Scores Ottawa's Neglect Of P. E. I. Requirements

Following is the text of a speech delivered in the House of Commons on March 1 by Mr. W. Chester S. McLure, Progressive Conservative member for Queen's, in the Draft Address debate:

"Mr. Speaker, may I say, first, that I am glad to see you in the chair so that you may take note of the members who are in the house at the present time. I rise on this occasion to take advantage of this opportunity to make a few remarks on behalf of my Province, the Island, and particularly the dual constituency of Queens. Since this debate has continued under a new procedure, you will pardon me if I do not offer the complimentary remarks which are customary on this occasion.

"I see before me, or I did a short time ago, new cabinet ministers and older ones in new cabinet positions, and it might be in order for me to say just a few words in this regard. Speaking of cabinet ministers, even at this late date—the opportunity did not come to me before — I want to say that in my opinion this Parliament and this Government sustained a great loss in the death of one member of the cabinet, Hon. Francis Bridges. He was a young man who had he been spared to continue in charge of the Department of Fisheries, would have gone far in his work and, I believe, would have placed the fisheries of Canada on a sound basis.

"Since his demise, we have had two ministers of fisheries, and I understand we are promised a third at an early day. I had hoped that the present Minister of Veterans Affairs, the hon. member for York-Sunbury (Mr. Gregg), while Minister of Fisheries would have had an opportunity to show his wares and prove his worth to the Atlantic fishing region in particular. However, today we have as minister one who came to that position from the Department of Trade and Commerce, a position he held with distinction for a number of years. We hope that this inland Minister of Fisheries (Mr. MacKinnon) may breathe in the briny air of the Atlantic and the Pacific and bring to us and to the great fisheries industry what we believe it requires.

No Cabinet Member

"While I am on this change of ministers, parliamentary assistants and so on that has taken place within the last few months, perhaps I may be allowed to refer to something I spoke of in 1945. At that time I asked the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) to fulfil at least one outstanding pre-election promise made to my province, namely, that Prince Edward Island would be represented in this cabinet. At that time I even went so far as to suggest that the senior member for the dual constituency of Queens might be promoted to the cabinet. However, we have not had representation for a number of years. I want to ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether in your judgment as Speaker of this house you do not think we as a province, according to the terms of union of 1873, are entitled to representation in the cabinet."

Mr. Speaker: "Order. I must call the attention of the hon. member to the fact that the Speaker should not be questioned from the floor of the house.'

Mr. McLure: "Then I withdraw that question and just ask that you give it your careful consideration. On different occasions I have endeavoured to speak in this house on matters concerning my province. When the Prime Minister had to search for cabinet ministers, thinking he did not have cabinet material in his own ranks, when he had to go abroad with coalition ideas, since Prince Edward Island was not represented in the cabinet I do think he might have extended to members from that province the opportunity to become part and parcel of the government by being included in the cabinet. However, they do not recognize our province. It always seems to me that there is either discrimination or forgetfulness; and the rights we had prior to 1873 are gradually being taken away from us.

Bank of Canada Taken

Let me cite one instance. We always had a savings bank in our province. Then this was swallowed up by the Bank of Canada, and we had a branch of that bank in Charlottetown. We were pleased with that until, in the fall of 1947, our branch bank mysteriously disappeared. It was taken, as it were, by thieves in the night, and was gone from us. That branch was something which should have been retained for us.

"It will be clear that this came as a surprise to the people of the province when I say that there was not one manager of a chartered bank, of the five great chartered banks in Charlottetown, who knew anything about the taking away or transfer of the branch of the Bank of Canada from that city.

"We made representations to have it remain. Those representations were made to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott.) At that time, however, very few ministers were in Ottawa; I believe the Minister of Finance was somewhere in Europe — probably in gay Paree — and we did not get any satisfaction whatsoever. That branch of the Bank of Canada was taken from us. Under present circumstances, all the business which our chartered banks have to do with the Bank of Canada must be done through Saint John and Halifax. This procedure is not always in the best interests of banking or bankers in Prince Edward Island.

