

# The Standard

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ST. JOHN, N. B., FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1911.

## MR. FLEMING, THE NEW PREMIER.

The changes in the Provincial Executive, necessitated by the acceptance by Premier Hazen of a portfolio in Mr. Borden's Cabinet, took place yesterday. Mr. Hazen came from Ottawa and met his colleagues in the Provincial Government during the afternoon. At this meeting the unfinished business of the Executive was disposed of and at 3.30 p. m. Mr. Hazen waited upon Lieutenant Governor Tupper and tendered his resignation as Premier, Attorney General, and a member of the Executive Council, and suggested that Hon. J. K. Fleming, Provincial Secretary, be called upon to form a Cabinet. Mr. J. K. Fleming, Chief of the Executive Council, subsequently called upon Mr. Fleming and requested that he attend on the Governor. Mr. Fleming met His Honor at nine o'clock and accepted the duty of forming a Cabinet and asked until Monday to submit the names of the gentlemen chosen as his colleagues. This completed the formalities and the Governor will be at Fredericton at the time appointed by Mr. Fleming.

The new Premier of New Brunswick is well and favorably known in every section of the Province. Born in the Parish of Woodstock, Carleton County, on April 27th, 1868, Mr. Fleming is 42 years of age and one of the youngest men ever called to the important position of Premier of New Brunswick. He was first elected to the Legislature in January, 1900, to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Mr. Charles L. Smith, who had been appointed Postmaster of Woodstock. His opponent was Mr. F. R. Shaw. Mr. Fleming's majority was 103. The total membership of the Opposition at the close of the session of 1900 was seven, as indicated by the vote taken on the report of the special committee appointed to investigate the charges made by Mr. Hazen against Mr. Emerson.

Mr. Fleming, because of his ability as a debater, at once took a first place in the Opposition ranks and was soon recognized as one of the leading members of the Legislature. In subsequent years Mr. Fleming became the chief financial critic of the Government and did yeoman service in bringing to light and exposing the financial failures of the Government of the day. His speeches were always lucid and to the point. It was, therefore, no surprise when in 1908 Mr. Hazen called him to the position of Provincial Secretary in his Government, a position which he has filled to the general satisfaction of the people of New Brunswick ever since. He has proved himself a good administrator and has done excellent service in working out the school book policy of the Hazen Administration. The success of this policy by which the cost of school books has been reduced to about one-half is largely due to Mr. Fleming's industry and business capacity.

Under his administration the Department of Provincial Secretary and Receiver General was thoroughly reorganized and a totally new system of handling the important business connected with the receipt and payment of monies on account of the Province has been introduced. All payments are now made by cheque through the Receiver General's office and all revenue collected in the various departments is now turned over to the Receiver General. Under former Administrations there were numerous bank accounts in the different departments. Now there is but one general account for them all. Mr. Fleming in addition to floating a loan for the Province on very favorable terms in the London market, has also been able to materially reduce the interest charges on necessary temporary loans from the local banks.

Mr. Fleming's success in the administration of his office proves him to be a man of unusual ability and one who can be safely trusted to keep the ship of state on an even keel. He is a plain man of the people, approachable at all times and willing to consider any suggestion likely to promote the development of the Province and increase the general prosperity.

Coming from Carleton County, Mr. Fleming is naturally interested in the Valley Railway project, one of the most important, if not the most important question that has been before the people of New Brunswick since Confederation. The construction of this railway will open up one of the oldest agricultural sections in the Province, besides adding largely to the export trade through the port of St. John. In his conference with Mr. Pugsley, Mr. Fleming clearly demonstrated his deep interest in this important undertaking. It was largely due to his efforts that the compromise between the Provincial and Dominion Governments was brought about, without which there was no possibility of the road being constructed for many years. Had Mr. Fleming abandoned the project where Mr. Pugsley left it a few months ago, it would have become a dead issue; that it is still alive is entirely due to his efforts. Mr. Fleming will have no difficulty in securing excellent material for his Cabinet, and when the announcement is made on Monday next of the names of those that will be associated with him, the public will be satisfied that the country will be governed along the same progressive lines that have marked the Administration of Mr. Hazen.

