

The Chatham Daily Planet.

(MAGAZINE AND EDITORIAL SECTION)

CHATHAM, ONT., SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29, 1904

(PAGES NINE TO TWELVE)

Effective Criticism

How the Ex-Minister of Railways, Hon. Mr. Blair, Riddled Grand Trunk Pacific Project.

Hon. Andrew G. Blair, in the House of Commons, on the 12th of August, 1903, delivered a speech which was a strong arraignment of the Government's railway policy with reference to a transcontinental railway. Mr. Blair had given emphasis to his protest by resigning his position as Minister of Railways and Canals in the Laurier Administration. The address which he made on August 12 is universally considered one of the ablest philippics ever uttered by a public speaker, and no effective answer to it has ever been made. Within the past few days Mr. Blair has emphasized his views by resigning his office as chairman of the Railway Commission and by announcing his intention of reaffirming his opposition to the Grand Trunk Pacific scheme. This has created new interest in Mr. Blair's great speech, and the re-publication of parts of it may not be inopportune. The following is an epitome of Mr. Blair's remarks—

"Let me tell the House in the first place, however, what the right hon. gentleman did not say in explanation of his course. He did not say that there had been deliberation; he did not affirm that the Government of the country had availed itself of all proper sources of information, and had waited until they had exhausted all the means in their power to ascertain what the opinions were in the various parts of the country which this road was to traverse; he did not tell us of the headlong rush into a scheme of this kind; he did not tell us that he summoned to his assistance the counsels which the country afforded; he did not tell us that he sought the assistance of experts in order to know what the traffic conditions were which would make this railway desirable; he did not even pretend to tell us that he had done these things."

—Hon. A. G. Blair

Mr. Blair, after some preliminary observations, said that he had followed the Rt. Honorable the Prime Minister in the statements which he made with the closest interest, and it was only fair to the right honorable gentleman to say that if the grace of eloquence, if the finest and choicest language, if eloquence coupled with the sincerest conviction that the measure was a proper and judicious one; if these things could have carried conviction to the minds of members of Parliament, then members of Parliament and the country generally would have been impressed by the Prime Minister's presentation of the case, speaking for himself alone, while

"Government may possibly not deliberate, but Parliament has a right to deliberate, and in my judgment, sir, before we impose a burden of such magnitude on the neck of the people of Canada, before we commit this country to a scheme of such large and extraordinary proportions, it is only just to the people of Canada that they should have a chance to talk it over and think about it, that the press should discuss it, and that everybody in the country should know what the Government are contemplating."

—Hon. A. G. Blair

he was impressed with the singular ability, of the right honorable gentleman, and while he felt that all had been said by him that could be said by anybody, and much more than could have been said by anyone else with the same effect, yet he still felt himself absolutely and entirely unconvinced, and he still felt that the objections which he existed in his mind against this measure almost in its entirety had not been removed except in a very small degree.

Turning then to the reasons which had been given by Sir Wilfrid Laurier in assisting the work, Mr. Blair read them briefly and summed them up with his famous declaration that they all meant that, "We cannot wait because Senator Cox cannot wait."

"My own view, continued Mr. Blair, would be that if we wanted to pass any legislation, if we wanted to do something of advantage for the transportation of the country, if we wanted to secure to our Canadian seaports the transportation of western products, we would have extended the Intercolonial to Georgian Bay by acquiring the Canada Atlantic."

"If they wanted to do something which would give evidence of a response to the national aspirations they would have gone to Georgian Bay and they would have found the Box 2—

them in going there with the Government railway."

As to the scheme for the construction of a railway from Quebec to the West, he was not going to say that it was a project that had not very much to recommend it, and perhaps a project which he would gladly see carried out, and which he would hold up both hands to support under proper conditions and in a proper way. If we could be satisfied that the country to be traversed by that railway from Quebec to the prairies is a fertile country which will invite and support settlement, and which will support a railway from a local point of view, then he would say let us go ahead and build it as rapidly as the occasion arises, and as rapidly as the settlement of the country will call for it, and as rapidly as we can justify it under a proper administration of affairs. He would favor the construction and operation of this section by the Government provided the precautionary steps which he had mentioned had been taken, but they were not.