Postal Service

"Similar treatment was meted out to us in connection with our postal service. Again Prince Edward Island has been ignored as a Province, and in connection with this work we have been attached to one of the other provinces. I mention these matters because, if there is one thing near and dear to us in Prince Edward Island, certainly it is our rights as a Province of the Dominion. We were the cradle of Confederation, and we resent these practices, small as they may seem to other provinces. We have our rights and we intend to try to hold them, no matter what odds we may come up against.

"Having made these few observations respecting discrimination, let me say that we are now dealing with the Speech from the Throne. I was not in the house when it was read, but after having read it I have come to the conclusion that it was written in a great hurry for that short session. The purpose of the calling of the short session no one has yet been able to understand; unless it was, of course, that the house might be in session during the birthday festivities of the Prime Minister.

"We of the Maritime Provinces, and particularly those of us from Prince Edward Island, had anticipated that the speech from the throne would contain something new and constructive for the Maritime Provinces. In order that we might be maintained in our proper sphere we had entertained the hope that some real suggestions on our behalf would be set forth in the speech from the throne. However, it contains nothing more than phraseology which does not mean very much, and certainly does not mean anything to the Maritimes.

Farming Interests Stressed

"For a few moments I shall deal particularly with Prince Edward Island. My Province is what might be described as an agricultural province, statistics showing that about sixty-five per cent of the people depend upon farming of different kinds. Next to agriculture come the fisheries. We have very few manufacturing plants. As I have said, farming is the great basic industry of our province, and we are proud of the agricultural activities in it, and of its productive soil. We are proud, too, of our industrious and productive farmers who operate the farms in our province. I say without fear of successful contradiction that they have no equal as farmers in any of the other provinces of this whole dominion.

"As a province the enterprise of which is almost entirely agricultural, and as one with still greater possibilities ahead, we must look for certain things. We are able to provide the best of foodstuffs for exports, in addition to supplying all the requirements for our own population. Our butter, cheese, potatoes and furs, as well as sundry other products stand ace-high on the markets of the world. As an agricultural province, we must look for assistance along agricultural lines. To be most effective, we must have the best possible forms of transportation. Our transportation facilities must be up to date. We must have better facilities for the cold storage of farm products. We must have better connection with the mainland. Further, let me repeat that we must have proper freight rates for the shipments we have to make.

"Speaking of farmers and the agricultural work being done throughout Canada, and particularly in the Maritime Provinces, I would remind hon. members of what was said by a great biblical writer who, upon looking at the production of food and those who produced it, made this memorable comment: "Moreover the profit of the earth is for all. The king himself is served by the field."

"As agricultural members, we must always look to those things which will favour agricultural interests in our provinces. As I said a minute ago, we in Prince Edward Island are producers of foodstuffs, and have always made the complaint that we have not had proper transportation facilities. To a certain extent this condition has been remedied. Since 1912 transportation has greatly improved, yet a great deal more could be done in the interest of the farmers of that province.

Lower Freight Rates

"As I said, we must have lower freight rates, particularly in connecting links between the province and the mainland. We have been promised by the different parties that the charges on our ferries would be based upon what it would cost to carry the freight the same distance over a highway. These promises have been partly implemented in connection with certain agricultural products, but if they were fully implemented it would mean that we could transport our surplus foodstuffs to the other Maritime Provinces where we could find a real market.

"If the bridging of the Strait of Canso is completed, as surely it must be at an early day, what a market for foodstuffs would be opened up. Our farmers could transport the products of their farms by motor truck direct to Cape Breton island, and on the return trip they could bring back coal, lime or other commodities. Today we have part of that market, but it is under adverse conditions. I understand that the miners, workers and labourers in the great industries on Cape Breton Island receive over $30,000,000 in wages annually. This new bridge would certainly provide a new market for a large number of our agricultural products.

"There is another matter in connection with my province which I should like to mention. When victory for the allied forces was in sight a great program of demobilization, reconstruction, et cetera was announced. The Maritime Provinces were asked to place their problems before the Federal Government and Prince Edward Island set up a reconstruction committee as suggested by the Federal Government. I do not know what treatment was given to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia; but, if it was any shabbier than that given to Prince Edward Island, then I pity those provinces. We have not received anything under that extensive program which as talked about and advertised for years previous.

