

HONORABLE MR. MCPHEE SPEAKS ON THE BUDGET

(Continued from page 1)

Prince County Expenditures.

Opposition Criticism. The Leader of the Opposition has made some general criticism with regard to the condition of our roads during last season. He says that they went "to wrack and ruin." I think that is the expression he used. Now we in this House have come to expect exaggeration from the Leader of the Opposition, and we treat most of his criticisms as such. Of course, it is his job—a rather unpleasant job, it is true, and one which his conduct will likely continue to fit him for—to have to act the role of critic. But that is the job of the Leader of the Opposition; that is what an Opposition is for. Of course, his criticisms would really be of more benefit both to the Government and to the province—and to his party, too, I think—if they were a little less vague and a little better capable of being substantiated by facts. (Applause.) He says, for instance, that our roads have gone "to wrack and ruin." It is his job to tell the country that we have good roads; that is not what I am here for. It is my job to conceive it, to do as much as I can with the revenue placed at my disposal towards giving the public good public service; and I think we have succeeded in that regard. (Applause.)

I was glancing over this little booklet which I have in my hand, issued by the Department of the Interior, at Ottawa, and I read with some interest their paragraph on our roads. They say: "Taking advantage of the Highways Act of 1919, the province undertook to reconstruct and improve 450 miles of its roadway system. This has now been carried out and as a distinctly high standard of construction is necessary before the Federal Government pays its share of the cost, a very good class of highway is the result. The maintenance of all roads outside the city and town limits is under the control of the Provincial Department of Public Works and they are kept in good condition. Where the traffic tends to concentrate, such as approaches to the different towns, the surfaces are either macadam or gravel, most of which must be shipped in from outside the province." That is what the Federal Department of Interior says, which, of course, deals with maintenance conditions last year, and perhaps the year before. However, it is not my job, as I said before, to tell you that we have given the Province good roads. But there is one criticism of the Leader of the Opposition with which I wish to deal, and that is with reference to a statement he made regarding the relative amount of work done in Kings County and in Prince. If I recall his statement correctly, it was this: "Some work was done in Kings County, for a purpose, but not too much in Prince." Now the intention, the insinuation, of the Leader of the Opposition, is perfectly clear. It was to imply that for some political purpose, we did more work in Kings County, and that for some political purpose we neglected Prince County. I conclude, at this rate, that that was the insinuation. It was the conclusion which any person listening to his speech would draw. Now the Leader of the Opposition knows, or if he has not, he is observing and at all interested in what is going on in his own County, particularly in his own District. He knows—that the comparison he made is entirely wrong and his insinuation entirely unjust. I say he KNOWS that. If he does not know it, he is taking no interest—he is not going about paying any attention to the needs of his own District; he is not observing what is being done there. And even if he does not know, his ignorance is no excuse for a statement of that kind. That is the position which the Leader of the Opposition does—the leader of a great party in this province—before he comes into this House and casts such an insinuation should supply himself with the facts. And that, as I will show you, is what the Leader of the Opposition has failed to do. (Increased applause.)