Mr. Blair ridiculed the idea of establishing a common highway over which other companies should have running rights. Such a suggestion showed conclusively that no advice had been taken from anybody who knew anything about railroading. In the opinion of every railroad man it was an unworkable and a senseless suggestion.

"Passing to what is called the western section," continued Mr. Blair, "I wish to make a few observations upon the question of the prairie section. A curious condition of things is developed here. The policy of even government construction and ownership is abandoned when you come to this portion of the line. Why should it be thrown aside here? I fail to understand—that is, I fail to reconcile it with any interest which Canadian people have in the matter, with anything calculated to serve the welfare of the general public. If it is simply because a railroad company desires and prefers to own the prairie section that we think it is proper

"Unless there be something behind which has not been discussed and which renders it necessary, I can see no reason now for the construction of this proposed national line. Both the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Canadian Northern Railway are national lines in the widest acceptance of the term."

—Hon. A. G. Blair

or if we think, on balancing the advantages and disadvantages it is better that the company should own and operate it, very well; I can see the force of that. But these reasons have not yet been made apparent. If it is a sound principle to own your railway from Moncton to the prairies, to the confines of that portion of the country where you hope the business will, in course of time, develop to a paying point, why should you virtually give away, and not only that but also substantially add the line through this valuable and fertile country? What are the compelling reasons? I see none, none whatever."

With reference to the extension from Quebec to Moncton, Mr. Blair was especially severe. He condemned it in the most unqualified terms as a project that would do wanton injury to the Intercolonial, the Government road. It would injure every man along that part of the Intercolonial, and would give no compensating advantages. "Both these lines," said he, "will have to be maintained, both of these lines will undoubtedly continue to be a very heavy charge upon the exchequer of the country, because the revenues of the Intercolonial Railway are not sufficient to pay the cost of operation, and the balance falls upon the exchequer. So in the case of this new railway, the maintenance of that road must necessarily be expensive; there will be a loss, and whatever the loss is it will fall directly upon the exchequer of the country. The interest upon the money which is expended upon it by the government will not, in all probability be paid."

"In so far as the Intercolonial Railway itself is concerned, farther there is no earthly necessity for having an

"We need not pass over American territory, even though the restriction were sought to be placed upon us by the American Government. We could avail ourselves of those railroads, and they are just as transcontinental, just as Canadian, just as national, as any railroads we could construct in Canada. They are railroads on Canadian soil, and one of them at least is owned by the government of the country itself."

—Hon. A. G. Blair

other railway through that country. The Intercolonial Railway has been fully competent to take all the traffic that has been offered up to this date. The officials who are in charge of the Intercolonial Railway, and whom I have consulted upon the subject, while the improvements and extensions have been going on, have advised me that without having a double track, except at one or two minor points, the Intercolonial Railway can carry four times the amount of traffic that it is carrying to-day. Therefore, from the standpoint of the capacity to handle the traffic, that question is absolutely settled, and settled according to the judgment of men who are most competent to form an opinion upon it. You will have both of these lines operating and struggling one against another. Whatever business one may take it will take it away from the other. You will have the government in the anomalous position of owning both roads, of operating one and of being practically interested in the successful operation of the other; going in and destroying its own property, impairing the value of its own property whether it be one or the other. Such a spectacle I do not think has ever been presented to the knowledge or observation of any human being since the world began."

As to the financial aspects of the proposition, it will be best to give Mr. Blair's views in his own words. He said:

I come now to the financial aspects of this scheme. On these I will not dwell at great length; but I would like to present to the House what my view of that branch of the question is. First, I take the question of the cost of the line from Lewis to Moncton. I make that mileage 425 miles. If the road is ever built, while I have very much doubt, that mile-

exception, perhaps, of rails, are more costly than they were then? What is going to be the cost of getting in to that country and building this railway under these conditions? It may possibly fall short of \$50,000. No man knows. We have not the information. It is not laid before us, and we must take this leap in the dark. We will call it, if you will, \$35,000 per mile. You see I am only adding \$5,000 to the present estimate, a very moderate computation, which makes the cost of those 1,400 miles \$40,000,000.