Maritimes Neglected

During the war years of 1939 to 1945 the Maritime Provinces were neglected. They did not share in the great increase in manufacturing for war purposes. In the case of Prince Edward Island it was practically nil. During those years the government poured out $790 million of the taxpayers' money to build or construct new factories and to expand or rebuild old ones. I do not object to that expenditure because it was for war purposes, but I do object to the way in which it was spent. It should have been divided among the provinces so that they could all have had a share in manufacturing certain types of goods.

The Maritime Provinces represented one-tenth of the population of Canada, and yet New Brunswick and Nova Scotia received less than three per cent of this expenditure. Surely they were entitled to at least ten per cent. But Prince Edward Island did not receive even three per cent; we received one one-thousandth of one per cent or the fancy, tiny sum of $1,277. This was to complete a small expansion of a factory which was manufacturing some war materials.

AFTER RECESS

"Just before the House took recess I was speaking of the large expenditures during wartime and the injustice done to the Maritime Provinces with respect to these expenditures. For instance, I mentioned that $790 million had been spent to rebuild factories and to construct new ones for war purposes. I said I took no objection to that because it was for war; but let us look for a moment at what happened. According to statistics tabled in this house with reference to the contracts which had been awarded to these firms which had been set up in business, and some created as crown companies, and so forth, the total expenditure was almost $12 billion from 1939 to 1945, or, to be exact, $11,979,200,000.

Unfair Distribution

"As I said, I am not objecting to these enormous expenditures; they were for war purposes. The objection I take is this, and I think I take it on good grounds. I contend that there should have been a fair distribution of this amount in the Maritime Provinces. Out of this immense sum of nearly $12 billion, my province received an expense account for the repairs of two or three corvettes and a minesweeper, a paltry sum indeed when compared with the $12 billion that was spent. It is not much wonder that in the Maritimes today we have unemployment. I say this to labour and to the labour department, do not take away our labour from the Maritime Provinces.

"Do justice to the Maritime Provinces by building the constructive works which have been promised to us, such as the Canso bridge, the Chignecto canal on the mainland and so forth. In Prince Edward Island we were promised improved highways and the construction of a highway from Borden to Charlottetown. We were promised a marine slip and the Brighton bridge. These things were all promised and were held out to the people in the last election on December 11 of last year. Both parties are committed to them.

Marine Railway Slip

"I wish to speak for a moment with reference to one of these projects that should be built. In my Province an essential work could be built which would give labour to from 150 to 200 people annually I refer to the building of the marine railway slip. When we started to get the ferry system in 1913 that was part of the program. It was included to such an extent that the government of that day purchased a property on Southport road across from Charlottetown for the building of a drydock. The war of 1914 put an end to the project for the time being. The property is still there.

"I might say that today they are recommending the building of the marine railway slip at Charlottetown harbour to take care of the repair work of our own steamers and our own ferry boats, and also the different boats that are in the marine service, such as barges and tugboats. All this week has to leave the province annually. It goes to Pictou, Halifax, Saint John and Quebec, and our own people are left unemployed. If this marine slip were built at Charlottetown —and it has been definitely promised to us – we would have employment the year round for some 150 to 200 men, in the summertime our big ferry ships could be repaired there or have their annual overhaul there, and the other marine boats, tugs, and so forth could be repaired there when they are laid up in the winter time.

"If these things were done and if Prince Edward Island were to receive assistance in comparison with what the other provinces are receiving we would have better times in the Maritime Provinces and no unemployment. Our men would not have to be taken away from those provinces to other places to seek work.

Ships Delayed

"Because these repairs all go to Pictou, Halifax, Saint John and Quebec, our ships are delayed in getting there. Most of these places have so much work on hand that the delay is continued and we are months without our ships back in the regular service. Charlottetown has an excellent harbour; and if we had this marine railway slip I am sure that the steamers making it a port of call, bringing in and taking away freight, would not have to leave for a slight overhaul The overhaul could take place right in Charlottetown while they are unloading and loading.