There was expended on highways in Prince County under the year 1926, \$28,572.34. Our expenditure in Kings County was \$21,287.32. Prince County is a larger county than Kings; the population, and I think the difficulty of road maintenance and upkeep is greater, because the soil in Kings County is better adapted to the purpose of good roads. Such being the conditions, it is proper, with no discrimination towards the other counties, that a larger expenditure should be incurred in Prince County than in Kings. The ordinary bridge expenditure, clear of concrete and steel construction, in Prince County last season was \$7,770.36; and the ordinary bridge expenditure in Kings County was \$3,620.55. I think the proper proportion between the two Counties has been observed there. The expenditure on ordinary roads, not including the improved highway projects, in Prince County last year was \$10,283.79. The expenditure for the same work in Kings County was \$8,630.63. I think the proper proportion has been observed there as well. It is not the policy of this Government to discriminate against any particular section of the province. It is natural, perhaps, that in the mind of the Leader of the Opposition this idea of political discrimination should exist. We have but estimates for this province tabled in the Federal House, and we find that out of a total estimate of \$189,000 for the three counties there is \$100,000 for Kings. It is very natural that one so close to the councils of the Liberal party, one who quotes for his authority the Liberal members of this province, should be so obsessed with the idea of political discrimination, that he cannot rid himself of it and give this Government credit for being free of this vice which seems to contaminate others. In the District of the Leader of the Opposition we did considerable work. We improved the highway from Coleman, and the expenditure in excess of ordinary labor on ordinary roads in that Second District of Prince was \$2,256.34. The expenditure in the Third District, which was very carefully looked after by my hon. friends from Egmont Bay and from Malpeque, was about \$185.00 in the Egmont Bay District, as against \$2,266 in the Second District. But no thanks are due to the representative of the Second District of Prince for that expenditure. I think that it is the principal duty of a District representative to look after the needs of his District; he should study those needs and arrangements and bring them to the attention of the proper department. The members in this House representing other districts have been most attentive in this regard. They are constantly bringing to the attention the needs of their District, and I was co-operating with them. But was the Leader of the Opposition so assiduous in regard to the District which he is supposed to represent? I will tell you that he took care of himself to see that the needs of his District were looked after. We received no cooperation from him, and it is very ingenuous of a man, after not even attempting to give us any assistance for the betterment of conditions of his own District, to come into this House and criticize the Government, which has treated every part of the country with equal fairness and justice. (Loud applause.)

Vague Charges. There have been other vague charges of extravagance floating across from the other side of the House—charges so vague as to be impossible to call for a reply; and yet at observing and at all interested in what is going on in his own County, particularly in his own District. He knows—that the comparison he made is entirely wrong and his insinuation entirely unjust. I say he KNOWS that. If he does not know it, he is taking no interest—he is not going about paying any attention to the needs of his own District; he is not observing what is being done there. And even if he does not know, his ignorance is no excuse for a statement of that kind. That is the position which the Leader of the Opposition does—the leader of a great party in this province—before he comes into this House and casts such an insinuation should supply himself with the facts. And that, as I will show you, is what the Leader of the Opposition has failed to do. (Increased applause.)

I might explain that the expenditures as charged against the Department of Public Works in the classified expenditures appearing in front of the Public Accounts do not include all the expenditures which are made under the supervision of that Department. We have, in addition, the Provincial Building, and the maintenance of the Jail and Court House. Those are included under separate items. But first take the figures as they appear in the classified expenditures. The total expenditure for the four years 1920 to 1923 (of the Bell regime), was \$505,657.71, an average expenditure for each year of \$126,414.68. Our expenditure last year was \$122,539.08—or \$3,874.63 less than their average expenditure for four years. Our friends may say that this comparison is not just, that we are including the year 1923, and that they went out of power in September of that year; and they argue that even if we paid their bills and fixed up the mess they left, it is not proper for us to include 1923 and charge it against them. To meet them on that ground, take the total expenditure for the three years 1920, 1921 and 1922—\$356,953.13. Against those years compare the expenditure during our three years, 1924, 1925 and 1926—\$351,067.42. Or \$5,885.71 more in their three clear years than we expended in the corresponding period of our term. (Applause.) These figures, as I said, represent

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The classified expenditures in the auditor's report. Take the total expenditure in the Department of Public Works, not including improved highways, but those other services, which as I mentioned, our department carries out. The four years average for the Bell Government, commencing in 1920 and up to December, 1923, was \$263,414.22. Our three years average expenditure was \$235,988.24; a yearly improvement over the four years period of \$27,625.98. Or if they say 1923 should not be included, we still show a yearly average improvement in our three years over their three year period of \$17,331.14. (Applause.)

Expenditure at Falconwood.

There is another institution in which the expenditure is very large. The figures are included in the last total which I gave, but a better comparison can be secured by viewing them separately. I refer to Falconwood Hospital. The total expenditure of the Liberals on Falconwood Hospital in the four years ending December, 1923, was \$470,169.88, an average for each year of their four years of \$117,542.47. Our expenditure last year was \$105,579.17 or \$11,963 less than their average expenditure for their four years. Again granting the request of theirs that they should not be charged with all their sins of 1923, we will leave that out, and take the years 1920, 1921 and 1922. Their total expenditure in that period on Falconwood was \$341,689.20. Our expenditure for the three years 1924, 1925 and 1926 was \$315,907.30, or a total expenditure during those years of \$25,781.90 less than theirs. (Applause.)