Now, 1,825 miles from Moncton to Winnipeg, or to some point north of

"What does the right hon. gentleman mean when he says—
The flood of the tide is upon us that leads on to fortune; if we let it pass it may never recur again!
What does the right hon. gentleman mean when he says—
If we let it pass the voyage of our national life, bright as it is to-day, will be bound in shallows?
What does the right hon. gentleman mean when he says—
We cannot wait, because time does not wait?
I think, Mr. Speaker, and I say it with all respect to my right hon. friend, that it would have been as correct if not so poetic for him to have said—
We cannot wait because Senator Cox cannot wait."

—Hon. A. G. Blair

Winnipeg, wherever the line may be supposed to run to, will cost this country \$65,000,000 upon the calculations which I have made. That may be somewhat in excess of the actual result; but no man can say that the cost may not exceed the figures I

A Vote For George Stephens Means a Vote for a Bonus of \$796,650 from Kent County.

The Hon. Mr. Blair, the only practical Railway man in the Laurier Cabinet, put the total cost to Canada of the building of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway at \$139,000,000. This was before further concessions to the big corporation were made by the Laurier Government in 1904. The population of the Dominion at the last census was 5,371,315 and dividing this into \$139,000,000 the cost per head of population is \$25.87. That is, every man, woman and child in Canada will contribute this amount directly or indirectly to the big railroad corporation for the carrying out of this mad scheme. On this basis Electors of the County of Kent are asked to vote this bonus of \$25.87 per head, or according to population in the County of Kent, \$796,650.00 for the county. A vote for George Stephens is a vote for this great corporation bonus for a railway 600 miles to the north of us. ARE YOU VOTING FOR THIS BIG BONUS?

"My quarrel with the Government so far as this portion of the undertaking is concerned, rests almost entirely upon the consideration that they are plunging headlong into this thing, in a most unwise, unjudicious and unbusinesslike way, when by a little pause, by a year or two of delay to get information, we might be put in possession of facts which would justify us in proceeding."

—Hon. A. G. Blair

age will not be found to be excessive, but a reasonable estimate. The Government estimate is made that it will cost \$30,000 per mile. From what I can learn, the cost of building the line through a considerable section of the Province of Quebec, before it reaches Edmonton, will be very great for a portion of the distance it will have to cross mountains, gullies and rivers, and I believe it will cost more than \$50,000 per mile; I would not be surprised if it cost \$40,000 to construct that portion of the railway. But I am going to take an average between the two, and I think I am on safe ground when I calculate on \$35,000 per mile. That will represent an expenditure of \$15,000,000.

I next take the section between Quebec and Winnipeg. We are told that it is 1,400 miles, some say 1,500 miles. I will take the lesser mileage. The estimate is that that will cost \$30,000 per mile. I have made some inquiry as to what the cost of that portion of the Canadian Pacific Railway north of Lake Superior was. That portion of the railway, as everybody knows, is quite accessible from the lake; and yet its cost, apart from terminal rolling stock and equipment, was \$50,000 per mile. How can anybody say what this railway is going to cost, 150 or 200 miles north of Lake Superior, while it is very much more inaccessible and probably, therefore, very much more difficult of construction than the Canadian Pacific Railway, and built at a time when wages are high and when materials generally, with the

have given, and it is a question which this house and this country may well pause and consider, whether such an obligation, incurred in the absence of information which I have tried to point out is so essential in arriving at a wise judgment on a question of this character, should be undertaken, and whether we can take the hazard of impairing the financial strength of Canada, to some extent at any rate, by undertaking an enterprise which may saddle us with an addition to our debt of \$65,000,000.

