neglect this feature of his remarks, and he dealt

with care and detail, supported by facts, figures, and corroborating documents, with every charge which had been made. At times his defence took the form of a counter offensive which carried him into the opposition trenches, with serious results for the opposition.

At the conclusion of his speech there was left no room for the shadow of a doubt in the minds of his hearers that, since the present government entered office, the province has enjoyed one of the most business-like administrations which has marked its history. The opposition criticisms had been left without a leg to stand on, and the administration's critics were left in the painful position of those who make criticisms which are not founded on fact and which have been disproved by convincing evidence.

Crowded galleries heard Mr. Veniot during the evening and the impression he made was unmistakable. On the floors of the house the applause from the government benches was enthusiastic as he scored point after point, and at times, on non-partisan matters, the opposition joined in the applause.

Standing out prominently in the speech was a question which Hon. Mr. Veniot asked, a question which he left to the leader of the opposition to answer and the answer will be awaited with keenest interest by Mr. Murray's followers and opponents alike.

The question was: "Where did the money come from?"

The minister of public works had reviewed the history of the patriotic potatoes, already famous in the annals of the province. Then he told the sequel. When the potatoes which were the gift of the province to the motherland, had been shipped, there was a large surplus left in the hands of the government, and this stock was disposed by Mr. A. C. Smith & Co., agents for the government, by shipments to the West Indies. The last of the potatoes were shipped in February and March of 1915, but when the books of the province should have been closed on November 10, the proceeds, a matter of \$82,860 had not been accounted for. The books were kept open until December 29 and on that date the province received a promissory note signed by A. C. Smith & Co. for the amount, which was entered as cash received. The note was discounted and by the time it was due Smith & Co. has failed. The note was met, in March 1916, by a check forwarded from London.

When these statements were made the opposition leader was not in the chamber, and Mr. Veniot remarked: "If the leader of the opposition was present he might be able to tell who forwarded that check and who furnished the money to repay the check."

Waits for Answer.

In Mr. Murray's absence he was forced to wait for a public answer, but he assured his hearers that the transaction was a disgraceful and dishonest one, and one which, when fully revealed would show how hollow was the claim that the former government had left office without a stain on the hands of the members.

There was another transaction of which the late administration had no reason to be proud and which will require some explaining from the former minister of public works. This is the contract made by Hon. B. F. Smith with the Smith Foundry Co. of Fredericton for the White trucks on the basis of twenty per cent profit, at a time when another concern was prepared to sell them to the government on a ten per cent profit, a contract made only a few days before the general elections. When Hon. Mr. Veniot entered office he took steps which resulted in cutting down the price and effected a saving to the province of \$7,900 on the transaction.

No Answer.

B. F. Smith followed Hon. Mr. Veniot, but made no mention of this matter. He talked for half an hour, quite evidently sparing for time and laboring heavily in the process. The war apparently has nearly been a knockout. At 11 o'clock Mr. Smith moved the adjournment of the debate. If he has an answer prepared by the morning the province will be glad to hear what it is. The first morning session will be held tomorrow when the house will convene at 11 o'clock a.m., sessions will be continued in the afternoon and evening and the members will be at work again early on Monday morning.

A bill to amend the schools act was read a third time and passed.

Mr. LeBlanc presented the report of the committee of municipalities on the report of Mr. Smith (Albert) gave notice of inquiry as to the duties and remuneration of Silas Cassidy, employed on the Marsh road near Moncton.

Hon. Mr. Veniot laid on the table of the house the correspondence in connection with the rebuilding of the Florenceville bridge.

Hon. Mr. Veniot moved that the order for the third reading of the bill to vest the title of certain wharves in the government of Canada be rescinded and the bill referred back to the committee of the whole house for further consideration.

Mr. Smith (Carleton) moved for suspension of the rule to permit the introduction of a bill to vest the title of certain real estate at East Florenceville in the trustees of the United Baptist church.

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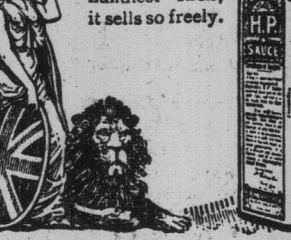
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church, leave having been granted he presented a petition for the passage of the bill.

Hon. Mr. Smith introduced a bill to vest certain lands in the parish of Bathurst. He explained that the lands contained a large gravel pit, which was wanted by the dominion government and the bill was to authorize its sale at \$25 per acre.

Hon. Mr. Smith introduced a bill to amend the act relating to migratory birds. He said that as a result of an international conference at Washington the government of Canada had passed an act taking over control of migratory birds

## MILLINERY ECONOMY

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