It is quite remarkable that while the change of Premier was taking place, the Opposition members of the House of Assembly should also be in session in this city to deal with the resignation of their leader, Mr. Robinson. Mr. Robinson, who was quite anxious to take up the leadership of the Government on the retirement of Mr. Pugsley, has been more anxious to resign the leadership of the Opposition than any other man who ever held it. At the close of every session of the Legislature since he has been leader of the Opposition, Mr. Robinson has tendered his resignation, but up to the present time has been prevailed upon to reconsider his decision. This attitude it is said there will be no reconsideration, but that Mr. Robinson will retire not only from the leadership but also from the Legislature. Should this surprise turn out to be correct the Opposition would be in a sorry plight indeed, as he is the only man in their ranks who has any standing whatever.

Mr. Copp, who has been Mr. Robinson's first lieutenant since 1908, and who is fond of making long speeches which contain more words than ideas, is believed to be anxious to take up the mantle of leadership, but the more outspoken members of the Opposition are not quite prepared to accept Mr. Copp as leader, and for some reason look to Mr. P. B. Carvell as one who might be prevailed upon to re-assume Provincial politics and head the aggression. Mr. Copp's advantage is that he has a seat in the House while Mr. Carvell has not, and there might be grave difficulties in his getting one under existing circumstances. There are vacancies in the counties of Sunbury, Charlotte and St. John, but in none of these would Mr. Carvell have a chance for election, and the

vigorous fight he is making to retain his seat in the Dominion House would seem to indicate that he has a preference for the Dominion Parliament rather than the House of Assembly. The Opposition's plight is particularly sad. Without a leader and responsible for the misdeeds of the old Government, their case with the people is hopeless.

## A FINANCIAL RECORD.

The latest issued statement of the financial transactions of the Government of Canada for the six months of the fiscal year ending with September 30. The period and the Laurier Government's control of the Administration practically ended together. The occasion suggests comparisons, says the Montreal Gazette in a review of the situation, that are instructive if not always satisfactory. The revenue for the six months in question was \$84,069,524. In the fiscal year of 1895-6, which closed just before the late Government took office, the revenue was \$36,618,580. In the past half-year, therefore, the revenue was \$27,450,924 more than that of the whole year from July 1, 1895, to June 30, 1896. In the past six months the revenue from taxation, that is customs and excise levies, was \$51,084,070. In the whole of the year 1895-6 it was \$27,759,285. The tax collections in six months are now well up to twice as much as they were in the twelve months before the Laurier Government was called into existence. These facts are worth bearing in mind. They indicate the particular matter for which the departed Government may be remembered. To almost quadruple the amount of taxes taken from a people in fifteen years, while the number of people has increased only about one-third, was something unusual, and something that only an industrious and prosperous community could stand.

The statement of the debt which accompanies the record of the revenue shows that large as was the increase in the amount of taxes collected from the people the growth in the expenditure was at even a greater rate. On June 30, 1896, the statement of the debt was as follows:—

Total debt	\$25,717,536
Assets	67,229,103
Net debt	\$25,487,432

On September 30 of the present year the statement of the debt and assets was as follows:—

Gross debt	\$477,256,141
Assets	153,317,372
Net debt	\$323,938,769

This shows that, besides all of the greatly increased revenue it collected, the Laurier Government borrowed and spent in the fifteen and a quarter years of its existence an additional sum of \$55,441,336. And while this record was being made statements were being put forth almost every year to show that the Government was accumulating great surpluses, which, if they had had an actual existence would have wiped tens of millions off the debt account. One of the duties of the Minister of Finance in the new Government should be to devise a system in connection with the published records of the national accounts that will make it impossible to use them to create a false impression in regard to what money the government is receiving, what it is spending, and what the effect on the debt is. The old system has ceased to deceive and should be replaced by a system that will not permit of its being used for deception.