But there is another consideration. We had more patients during our time. The great factor in the expenditure at Falconwood is the maintenance of the patients, and the cost increases as the number of patients increase. That is logical; that is what the institution is for. Under the Liberals the average number of patients was 385. The number of patients we had in 1926 was 408; we had twenty-three patients more last year than their average number. The average for the three-year period, 1920, 1921, 1922, was 381. The average for 1924, 1925 and 1926 was 408. Right through we carried more patients than they were carrying, and at a much less cost.

In dealing with Falconwood, I think it proper to make some reference to an item which appeared in the Public Accounts and to which the Leader of the Opposition made some objection, as to the manner in which it had been charged. He also thinks that he should be allowed to play tag with it when he is making up that wonderful financial statement which he shows. I might during the past year as to have Falconwood Hospital struck by lightning. The tower was struck and the building caught fire. Through the bravery and the strenuous exertions and devotion to duty of the staff, and the splendid assistance rendered from the fire department of the city of Charlottetown, the fire was got under control and did not too great a loss to the institution. However, it did considerable damage, commencing at the roof of the tower and spreading right down through three floors. For that damage we received some insurance. I may say that in this connection that we in the Department of Public Works saved three thousand dollars to this Government. The insurance companies sent out an appraiser, and his report was that the total damage amounted to \$2,113; and that the amount which the insurance companies would be called upon to pay. The trustees considered, and we considered, that that appraisal was too low, that we were entitled to more, and we refused to accept the appraisal. We took the matter up with the man representing the insurance companies, and we secured a settlement of almost \$6,000 for the loss incurred. The repairs which remain to be done at the present time cover only a very small part of the original damage. We repaired everything right up to the tower. In one it is impossible for us to estimate accurately the value of these repairs. We employed some outside labor, but we employed a good many of the patients as well who were capable of doing that kind of work, and who would be benefited by the exercise. We also employed the members of the staff. So it is impossible for us to tell just what the labor would cost; but the point I wish to make is that the repairs have been made up to the tower, and a temporary roof has been placed there.

Statement of Highways Expenditure.

I have given some figures dealing with the Public Works Department, I know that figures grow a little grotesque, but we have just this year completed our final expenditure of the amount allotted to us by the Federal Government in connection with the highways scheme; and at this stage, as we have received our final allotment, some little explanation or some final statement may be in order. We received from Ottawa the full amount that we were entitled to under the highways grant—\$37,581.48. That is our share of the grant, and we have taken up the last of it this year. We are presently to have the grant re-opened. We still have a good deal of work to do in this province. A good many wooden bridges and culverts still remain to be placed, and a good many of our highways need to be surfaced with gravel, and the re-opening of the grant would be very welcome. Acting in conjunction with all the other provinces of Canada we have made representa-

tions to the Dominion Government for an extension of this grant. received a communication a couple of days ago in regard to the matter. We now have the assurance of at least some members of the present Cabinet that they are in sympathy with it. I am sorry that we are not in a position to give any assurance at this stage that the matter will be re-opened, but we are doing all we can to bring that about.

The Leader of the Opposition and his followers claim that we limited their policy of highway construction. Of course, that would be a serious charge if it were true. That is something we resent. We do not want to be charged in any particular with imitating the Bell Government. Under the two governments, money was borrowed for the construction of these improved highways, and the total expenditure under both Governments up to date was \$1,492,075.48. Of this amount, as I said before, the Federal Government expended \$537,581.48. We borrowed under our local governments (Liberal, \$450,000; Conservative, \$340,000) a total of \$790,000. And out of this provincial revenue there went into this work \$164,694.00. With that amount of money there has been completed, or practically completed, 780 miles of improved highways. There have been placed 1125 steel culverts and there have been built 609 concrete bridges and culverts. The total showing is fairly satisfactory, on a borrowing of \$790,000, and I do not think any other province can equal it. But the showing would be more satisfactory and the same amount of work could have been done with considerably less borrowing, if the economy which has prevailed for the last three years had been practiced in the four years before that. That is a general statement, and I do not like making general statements without producing some weight in support of them—that I now propose doing.