"I should now like to refer to the building of the Brighton bridge. As I said, these things were promised by both parties during the last election, and they were pretty well threshed out not only here but down there during the election.

"Another matter to which I wish to refer for a few moments is the tourist trade. As we have all said and keep repeating, Canada has wonderful possibilities in the tourist trade. It is a grand thing to see the provinces interested in that trade. Like the Maritimes generally, my province is a real vacation spot. There, where much of the dominion's history originated you will find a tourist's paradise. No place offers more to the real tourist than the Island. There you will find a real climate, not too hot. Even if it is a hot day the gentle sea breezes will temper it nicely to the tourist. There you can see the most beautiful farms and farm scenery, scenery which will bring pleasure to any tourist who travels around.

"A few years ago, in co-operation with the Provincial Government, the Dominion of Canada gave us a national park beginning at Tracadie, or, as we say, Dalvay by the sea. That took in the coast line of Dalvay, Tracadie, Brackley Point, Stanhope, Rustico (not Russia) and Cavendish out to Stanley bridge.

Ideal Spot

"The minister himself said that this National Park was an ideal spot. In connection with it we have what is known as the Green Gables golf course. Those who play golf can find no finer golf courses than Green Gables, in the land made famous by Canada's greatest writer, the late Lucy Maud Montgomery MacDonald. On the sandy beaches of this beautiful national park you will find the best bathing grounds that are to be found anywhere. I might say, however, that the worst feature since we received this park is in the highways that we have by which to reach the park; and I hope that the government, in conjunction with the provincial government, will see to it this year that we have proper approaches leading to our park.

"It would take only ten miles to reach the beautiful playgrounds and vacation grounds of Brackley, Stanhope and Dalvay. Then, from Rustico it would take only seven miles, and from New Glasgow a distance of six miles. I am glad to learn that the Department of Mines and Resources is considering building one of these highways this year. The other day I asked the minister a question regarding which there was a little misunderstanding, a typographical error having occurred. My question had reference to the road from Rustico to Cavendish, to the national park, and I wanted to know when it would be built. I had understood it was to be built on a sixty-forty basis between the two governments. If we had these roads constructed as they should be, leading to our national park, it would do a great deal for the tourist industry of our province.

Tourist Trade

"There is one thing you can be assured of, Mr. Speaker, and that is that the people engaged in the tourist business in Prince Edward Island are making a real industry out of it. They are endeavouring to the best of their ability, to cater to the people who come to our shores; and we hope that in years to come, with the assistance of the federal government in the way of good roads, our tourist trade will be materially advanced so that we may have this wonderful vacation spot thronged with visitors during the summer months.

"Another matter on which I wish to speak for a few minutes is in reference to social security You, Mr. Speaker, as well as the members of this house have listened to many excellent appeals on behalf of the aged, the blind, and the veterans of both wars. You have heard about the rehabilitation of these men and you have heard proposals for giving them security in their old age.

"I often think there is one class of people who have been greatly neglected, more so in our province than in any other, and for a few minutes I wish to discuss the low-wage bracket earner of the Canadian National Railways when he is put on retirement. There are in my constituency a number of these men who were retired a few years ago and some who have been recently retired, and the amount of their retirement is $25. to $27 a month. That retirement allowance might have been good enough a few years ago; but today it is not sufficient, and I for one would like to see these faithful employees of the Canadian National Railways, retired some years ago, and especially the men receiving less than $150 and down to the lowest, brought up to where they can have a decent living allowance for the rest of their days. Those in the higher brackets who have had higher salaries need not be taken into consideration to the same extent as those in the lower brackets.

Neglected Class

"There is another class of people to whom I would refer. We have given aid to the blind and the aged; we have provided children's allowances and so on; but in every constituency across Canada we find today people who are crippled, some crippled by severe accidents when they were young, some as they have grown a little older, and some crippled and handicapped from birth. There seems to be no social security for any of these, and I know that in my own constituency there are several of them.