The actual increase in the debt of over sixty-five millions of dollars is not, moreover, the only obligation which the retired ministers created for their successors to bear. No one knows how many tens of millions will be required to complete the National Transcontinental Railway, that costly funder of which the promoters are now so ashamed that in the late election campaign they avoided reference to it as if it were an indictment. No one can tell either what will be the cost of the Hudson Bay Railway to which the ex-ministers committed Parliament and the country. Nor can anyone tell the amount of the possible liabilities connected with the guarantees of interest which the late Government gave to railway companies for the construction of lines, some of them to compete with existing lines of commercial usefulness. This story of the financial work of the Laurier Government is instructive as showing what a wise Administration should strive to avoid.

## Current Comment

(Montreal Gazette.)

Mr. Hazen, who comes from the Premiership of New Brunswick, was formerly a member of the House of Commons. Entering the Legislature in 1899, he was chosen leader of the Opposition, and in 1908 in a general election overthrew the Liberal-coalition Government that under varying leaderships had been in power for twenty-five years and had in the campaign all the help the Laurier Ministers at Ottawa could render. His work in this regard was as effective, and as much needed, as was that of Sir James Whitney when he overthrew the Ross gang in Ontario, or of Mr. Roblin and Mr. Rogers when they defeated the Greenway Administration in Manitoba.

(Ottawa Journal.)

In first names the new Cabinet is proof that Canadian parents of fifty years ago stuck to the good old-fashioned designations. There are two Williams, two Roberts, two Georges, Frank, Tom, Sam, Fred, Charles and John in the new ministry. The growing boys of today named Wilfrid may safely be said to have been named after the former Prime Minister. Seeing the name Robert is so frequently met with, those named after the new Premier will have to be christened "Robert Laird" in full in order to distinguish them from the ordinary "Bob."

(London Free Press.)

The Province of New Brunswick is likely to take some early action with regard to reforming its assessment act. The Union of Municipalities, which meets at Newcastle this week, will discuss a resolution favoring a law providing that municipalities may remove the tax from improvements and place it on land with a poll tax and a system of business licenses. The example of the Western cities, which are lifting the burden of taxation from improvements, is having its effect in the East.

(Hamilton Herald.)

The Minister of Marine and Fisheries is Hon. J. D. Hazen, late Premier of New Brunswick—an able man and a sound Imperialist. If the Horden Government is to launch a larger and more comprehensive naval policy, it is well to have the marine portfolio in the hands of a man like Mr. Hazen.

(Sydney Post.)

Hon. J. D. Hazen is Minister of Marine and Fisheries. Since 1908 he has been Premier of New Brunswick, and by his careful administration and conspicuous ability has won the full confidence of his native Province.

(Toronto Mail and Empire.)

The real test of a Cabinet is not in what preconceived notions anyone may have of it, but in the work it will do.

## THE TAX AS PROPER BASIS OF ALL TAXATION

Text of Interesting Paper on Municipal Taxation, Read by Ald. H. H. Stuart, of Newcastle, at Meeting of Union of N. B. Municipalities.

The following address on Municipal Taxation was delivered by Ald. H. H. Stuart of Newcastle at the meeting of the Union of New Brunswick Municipalities in Newcastle yesterday:—

Few thoughtful men will contend that the prevailing system of municipal taxation in this country is fair or reasonable, either in theory or practice. And many who have enquired into it denounce it as decidedly wrong in principle and vicious in its practical application.

Our municipal taxes are derived from the levy of a certain percentage on the assessed value of land, buildings and other improvements, personal property and income, and from a poll tax.

The rate of taxation on each of the above items is the same; and, with one or two exceptions, each county, city and town has to raise one-sixth of its revenue by means of a poll tax.

Allowing for the exemption in most New Brunswick municipalities of the first \$200 of income, land, improvements, personal property and income are supposed to be assessed at the full value of each.

Now suppose, for the sake of argument, that the assessors are both honest and capable—that they value honestly and assess properly without fear or favor—the selling price of land being so much less than that of the improvements thereon, every temptation is offered and facility afforded for speculators to hold land idle in hope of a rise in price whereby they can reap a golden harvest from the pockets of the rest of the community.

**Land Speculator Scored.**

The land speculator is no good in any place. His policy is to acquire and hold land in what he considers a growing district and keep it idle until prices go up. Year by year people settle near it, clear the ground, open up streets, erect buildings and bring trade to the neighborhood. Schools, churches, theatres, railway stations, are built near it, and soon his unimproved property becomes most desirable real estate. He is offered for his claim many times more than what he paid for it. Then he sells and pocket the extra value which is created by the labor of others—the unearned increment which should all go to those who created it, that is, to the community.