Returning to the question of the liabilities which the Government assumes, on the eastern section it will assume \$65,000,000. On the prairie section it guarantees \$9,750,000, and on the mountain section \$13,500,000. This will make a total on the three sections of \$88,250,000. To this I add the three per cent. interest on the cost, which for ten years on the eastern section would be \$1,950,000 a year. I have taken this at ten years because that is the expectation of the contracting parties themselves. This

"The line, my right hon. friend claims, is both a national and a commercial line, but yet he says it is not a commercial line in the sense that you are to count on a profit or loss. Well, sir, what is a commercial line? It is not a line constructed according to the dictates of commercial needs and which involves, necessarily and inevitably, the idea of profit or loss? You may build a sentimental line, but if so, tell the people that it is a line which you are building for sentimental purposes. Or, if you are building it for commercial purposes, say so. But my right hon. friend does not seem to be willing to consider entirely the one or the other. It is a compound of both."

—Hon. A. G. Blair

is a railway which, for the carriage of western traffic, would only operate through the Moncton end dur-

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The Days of Auld Lang Syne

Interesting Events of Ye Olden Times Gathered from The Planet's Issues of Half a Century Ago.

From The Planet files from Aug. 23, 1860, to Sept. 13, 1860.

Galt's rate of taxation is 17 cents on the dollar.

William McRae is secretary of the Thames Cricket Club.

Mr. John Sparks, watchmaker, gets in a new line of stock.

Joseph Northwood, of the Kent Mills, advertises for wheat.

Birth, on Bloor street, Toronto, the wife of Dr. Berryman, of a son.

Lawry Carey & Co., grocers, William street, sell out to J. C. Gerger.

The Planet thanks Mr. Smith Hughes for a lot of choice eating apples.

Albert Prince, barrister, advertises his offices in Toronto and Chatham.

Dr. White, dentist, of Chatham, visits Blenheim and Morpeth once a week.

Died, in Harwich last night, the 22nd inst., John Muckle, Esq., aged 48 years.

Joseph S. Beatty opens up his "Old Chatham Store" and offers general produce for sale.

The people of St. Catharines subscribed \$1,500 for the reception of the Prince of Wales.

John Reimers opens up a sign painting establishment nearly opposite the Chatham Arms Hotel.

Wm. Banks, a farmer in Chatham Township, advertises a cow which strayed on his premises.

Died, suddenly, at Tilbury East, County of Kent, on the 31st ult., George Richardson, aged 23 years.

The Montreal hotels have adopted a uniform rate of \$2.50 per day during the visit of the Prince of Wales.

Died, in the town of Chatham, on the 7th inst., Louise Hawkins Smith, aged one year, only daughter of Mr. Isaac Smith, merchant tailor.

The new steamer Essex arrived in the city with a fair load of freight and passengers under the command of Capt. S. Jenkins.

Married, at Chatham, on the 10th inst., by Rev. Mr. Walker, Mr. Samuel Lewis Brundage to Miss Louise Staley, both of Chatham.

A grand ball was held in London in honor of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. The event was advertised in The Planet.

Died, in the town of Chatham, on the 7th inst., Louise Hawkins Smith, aged one year, only daughter of Mr. Isaac Smith, merchant tailor.

Married, at Detroit, on the 18th inst., by Rev. Mr. Balmer, U. P. Mr. Duncan McCoig to Miss Sarah Jean Taylor, both of the Township of Harwich.

Mr. Thompson, of Detroit, gives a concert in the Town Hall, assisted by Mrs. Thompson, Master Ziegler, and A. J. Vandermeer, the latter on the melodeon.

R. O. Smith is secretary of the I. O. O. F., who hold their meetings every Tuesday evening at a quarter past seven o'clock in the lodge rooms, Pratt's Block.

The finance committee of the city of Hamilton at the last meeting of the Council brought in a report recommending a rate of 20 cents on the dollar for the current year.

The picnic which came off in McGregor's Grove on Wednesday in connection with the United Presbyterian (Rev. W. Walker's) church was a pleasant and most successful affair.

It is estimated that the reception to the Prince of Wales will cost the Provincial Government of Canada no less a sum than \$1,000,000, independent of the vast sums spent by the different towns.

Wanted, by the trustees of school section No. 12, Raleigh, a second or third class teacher. Applicant stating salary with references. Please address Henry Ronalds, Chatham P. O. Thomas Irwin, B. F. Slatex and Henry Ronalds, trustees.