Comparison by Projects.

The projects which were commenced by the Liberal Government at the end of 1922 were the projects numbered 1 to 29. They were 344 miles, and the expenditure amounted to \$773,325.58. That gives them an average expenditure per mile of \$2,241. I am leaving out the year 1923 as a sort of no-man's-land, for the time being, and I am taking the projects commenced by the Government after the end of 1923. These were the projects Nos. 60 to 78. The total expenditure on them was \$249,994.01, or an average expenditure of \$1,288.37 as against the Liberal average expenditure of \$2,241. In other words, we did the work at nearly a thousand dollars per mile less cost.

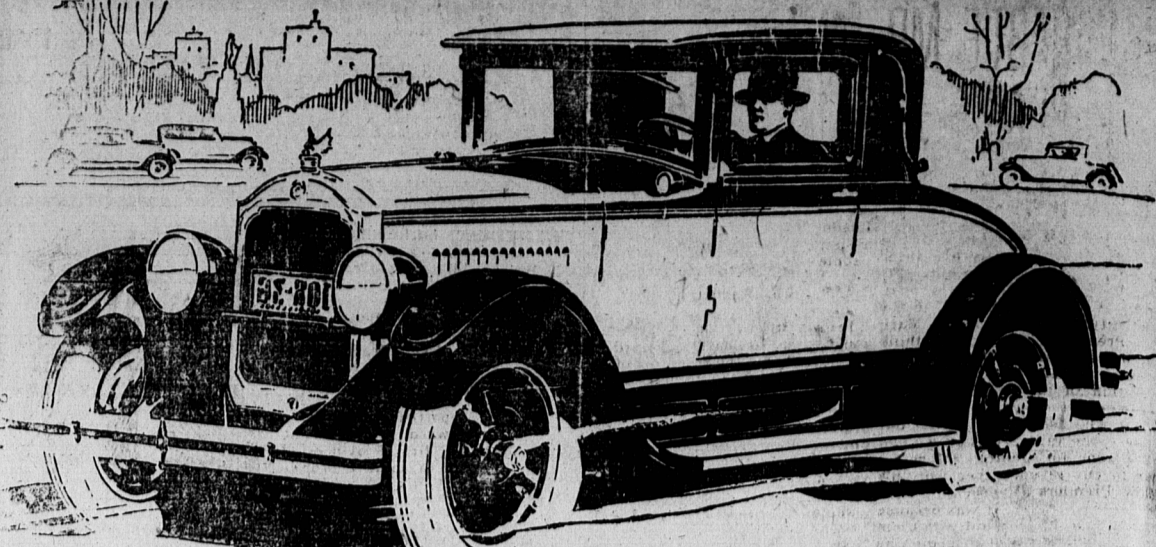
The Liberals sometimes claim credit for the highways which were commenced in 1923. Anybody who remembers what happened with regard to the highways that year would not, surely, make any claim for "credit" in that regard, except as to the way they were carried out, and they would not use that word in connection with any praise that might accrue. You remember, Mr. Speaker, that when the adverse decision of the people was given against them that year, all road work immediately ceased. With an utter disregard for the convenience and safety of the public, not only did they fail to continue their work but they so acted that it was impossible for the incoming Government to prosecute it. They remained in office until it was so late that it was impossible for this Government to take hold of the work and complete it. The result was that much of that heavy expenditure was lost. Hon. members know that when you tear a road up and leave it that way for a season, exposed to the frosts of winter, you are doing worse than nothing—you are throwing money away. That is what was done in 1923. It is not remarkable, then, that out of our total highway expenditure we had to expend only \$249,944 on our own projects, but on the Liberal projects Nos. 1 to 60, commenced during their time, we had to expend \$320,000, or seventy thousand dollars more than we expended on our own projects.