"I have taken this matter up with the Minister of Health and Welfare, but the answer always comes back that it is a provincial matter. When you go to the provincial house there is always a dispute between city and country, with the consequences that very few of those people are securing anything to help them with the great handicap they have. I hope this government will consider the matter to see that these people have some compensation for themselves.

"Another matter I wish to touch upon, and one that is of importance to us, is the question of freight rates."

Mr. Speaker: "I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired."

Son hon. members: "Go ahead."

Mr. McLure: "I wish to say a few words with reference to freight rates. One of the great problems in Canada today is that of freight rates. It touches everybody in every part of the country. Here we are faced in Canada with a government-owned railway system, the Canadian National Railways, one of the greatest railway systems, if not the greatest in the whole world. This company, after due consideration regarding its has applied to the government for expenses and operating income, a 30 per cent increase in freight rates.

"We all know that conditions have changed and that greater demands are being made in every direction, and I may say that if the railways are expected to give the service which is demanded of them, both by the government and by the people of Canada, and if at the same time the demand is made that they pay their own way and make a surplus instead of a deficit, then the task is an impossible one for them.

Government Responsibility

"If the government demanded of the railways that they give perfect satisfaction they must also say to the railways, 'If you have a deficit we will take care of it, if they are not going to allow them to increase their rates.

"In connection with freights, I believe in the very near future the railway systems of Canada will make a study of what is termed stamp freight rates. What I mean is this. If a man in Halifax writes a letter to a friend outside that city a mile or so and writes a letter to one in British Columbia, four cents will carry each letter, though one of them has to go thousands of miles. I believe the railways will discuss in the future this idea of the stamp freight rate whereby all freight will be put on a par to all geographical centres across Canada and to all business houses.

"Centralization has taken the big factories to the larger places. Why should we who are a long distance from these factories be penalized? I am going to mention only one or two cases in particular. We have no objection to the great automobile works, we will say, in Oshawa. We in the Maritimes and the people all over Canada to the extreme limits of the country support that factory. The farmers around Oshawa support it by buying automobiles, but they also receive a great deal of support by growing food to feed the employees of those factories. We in the Maritimes are in a different situation, and the same thing applies farther west.

"If one of our farmers buys an automobile at Oshawa, what happens? He is immediately penalized to the extent of anywhere from $75 to $118, because he must pay the freight from Oshawa; whereas the farmer who lives around Oshawa gets his car for that much less. I mention this in my argument that if a stamp freight rate act were in existence in this country, which it will be in the near future just as sure as we are sitting here tonight, that difference would be equalized. When the cost of that car was made known at the works, what would happen? They would say, 'We are sending so many of these to the Maritimes and so many to the west.' They know the distance; they know the freight rates; and the freight would be added to the cost of the car. Hence, a farmer in Oshawa who gets the benefits in everyway of the automobile factory there would have to pay the same price for his car as the man in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, would have to pay for his. That is giving fair and equal rights to all.

Another Example

"I might mention one other case, Mr. Speaker, if you will allow me

Continued on page 13

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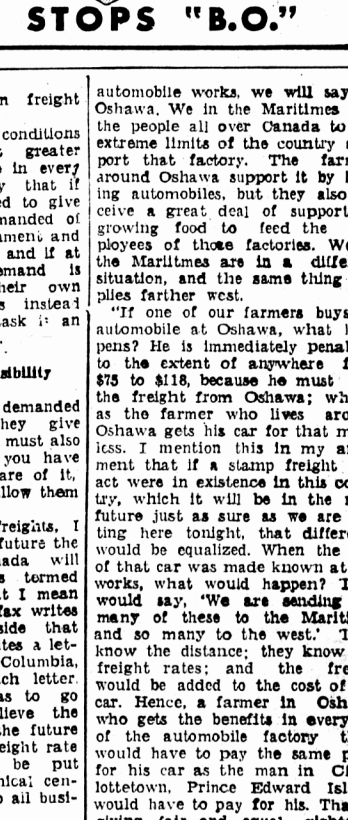

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