Not only does the speculator perform no useful service to the public, but in many instances he positively injures the community. His block of land in the middle of a town, held at exorbitant price, compels others to go far out of their way to build their houses, extra sewers, miles of extra water mains, electric light and telephone posts and other public works, the inefficiency of police and fire protection.

If the vacant block be held in the country districts, it often leads to the establishment of small, inefficient schools where if that block were settled on good graded schools would be possible. The young men who wish to take up land to leave the vicinity or open up new farms in the backwoods, when miles of land have to be traversed by labor which could be better employed, and removing them to an unnecessary distance from markets, and forcing them to cultivate poor tracts of land and making a bare living, while right alongside of them are tracts of fertile soil, held idle and taxed at a merely nominal rate.

**Absentee Owners.**

The granting of vast areas to those who were neither willing nor able to improve them, and who were not even residents of the Province, has done much to retard the development of the Province. There are two Williams, two Roberts, two Georges, Frank, Tom, Sam, Fred, Charles and John in the new ministry. The growing boys of today named Wilfrid may safely be said to have been named after the former Prime Minister. Seeing the name Robert is so frequently met with, those named after the new Premier will have to be christened "Robert Laird" in full in order to distinguish them from the ordinary "Bob."

**Should Secure Labor.**

Again, as already stated, it is a fair proposition that anything a man creates by his own labor is rightfully his and the law should secure it to him. If a man settles in the wilderness and raises a farm, or five or fifty acres of comparatively unproductive soil into gardens, orchards and fields of grain, who but himself has any right to the increased value of that land created by the working of his own hand and brain?

If a neighbor with equal opportunity creates only half as much value why should the former be taxed more than the latter, their holdings and opportunities having been equal? Why should the personal property bought and improvements made by the first man with the gains of his labor be taxed a greater sum than the less valuable property accumulated by the second? Why should the first man's income be taxed more than the second man's? Better tax the land values only and let the values created by the tenants go free.

It would be manifestly unfair to tax all land at the same rate. The relative fertility, accessibility and desirability of the land must be taken into account. Land within a mile of a railway station is, other things being equal, much more valuable than that ten miles away; meadow land is worth more than upland; and so forth.

So, also in a town or city, certain blocks, are by virtue of their situation more valuable than others and should be taxed at a higher rate. Not only are some blocks more valuable than others, but certain streets are generally more valuable than the rest in the same block, and the deeper the lot of a certain frontage the more valuable it is.

After the valuation of each district is ascertained, then the holders of equal areas should pay equal taxes. The man who holds his land vacant should pay the same taxes as he who covers his with buildings or crops.

**Tax The Land.**

I do not claim that it is not, that the system of taxation here advocated is a panacea for the financial ills of the country, but two things are certain: viz. that the raising of taxes from land values only will tend to rapidly eliminate the speculator in land values and will make the collection of taxes a much more simple and satisfactory operation than it is at present or ever has been in this country. For these two reasons it is worthy of a trial.

In adopting the method of raising taxes from land values only, care should be taken to secure to every citizen equal political rights. Every naturalized resident of a municipality should be a voter therein and also eligible for election as alderman, mayor or county councillor, regardless of what property of any kind he holds or does not hold. If he pays no taxes directly the landlord and others will see to it that he pays enough indirectly. Therefore, as every British citizen residing in New Brunswick has a vote at Provincial and Dominion elections and is also eligible as a candidate for the House of Assembly and House of Commons, without being subjected to any property qualification, so should every British citizen residing in a municipality be entitled to all the rights and privileges of the most favored.

As these ideas are new to many people, and as undue haste is always to be deprecated, this union should not ask the legislature to at once compel all municipalities to restrict taxation to land and abolish all property qualification for voting and holding office, but should merely demand from it the right for all municipalities to regulate for the present at least, such matters for themselves. Such permission being obtained, each municipality could fight the question out for itself and advance as rapidly or as slowly as the majority of its people should decide. In all cases, let the people rule.

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