The members on the other side object to these comparisons. They say we are not fair. They ask: "How could you do the work more cheaply than they did?" You had the same system, the same officials. You imitated our policy, and there is no conclusion but that the same disastrous results would happen to us as happened to us. But our reply is that we did not imitate their policy. They speak of contractors, and of awarding contracts to the lowest tender. Suppose the lowest tender is that the contractor mean that the contract was given? That is what happened under the Bell Government. Let me take the case of concrete culverts, by way of illustration. Any figures, and I would recommend a study of them, particularly to the members on the other side. In the year 1921 the average of twelve contracts entered into for mass construction of concrete was from \$14.00 to \$23.00 a yard. Let me explain: Those figures do not include cement. The department always supplies the cement. The fluctuation, if any, in the price of

cement is therefore not a factor. \$14.00 was the price in those cases where the sand and gravel were placed at the work by the Department. In the case of the sand and gravel were supplied and delivered by the contractor. Local sand and gravel have not changed in price. The only element entering into the question was labor; and the labor price in 1921 as paid upon these contracts was not a cent higher than it is today. We expect when this is completed work done for \$14.00 to be done for from \$6.00 to \$10.00. (Applause.)

Excessive Cost Under Liberals.

That explains the difference. Their prices were manifestly too high. If anybody with any business acumen was attending to the matter the contracts would not have been awarded. Everyone knows that those contractors were able to employ men to do the work at nearly half the price that they received from the Government. It is absurd for the hon. members on the other side, in this late date when all this is ancient history and when every man throughout the country knows of the extravagance that went on—come in at this stage and endeavor to persuade us that there was no extravagance in view of the figures we have given and proved. I think it is the most ridiculous thing that we have heard yet from the Opposition. We have heard a good deal of the number of miles of highways they improved, and the number of concrete culverts they laid. Up to the end of 1922 they had initiated in highway improvement 344 miles. That was not all completed, by any means, but that is the amount that was initiated up to the end of that year. We need not consider any highways started in 1923 as having been completed; that word certainly is not applicable to any of the highways done in 1923; but up to the end of 1922 they had placed a total of 500 culverts, 150 of steel and 350 of concrete. Or, giving them the benefit of 1923, they had placed at the end of that year a total of 850 steel and concrete culverts. Up to the end of 1926, for our three years as against theirs, we have placed 684 culverts of steel and concrete. I do not know, Mr. Speaker, if there are any other matters in connection with the Department of Public Works with which it is necessary for me to deal. There are



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on until our claims have been recognized. The result is that we are able to come before the House this year with a substantial surplus; a real surplus—not a "modest" one, with an origin such as theirs; but with its origin in the realization of one of our claims; a claim that had been neglected since 1919. I have said that it was part of the duty of the Leader of the Opposition to criticize; and that is perfectly true. That is one of the most useful functions that an Opposition serves. But, as was pointed out tonight, it is certainly NOT the function of the Leader of the Opposition to try to take away from a public man who has conferred a signal benefit on this province the credit to which he is perfectly entitled. It is not his duty to hound the track of the Premier in the course which he followed to obtain some little slip, so that it could be hurled across at him from the other side of the House. That is NOT one of the duties of the Leader of the Opposition, but it is due to the duty of every public man, who was obtained. (Applause.)

Passing from that department I think it would be wrong not to make some reference to the favorable financial position in which we are being made out this year. Our Premier has been able to tell the House and the country that he has taken proper care of all the public services and that he is able to show a substantial surplus of over \$22,000. It is not one of these "modest" surpluses that our friends on the other side of the House like to talk about. They always refer to them as "modest"—and I don't think that is a very complimentary holder; somewhat ashamed of their origin, perhaps. (Laughter.) Why would not a surplus be ashamed of its origin, when its origin lay in the neglect of public services in the denial of the claims of destitute children, in the refusal to assist and support public health, in an entire lack of any one of those public benevolent grants which this Government has made? If it can be properly designated, I think brazen surplus would be a better term—that in face of its parentage it should dare to show its head in public at all. (Applause.) That is not the kind of a surplus that we have been able to show. The Leader of the Opposition claims that if we had not received the \$80,000 in lieu of taxes from the Railway we would not have a surplus. And that is perfectly true. We have taken this position, that in honestly showing a deficit where a deficit existed we were able to make our claims understood. One of our strongest arguments was that our revenue was NOT sufficient to take care of the public services; and what argument is better than the existence of a deficit after the management? We never contended that we had sufficient revenue. It is because we admitted our lack of sufficient revenue that we have been able to make the presentation we did, and to carry

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