

The Free Press - Star

SECOND SECTION

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PAGES NINE TO SIXTEEN.

ST. JOHN, N. B., THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 1924

SIXTEEN PAGES

Premier In Able Speech Defends Provincial Government

GRAND FALLS POWER TO BE DEVELOPED BY THE GOVERNMENT, SAYS VENIOT

Answers Forcefully Accusations Made Against Administration—Defends Addition to Public Debt—Political Situation in New Brunswick Is Reviewed During Premier's Speech on Budget.

Fredericton, April 9.—Hon. Premier Veniot in one of the closing speeches of the budget debate gave a very able review of the provincial political situation. He is never at a loss for words, and this afternoon was even readier than usual in his examination of the arguments of his opponents and his criticism of the accusations levelled at the administration.

When in Opposition, though not in the house, P. J. Veniot was able to investigate financial figures very closely. Experience since that time has made him even more skilful in this respect. This was proved this afternoon when he challenged the Opposition's statement with regard to the responsibility for the additions to the provincial debt and showed unerringly just what it was in 1917 when this Government came into power how many millions in addition they had to shoulder responsibility for because of obligations already entered into and how it had been decreased by payments, by buying in of the Valley Railway bonds and other securities during war time, and by additions to the sinking fund.

ROADS AND BRIDGES FUNDS.

Deducting the obligations entered into by the old government, amounting to over four million dollars and considering the hydro expenditure as an interest bearing obligation without taking into account the amount expended upon the Valley Railway, the only large increases to our public debt have been about \$1,800,000, expended for federal roads and some three and a half millions for permanent bridges. The Premier pointed out that we had borrowed three million dollars provided for out of the auto fund, and that the interest and sinking funds for the redemption of this debt were very generous. In addition to federal roads and permanent bridges out debt had been added by over a million and a half for floating obligations of the old Government as well as of this, and by the bonding of three quarters of a million additional of Valley Railway deficit.

The speaker was emphatic in his reference to the Dominion Government taking over this railway, and felt that if the branch line connecting with the Maine Central at Vanocboro is built there would be no difficulty, in his opinion, in the road being taken over.

DEVELOPMENT AT GRAND FALLS.

In spite of his attention to detail the Premier did not lose sight of the statement of the Opposition leader, that he personally preferred private development of Grand Falls, and that Government operation as a rule was not carried out as efficiently as private enterprise. It is our policy to develop Grand Falls and no amount of pressure on the part of the Opposition will induce us to change our policy.

Again in a later part of his speech he used these words "as leader of the Government I have made the Government position absolutely fair, and I repeat that the Government will develop Grand Falls and no private company will have a look in while this Government is in power."

ACCUSATIONS AGAINST ADMINISTRATION.

The speaker's further references to accusations made against the administration of his Department of Public Works by Messrs. Stewart and Dlott, of Restigouche, and Flewelling, of Charlotte, were very full of detail and departmental records were brought into play to show he considered their unreasonable and misleading contentions. It will be recalled that Mr. Stewart and the leader of the Government had a sharp clash when the former was speaking some days ago, and since then it is very evident that the minister has been busy in his department looking up certain matters of patronage in Restigouche county during the regime of the old Government from the years 1918 to 1916 inclusive.

He also commented upon the contention that the roads will not last out the life of the bonds which furnished the money for their construction and showed that New Brunswick highways were of a standard similar to those of other provinces and that those built under Federal aid were cheaper here. After passing over with much attention to detail the charges against the administration of his department, the Premier gave an interesting statement showing that the proportion which the rural population bore to the city and town population had not altered more than 2 per cent. He took the figures from the census of 1911 and 1921, and showed that in that period many towns had been incorporated in New Brunswick and the population in them classed as urban instead of rural.

If they had remained under the latter classification the census figures would show that the migration from the country to the city had not changed the proportion more than 2 per cent.

Premier Veniot has made many able speeches in the House and in the country. In many respects this was more complete and convincing than any he has yet delivered.

Public Debt Has Increased

Table showing public debt increase since 1916, October 31st, with categories like Permanent bridges, Borrowed for roads against Auto Fund, etc.

Of the above gross increase the present Government had to bond the province for the following obligations contracted for and completed but not provided for by the old government, as well as contracts given and not completed, and for which no provision had been made, as well as their accumulated floating indebtedness, the whole being taken as of the date of March 31st, 1917:

Table showing obligations contracted for and completed but not provided for by the old government, including Permanent bridges, Floating debt, etc.

This would leave a gross debt of \$11,205,000, or a net debt of \$9,745,288 for which the present Government is responsible since March 31, 1917.

BONDED DEBT INCURRED.

