

Scathing Criticism On Prohibition Enforcement

The Premier's Amazing "Confession" Analyzed By Dr. W. J. P. McMillan And The Whole Prohibition Situation Reviewed In Eloquent And Convincing Speech.

Provincial Legislature, March 14. Debate on Draft Address. Dr. W. J. P. McMillan. (Continued from yesterday's Guardian):

Progress Backwards

Isn't that wonderful? Isn't it logical? Isn't it the height of nonsense! (Applause). After detailing in every particular the most scandalous condition of affairs that has ever existed in the Province, after admitting that he is unable to enforce Prohibition throughout the Province but that he cannot even keep the prisoners in the jail, under the very eyes of the prohibition officers, from getting drunk, he concludes by stating his belief that he is "making a great success of it." Isn't it the most pitiable farce that anyone ever heard of? Wasn't this wonderful Summerside jail was built, he says, no one every imagined that there were going to be moonshiners and bootleggers. Of course not! That is the result of the "progress" we have been making under Prohibition. But when they were building the jail, they should have provided for the detention of criminals of every stripe.

The sum and substance of the Premier's statements amount to this: that two years ago bootlegging and moonshining were practically extinct, that today the condition has been accentuated "a thousand fold," that law breakers are resorting to "every conceivable method" but that the Prohibition Act is a great success because the jails are filled. That is the proper index by which to judge—because the jails are filled with small fry bootleggers, with poor, unfortunate creatures who yield to the temptation of trying to make a little money out of the miserable business of selling rum. But what about the sources of supply? What about the big fellows in the business? What about the merchant princes, the wholesalers? Do they go to jail? The Premier says the Dominion Government takes every precaution to keep them out of the Province. He says Prince Edward Island is the most ideal place in this broad Dominion in which to enforce Prohibition, because it is so easy to guard our coasts. What is wrong, then? How does it get in, and when it gets in what happens to it? We know very well that the history of Prohibition in this Province is the same history that has repeated itself in every Province and country where it has been tried; and we know it is useless for any Government to say, as the Premier tried to tell this House yesterday, that they are "making a great success of it."

I taught school at one time, and there was an old gentleman in the district who used to say of the younger generation: "They are retrograding very fast." That is the way with this Government. That is the way they are making progress. They are "playing checkers" with the bootleggers, and they are always a move or two behind.

Amending the Act
We spent two sessions of this Legislature in amending the Prohibition Act to make it "more workable." You

will remember the kind of law that was put on the statute books two years ago, Mr. Speaker; the most drastic piece of legislation ever introduced in this House, in which the same power was given to the Prohibition Magistrate as is possessed by the Supreme Court of this Province. You will remember the nature of the penalties imposed. After the 1928 session, if a man was found drunk he was liable to a fine of from \$200 to \$400; and they called that sane legislation! We pointed out at the time that it was only a farce. Next year, that clause had to be repealed; and my hon. friend from Rustico, the apostle of Prohibition, when it was being revised had to acknowledge that it was unreasonable, that it was not sane, that it was, in fact, foolish.

So they amended it, and during its progress through Committee last year we had another remarkable declaration about Prohibition enforcement. I would like the Premier, who has conveniently absented himself from his seat just now, to hear what I have to say on this matter because my remarks apply particularly to him. Perhaps he thought the fire was getting a little hot! (Conservative applause). At any rate, it was his contention that the proper time to get evidence out of a man in these prohibition cases was when the man was drunk. (Laughter). He made that statement in this House, Mr. Speaker, and he repeated it emphatically; that the time to get evidence was when a man was drunk, and not after he had been left in jail for two or three days and had time to sober up, because then he would have time to concoct a story.

Had All Qualifications

That was the Premier's attitude when the Prohibition amendments were going through. But what happened when he brought this detective down here from Montreal? The detective had all the qualifications in that regard. He could get drunk! He got drunk and he stayed drunk! Wasn't that man qualified to tell the truth under the Prohibition Act? Surely, Mr. Speaker, he had the very qualifications required! (Loud Conservative applause).

But, lo and behold! they tell us that those informations which this man secured and the prosecutions that were started, had all to be dropped because the man "was not reliable,"—because, in short, he got drunk! (Laughter). They didn't think it advisable "in the interests of temperance" to go on with them. After a consultation with Mr. Brown, the chairman of the Commission, Mr. Thane Campbell, the extra-mural Premier, the Chief of Police and Mr. Haywood, they decided that the best thing was to drop those prosecutions. It was not in the public interest, or in the interests of temperance, to go on. The Premier should have said, not in the "Liberal interests," because that is what it amounted to. That was where the shoe was beginning to pinch. There were too many on that list who were friends of the Liberal party; too many around Summerside; it was dangerous—politically—to go on with those prosecutions. It would be very dangerous, probably, to Mr. A. E. MacLean, the sitting member of that constituency in Parliament. So it was decided, "in the interests of temperance," to drop them. Wasn't that a wonderful admission to come from the mouth of the Premier of this Province? Wasn't it a beautiful illustration of the administration of the Prohibition law by representatives of "the best-thinking people of the Province? Wasn't it a farce! (Applause).

