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OPPOSITION CRAWL DOWN

Mr. Bell and Mr. Johnston are to be pitied as well as blamed for the mess they have made of their political stewardship. The scene in the House, yesterday, when they crawled down, and were even pulled down by their colleagues, on the charges they made against the Honourable James A. McNeill during the Souris campaign was about as humiliating as any humiliation well could be. They had conducted a campaign on this slander, had carried it around from meeting to meeting, had flashed it in capital lettered headlines as a "damning accusation" against Mr. McNeill, and when confronted with an opportunity—or rather a demand—that they substantiate their charges, they crawled down and out and in their abject fear of the investigation demanded being pressed, heaped deserved encomiums upon the head of the man whom they had vilified and slandered during the election campaign.

In other words, during the campaign, they made charges for political purposes, which they hoped would drive the Commissioner from public life and bring the Government down in his ruin. If they had succeeded in making the electors of Souris believe the imputations and insinuations they wished to be drawn from the now notorious affidavit, the consequences might have been serious for the Hon. Mr. McNeill. But they failed to deceive the electors of Souris, thanks to the fact that Premier Mathieson, Senator McLean and the Commissioner of Public Works were in a position to prove the utter falsity of the allegations.

Notwithstanding, however, Mr. Bell and Mr. Johnston still pretended that they believed in the affidavit and Mr. Bell went the length of stating during the debate on the address, as reported in the Patriot, that it was open to any member to draw their own inference from the "damning evidence" which he purported to set forth. This could leave no other impression and was intended to leave no other impression than that Mr. Bell believed that the Hon. the Commissioner of Public Works, had acted with a corrupt motive. When called upon by the Premier to have the courage of his convictions and to ask for a committee to investigate the charges he made and applied, Mr. Bell declined, and the Premier intimated that the matter would not be allowed to rest there but that the House would be asked to appoint a committee for the purpose. The resolution for the appointment of such a committee of investigation yesterday found Mr. Bell in quite a chastened and humble mood. There was no more bluff and bluster in him. He denied that he had ever thought or imputed motives in connection with the Arsenault transaction and said all there was to it was that the Provincial Auditor had been guilty of incompetence or carelessness in signing a cheque in excess of the amount due. All the members of the Opposition seemed to vie with one another in expressing their confidence in the Commissioner of Public Works, and as all charges of corrupt act or improper motives were withdrawn, the necessity for an investigation was removed. And so by a standing vote of the House the matter was allowed to drop. Surely this will be a lesson to the Leader of the Opposition and his right-hand lieutenant to pursue different methods in any future campaigning. It also affords a striking lesson to the public to accept with more than the proverbial grain of salt, any charges against the Government emanating from the same source.

SOLDIER FARMERS

We understand a large proportion of the members of the 105th Regiment and of the new Siege Battery now organizing are taking advantage of the recent order permitting soldiers to work on farms during the seeding season.

The advantages of this arrangement, both to the province and to the soldiers themselves, are simply incalculable and probably no move made by the Militia Department since recruiting began has been as popular. It very largely minimizes the effect that it was feared such extensive recruiting would have upon the agricultural activities of the province. There is scarcely a farm in the province that has not sent one or more men to one or another of the arms of the service. Now, those of them still in the province have the privilege of returning to their homes or to their former employment on farms and take part in the seeding and planting operations for three weeks, at the same time, receiving their pay as soldiers and also receiving free transportation from and back again to their headquarters.

We understand that quite a number of recent applicants for the new Siege Battery deferred enlistment until after the spring work. Those men can join at once and return to their farm duties. The opportunity is a splendid one, especially for those who are obliged to make the very difficult choice between duty to the Empire and that to their homes and farms. In very many cases to leave the farm just at the begin-

ning of the planting season is a serious matter, but this arrangement practically clears up the whole difficulty as the three or four weeks' furlough granted will put them safely through their spring work. We trust that the splendid opportunity will be taken advantage of by a large number of our soldiers, enlisted and unenlisted. In this way the year's crop will be assured and the credit of the province maintained in doing its bit for the Empire.

WHERE THEY FAILED

One of the greatest, as well as one of the most asinine political crimes ever attempted by any political party was that undertaken by the Leader of the Opposition when, at the close of the debate on the Estimates, and when the motion was made that the estimates be passed *en bloc*, he rose in his place in the House and asked that no such grant be given.