On Monday last W. McK. Ross, Esq., showed us a ripe fig grown on his premises on Park avenue. It had arrived at perfection and presented a most novel appearance. Mr. Ross deserves credit for the pride he exhibits in the production of rare fruits and flowers.

The Courts of General Quarter Sessions of the Peace and County Court for the County of Kent were opened

on Tuesday, Sept. 11, at 12 o'clock. His Honor Judge Wells presiding. Stephen Kinney, Esq., J. P., associate Justice.

The bar was represented by W. McCrea, Esq., and A. D. McLean, Esq., Clerk of the Peace.

Court opened by proclamation. The Grand Jury being called, the following answered to their names: John M. Taylor, foreman, William Craig, A. W. Crow, W. J. Courts, Geo. Long, Duncan McNaughton, John McCormac, Edward Notion, C. P. Sisson, Henry Emet, Alex. Graham, James Laird, Malcolm McTaggart, Robert Milton, James C. Nation, Henry Robinson, and John Sinclair.

A very pretty and elegant present has been forwarded to Miss Florence Nightingale by a grateful officer who recovered under her kind treatment whilst in Crimea. It consists of a small repeating watch in a ring, the cylinder of which is made of an oriental ruby. Its diameter is the fifty-fourth part of an inch, its length is the forty-seventh and its weight the two hundredth part of a grain.

On Friday last a spirited match at cricket was played in this town between eleven members of the Morpeth club and eleven members of the Thames club, Chatham. The Morpeth club showed some very good playing. The bowling was very fine, also the fielding. Indeed in these respects they exhibited good playing. As will be seen by the score more was made by them off the field than off the bat.

Practice will remedy this and we doubt not that in a short time when their batting is brought up to the same degree of excellence with their fielding, they will be able to take high rank as cricketers. The refreshments were of the best description, abundant and liberally donated by Sheriff Mercer who, with John Duck, Esq., of Morpeth, were the getters-up of the match, so we are informed. A return match will be played shortly.

Morpeth—John Hartwick, William Husband, James Grant, U. Westland, Geo. Arnold, Geo. Steamp, John Taylor, John Duck, Wm. McCure, Wm. Smith, and John Kiteva. Total runs first innings, 20.

Chatham—A. Rolls, James Oldershaw, W. Fletcher, M. Purser, W. McCormack, Wm. Smith, T. Boniface, W. Wright, A. Northwood, C. Northwood, and John Mercer. Total runs first innings, 89.

LAPRESSE ON THE SITUATION

Montreal, Oct. 28th, 1904. — LaPresse which has been Laurier's backbone, says Quebec will be more evenly divided than at any time in fifteen years. LaPresse says the Conservative Party has put excellent candidates in Quebec constituencies, and that Borden will gain in Quebec more than in any Province. LaPresse says if the Liberals are beaten they can blame the Sifton-Fisher-Mulock combination and not Laurier. Evidently the Liberals are preparing for a fall.

COME FROM SUPPORTERS ONLY

Montreal, Oct. 25.—There has grown up in the public mind, and not without reason, the impression that campaign subscriptions mean something sinister, and, indeed, according to present usage, there is much to justify this feeling. At the same time the legitimate expenses of an election campaign are heavy and justifiable, and it is for defraying these outlays that subscriptions are received by both parties. The habit of taking campaign funds from almost every source has become a matter of some notoriety and having this in mind, Mr. Borden has decided not to accept any contribution from any one who would afterwards claim any special consideration on account of assistance granted at election time.

The leader of the Conservative party has, therefore, issued the following:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

To avoid misunderstanding it has been thought best to distinctly state that the Conservative party will receive subscriptions only from those who favor its general policy, that such subscriptions are not to be understood as creating claims to consideration for any interest likely to be affected by any special feature of that policy, and that no subscriptions are solicited from any such interest. Such a declaration is deemed desirable in order that the leader may have an absolutely free hand in framing his policy in the interest of the whole country upon the return of the party to power. If any subscriptions have been given in other spirit they will be returned on application to

JAMES CRATHERN, Treasurer, Montreal.