Money Wasted
This detective was brought here for a specific purpose, and while he was here he got information on the liquor game. The Premier says he engaged him to investigate a fire. According to the junior member from Summerside (Mr. Allen) they do not know yet who set that fire; so that investigation resulted in nothing. He was sent down to investigate for stealing; and again the investigation resulted in nothing. The Province was not big enough for this man to operate in. It was big enough to get drunk in, but not to investigate a fire or the stealing of faxes. And at the end of it all, this man was sent off, and there are a good many stories as to why, and how, and who sent him off. The Premier says, "We

paid him \$1200 or \$1400." If I say, Mr. Speaker, that that was \$1200 or \$1400 of the public money of this Province thrown away—and I will say it—then I believe the people of the Province will appreciate that I am making a plain statement of fact. (Applause). And I say that the Premier, the leader of this Government, is the responsible party; that he had no business bringing a man down here who was not properly vouched for; and that when he had him here—and he was here for several weeks and months—he should have found out long ago that he was not a reliable sort of man, that he was drunk and incapable, and that his services were useless. (Applause).

WHY PAY THE BILL?

Why should this Province be asked to pay the bill and expenses of a drunken detective? If you engage a man to do certain work, you certainly expect him to do something. If this man proved to be so inefficient that he gave no value for his services, that his information could not be relied upon, how can the Premier justify the throwing away of \$1200 or \$1400 on his salary? (Applause). Apparently, his own qualification was the fact that he was getting in with bootleggers and getting drunk. But that qualification, according to the Premier, made him the very best witness under the Prohibition Act, because, so long as he remained drunk, he was sure to tell the truth.

The leader of the Government went on to talk about the jails. It is a big subject at the present time, the jails of this Province. He explained all the precautions they had taken to make this wonderful jail in Summerside—"one of the best jails in the Maritime Provinces"—safe and sound. Liquor had been coming in, and the prisoners were getting drunk. So they barred the windows and repaired the locks that were defective. And the liquor was still coming in and the prohibition prisoners in the jail were still getting drunk. Was that due to any negligence on the part of the Government or its officials? Oh no! It was due to the fact that the ingenuity of these bootleggers is almost beyond the comprehension of man. (Laughter). We need something supernatural nowadays to deal with the situation. All they have to do is get a string or a fishing rod, and they can either lower it down somewhere between the bars or put it up somewhere over the window sill, and in goes the booze! In goes the "canned heat," and it is mixed with molasses, conveniently supplied, free of charge.

Now we know, Mr. Speaker, why the bill for groceries for the Summerside jail, from the firm represented by my hon. friend the junior member for Summerside (Mr. Allen), is so large! (Laughter). We wondered and made enquiries as to why the bill from that firm was so large, compared with the amount under the previous Government. But now the whole thing is explained. We know at least where the molasses goes, or some of it. According to the Premier, the surplus is used to mix with "canned heat" to provide that proper prison fare which is the standard under the Saunders Government in the administration and enforcement of the Prohibition Act. (Applause).

Mr. Allen's Charge

The junior member from Summerside, however, claims that the situation was just as bad when we were in power. At a meeting of the Temperance Alliance the other day referring to the recent episode in the Summerside Jail, he said "the jail

had been in an unsatisfactory condition when taken over by the present Government, as locks and windows were not in good repair. He maintained that two stills were in the jail at that time. The windows were such as to permit articles being passed through from the outside to the prisoners within."

BRINGING UP FATHER

I am rather surprised that the hon. member from Summerside should make that statement, that there were two stills in the jail when they took over, because I do not believe that the statement is correct. (Applause). Probably the most charitable way of looking at it is to say that the hon. gentleman was mistaken. That is the way I will deal with it for the present. So far as the statement itself is concerned, you have only to take the answer made by the jailor at that time. Mr. John Steele was jailor of that institution under the Stewart Government, and I think it will be admitted that he

was a fairly efficient officer. At least, it was never known that the prisoners in the jail under Mr. Steele got drunk. Mr. Steele was never beaten up by the prisoners. There was never any outbreak of fire under Mr. Steele. There was no disgraceful condition among the prisoners under his management, although the junior member for Summerside says the jail was in an unsatisfactory condition when they took it over. Mr. Steele says he served as jailor for about twelve

years, that not a day during that period nor when he handed over the keys to the present jailer was there ever a "still" on the premises. There was never any drunkenness, fighting or disturbance of any kind, nor were there any complaints made by citizens living near at hand, of rowdiness amongst the prisoners, nor any escapes during all the years that he was in charge of the jail. He says further that he served under two sheriffs, Mr. F. J. E. Wright and Mr. J. R.

McDonald, and that these gentlemen should know whether there was ever a still in the jail during his term of office. (Applause). (To be continued)

Hawaii is considering measures for perpetuating or increasing by artificial means the production of the colony of pearl oysters discovered two years ago near Pearl and Hermes Reef 1,200 miles northwest of Honolulu.

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