This, after two whole nights had been wasted in pure and unadulterated obstruction; after every item in the proposed expenditure had been passed without a solitary objection being raised by the leader of the Opposition or any one of his followers; after every dollar in the Estimates had been scrutinized with a view to lopping off any one dollar the expenditure of which could be avoided without detriment to the province, and after the Opposition members had failed to place a finger on any such!

The Opposition would have been perfectly justified in holding up the Estimates indefinitely by every means in their power, except physical force, if they had been refused any information they asked for with reference to the expenditures under consideration; they would have been justified in holding them up if they could show that any of the items of the proposed expenditure were unjustifiable. Yet they had no such excuse. All the information they asked for was cheerfully given; every dollar proposed to be spent was held up to them and examined and they could offer no objection to the expenditure of any one of them. Yet they held up the whole House for two nights—by every means in their power—of speech and vilification. Such a finale to a debate on Supply had never before been experienced in the Prince Edward Island Legislature and probably in no other. Mr. Bell's only argument, his only reason, was not to grant any "Supply to His Majesty."

Had his desire in this case been confirmed by the House, what then? The whole financial machinery of the province would be stopped short, all the public offices would be closed, our schools would be paralysed, our teachers would be out of business; our jails would open their doors, our lawbreakers would be free to move whither they would! Our public roads and bridges would revert to the condition in which they were left by the Liberal government and even the Leader of the Opposition and his followers would go without their seasonal indemnity!

This is the record, thus far, of His Majesty's loyal (?) Opposition and its Leader, Mr. Bell. And this, too, in a year of serious conditions, a year of life or death to the Empire!

The vote of the Opposition in this case makes a record which, if such deeds live in history, will be a standing disgrace to the Liberal party. For future reference we give the vote as it stood on the question of granting Supply to His Majesty. The Nays, that is, those who could raise no objection to a single item and in desperation or pure cussedness voted against the whole thing *en bloc* are inscribed in the Journals of the House as follows: "Bell, Gallant, McInnis, McMillan, David McDonald, Howatt, Dennis, Johnston, Lea, (9). Those who, after scrutinizing the items and inviting conference with their political opponents with a view to making the amount as light as possible and who voted for the whole amount because in the interests of the province it could not be made less, were: "Mathieson, Arsenault, McKinnon, McNeill, Dalton, Kennedy, Jenkins, Wood, McEwen, Prowse, Paton, A. A. McDonald."

MOTOR SERVICE

The Patriot claims to be "in a position to state that before the coming summer is ended there will be under proper conditions, restrictive and otherwise, a motor bus service running in Charlottetown."

Many of our best citizens will gladly welcome such a service and we trust the Patriot's forecast will be fulfilled. Such a service is one of the greatest needs of the city at present and we might go farther and say that a well-regulated automobile service, bus and truck and passenger car, is one of the greatest needs of the province. This opinion was well expressed at the recent Conference in Charlottetown by Mr. Nelson Rattenbury in his report on behalf of one of the committees, when he said that the roads of the whole province should be opened to automobiles every day in the week.

We agree with the Patriot that public opinion has vastly changed with respect to the auto in the past few years. The people who find the gasoline engine so indispensable in their farm work, are beginning to realize, as people realize elsewhere, that there are infinite uses to which the same motive power can be put, even beyond the limits of the farm, and the present demand for motor trucks for use in sections remote from railways and harbours is one of the evidences of this change of thought.

It is sincerely hoped that no littleness or narrowness shall be allowed to retard the progress of the province, and that ere long, we, like our neighbors throughout the civilized world, will welcome the introduction of the labor-saving and comfort-making and money-making inventions that science and invention and economy are placing within our reach.

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IMPORTANT

Relatives of soldiers returning from the front are asked to communicate with the Secretary of the Provincial Committee of Wounded Soldiers Commission, Miss Nellie Gillespie, Charlottetown, intimating the date of expected arrival, cause of return and any other particulars, in order that preparation may be made for a fitting reception.



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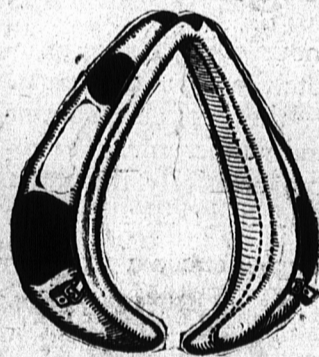


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