As the amount of bonded debt incurred for hydro is being annually reduced by a Sinking Fund sufficient to meet the bonds at maturity, it should not be considered a direct debt, but looked upon more as a debt which can meet all its obligations and being only guaranteed by the province. This amount should be deducted from the net increase made by the present regime as follows:

As the old government had increased the bonded debt from \$5,384,533 as of October 31st, 1908 to \$15,980,646 as of October 31st, 1916. But to this

Answers Criticism Of His Government

Answers Criticism Of His Government. Premier Veniot in his speech in the House yesterday said: I now come to a matter, Mr. Speaker, which I feel should be dealt with in no uncertain or haphazard way. It is somewhat of a personal matter, but at the same time it is of great public interest because it affects the integrity of the Premier of this Province. While those who have been instrumental in putting into circulation certain rumors affecting the standing of the Minister of Public Works with certain contractors have not displayed sufficient courage to come straight out and say just what they mean, they have gone just far enough to leave in the minds of their followers a suspicion that there exists a state of affairs between the Minister of Public Works and certain contractors, notably the Concrete Builders, Limited, Fredericton, which does not inure to the credit of the Government.

Expresses Surprise.

Two years ago when the Opposition asked "If the Government knew of the shareholders and directors of the Concrete Builders, Limited, and the answer was given in the negative, I little thought that such a way as to open a matter which would stop so low as to make use of that answer to insinuate that notwithstanding the fact that the Government knew of the shareholders and directors of the Concrete Builders, Limited, as Minister of Public Works, had a financial interest in that Company, either directly by myself or indirectly through some member of my family. While I was aware, Mr. Speaker, that such an insinuation was being circulated, I gave very little heed to it because I knew within myself that there was absolutely no truth in such a charge or insinuation. But, since I have discovered that the same dirty work was being carried on in the Kent election and that a former member of this House, once the Leader of the Opposition, made references to this matter in a public meeting, in such a way as to open a matter which I, I decided that I would not allow this session of the Legislature go by without calling his bluff and that of his friends.

Admirer of a Fighter.

I have said it before, and I wish to repeat it, I admire the open and honest fighter, but I despise the one who is an insinuator. I have always been a hard political fighter. I have on no occasion spared my political opponents, but I have always been above the fray. I have had nothing to say against an opponent. I never gave quarter and never looked for any in a fair fight. I intend to continue that course, and today I want to give an opportunity to those who have been circulating that I am in any way interested in the Concrete Builders, Limited, either directly or indirectly, to come forward and tell me of my family, that myself or any member of my family have in any way, shape or form benefited through any work that that company may have carried on for the Government since they have been organized, in any manner.

Integrity and Dignity.

I request this in all earnestness, not only in my own interest, but for the protection of the integrity and dignity of this Legislature. To my friends I wish to say you can rest assured that in the discharge of my duty as Minister of Public Works I have done nothing for which I have any reason to be ashamed, and which I have assumed the duties of Premier I have endeavored to avoid any and all matters that might in any way reflect on the followers of the Government or on the dignity that attaches to that high position. I only ask for a fair deal. If my opponents have anything to say to the contrary I ask them to formulate their charges and not deal in low-down, despicable insinuation, but to resort to tactics that are unbecomingly decent political opponents.

Dog Swallowed His Master's Dice

Berlin, April 10.—Operating on an alling bull dog, a Berlin veterinary found in its stomach a Berlin of the property of its student owner. From a dachshund that rattled strangely when it ran, the same veterinary removed an iron ball and a big stone. Both patients recovered.

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Boy Gave Her the Idea.

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April Fool Initiation.

April Fool Initiation. The initiation took place on the evening of April 1, at the home of Miss Grace Turner, Decatur street, and the art work on the three girls was done by Miss Norton. All went well and everyone appreciated the "joke" until the night hit the three girls the following day. Then the girls turned black and began to "ring" people on the street cars and "asked one of the girls to "take off your mask." She left suddenly for home, and then the parents and several specialists were called in.

Burns Manuscript Sold at Sotherby's

Burns Manuscript Sold at Sotherby's. London, April 10.—An autograph manuscript of Burns' "O Wot Ye Whil's in Yon Town" realized \$260 at Sotherby's. The song was begun at Ecclefechan, where the poet was stormy-strewn in February, 1785. It was written on five small pages, which were probably a portion of one of his excise note books. On four pages there are references to tea and tobacco.

Premier Challenges Statement on Liquor

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MUSEUM GETS A "BIKE" OF 1818

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Tramp Is Heir To Big Fortune

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Sees Wife Die In Burning Hedge

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New York, April 10.—The result of a jest, which ended in tragedy, was called this week to Mrs. George H. Danforth of Summit, N. J., who had gone abroad with her daughter to travel in France, after the recent death of her husband. Death has again visited the family. Mrs. Danforth's son, Noel, fifteen years old, a promising student at Andover Academy, having been shot and fatally injured in a mock pistol duel with his best friend.

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