

SPEECH ON DRAFT ADDRESS BY MR. W. C. S. MCLURE

Continued From Page Nine
HON. MR. SAUNDERS: I rise to a point of order again. I might say that for years and years it has been the practice of every Premier, at least when the Premier happened to be a lawyer, to occupy the position of Premier and Attorney General. That practice was only discontinued on one occasion, when Premier Bell was Premier of this Province. So my hon. friend is entirely beside the mark. What I referred to, and he knows it, was that I took exception to a lawyer being Minister of Agriculture, or Acting Minister of Agriculture. That is the only exception I took, but my hon. friend is running true to form. He likes to exaggerate.

MR. MCLURE: Well Mr. Speaker, his chickens are coming home to roost. The Premier has found out that what he said in Opposition was not quite what it should have been. It was not fair, and now, while he is occupying the same position, drawing the same salaries, so far as we know on this side of the House, and so far as the Public knows, he sees that it was not fair. If it is now sauce for the goose it should have been sauce for the gander. I think, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier gets up to make an explanation of that kind, he should have added to it and said: "Well, I was out on a campaign then. I was trying to get into power, and I didn't care what I said." That would have been a better explanation of it. At the time that he was talking these exceptions he had in mind just one thing, and that was to criticize Premier Stewart, the man who led the best Government that this Province ever had. (Applause.)

These are a few of the things— and there are a great many more that will be aired on the floor of this House before the Session is over—showing the inconsistency of the Hon. Leader of the Government.

"OLD AGE PENSIONS."
 The hon. member from my native heath, Rustico, and a member of the government, while addressing this House, spoke on the Old Age Pensions. I was pleased that some member of the Government mentioned this important matter, but I regretted exceedingly, Mr. Speaker, that he was "soft-peddling" for the Government. Now I agree with the hon. member from Rustico that this was a plank in their 1927 platform; and I was pleased that the question was being considered. I must say to this Government, Mr. Speaker, that the Government must deal with the question. It has been omitted from the Speech from the Throne, but I hope to see it introduced in this House by resolution or Bill at this Session.

I cannot agree with the "soft-peddling" of my hon. friend from Rustico, that it is a financial question that they cannot undertake; because if that be the case, why did they put it in their platform with-out due consideration of the financial aspect of the question. What then was their purpose? I ask. I believe that I could answer that question myself, but will not do so, until they have had an opportunity to say or do something on this most important problem—a problem that is being considered the world over.

The problem of Old Age Pensions and its importance can be stated clearly and briefly. A number of commissions have made a study of this subject, and their reports and recommendations agree in general as to the character of this group. Two reasons are pointed out for the increasing size of the problem. Medical science is increasing the span of life, while at the same time the rapid pace of modern industry is lowering the age at which a man ceases to be a desirable employee; so that the period in a man's life of unemployment on account of age is increasing.

The worker of today, as compared with his grandfather, may count on a longer period of life, but a shorter period of industrial availability.

Again, the majority of aged dependents come from the ranks of the lower paid workers, whose earnings have not been sufficient to support their families and also to make provision for their old age. Dependancy in old age cannot be regarded as proof of thriftiness or individual maladjustment, but among the leading causes are impaired physical conditions and the lack of family connections. For the great majority of those reduced to want, the poorhouse is the only refuge; and this form of care is inadequate, antiquated, and very costly considering the returns made for the sums expended.

Instead of the poorhouse for those who are in want as a substitute there is a growing tendency to recommend some form of pension, to be regarded not as charity, but rather as an honorable recognition of past services, such as is paid to Civil Service employees and others. This recognition of past services, such as is paid to Civil Service employees and others. This recognition to be paid under supervision, and to be sufficient to enable the recipient to remain among his own friends instead of obliging him to become an inmate of an institution, with all of which implies in the way of loss of self-respect, comfort, personality, and interest in his life.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that all are agreed that old destitute people are charges of the State, and the sooner we realize this the better. Old Age Pensions then is a problem we must consider, because destitutes are charges of the State. The degrading feeling caused to the institutional inmates or recipients of charity, is something to be thought of. Then the cost to industry, in worry caused the worker, are great. The cost to the younger generations and to society is great. The younger generation is forced to support the aged destitutes, and this takes away the necessities of life from them. There are but a few of the many reasons why old age poverty is a problem and a charge of the State.

In Canada a measure has been passed as far as the Federal Government is concerned. The new Act, however, will not come into effect in any province, until that province through its own legislature has accepted the law and put it into effect. Public opinion is so strong in favour of Old Age Pensions that it forced the Federal authorities to pass the Old Age Pensions Act, but this Act does not go far enough; it is a plan to be administered jointly by the Federal Government and the provinces. It is the policy and platform of the Conservative party in Canada that this Act should be a Federal one and that the entire pension be paid from the Federal treasury.

However, the Act as now passed provides that the "indigent poor" upon reaching the age of 70 years shall receive pensions of \$20 a month. There are many provisions, such as reductions for ability to earn money and for the possession of private income. Where a home or other property is owned by the pensioner, it must be sold after his death in order to reimburse the province, and it also deals with many other things, such as time of being a British subject, etc. The members have all been supplied with copies of this Act.

The Federal Government will assist each province in carrying out the scheme; each province must administer it and pay half the pensions and all the cost of administration.

This Federal Act just passed is a beginning, and it may take a little time to accomplish the purpose of

this legislation,—yet it must and will come. It would not be expensive to Prince Edward Island, because at the present time the Government is spending some forty thousand dollars on its "indigent poor" half of this amount would be paid by the Federal Government. We owe it to our poor, it is our duty as a province to move in this matter and follow the Province of British Columbia.

The real purpose of Old Age Pensions is to make it possible for those reduced to poverty by age, to spend their declining years in self-respecting privacy, free from the anxieties of want and the stigma of pauperism, living independently in their own surroundings. Instead of being massed together in an institution.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to say any more on this matter of Old Age Pensions, only this,—and I say it earnestly to the Hon. Leader of this House,—that public opinion will urge him to implement his promise, or place before this House the reasons why. I am prepared to assist, if required, in bringing in such legislation, and will have something further to say when the resolution or Bill is tabled.

Prohibition
 Considering the prominent place prohibition held at the general election I was amazed at the small insignificant position it occupies in the Speech. Would you believe it, Mr. Speaker, when I tell you that it occupies a smaller space and contains fewer words than any other of the twenty-two paragraphs of the speech relevant to the questions at issue! The whole of this great subject on which the Liberals rode into power in June last is disposed of in exactly twenty-eight words. And what are these words? "The law is a much more rigid enforcement of the Prohibition Act being pursued and that the offenders realize this." Now is this actually the truth? Is the law being more rigidly enforced? Is it not the case that the poor and unfortunate members of the community who are being harassed and prosecuted, while others in higher positions are allowed to break the law with impunity? Is it not the case that if a poor unfortunate were found on the streets or country roads with a bottle of home-brew he would be prosecuted and compelled to suffer the extreme penalty of the law, while a citizen sufficiently affluent to go to Moncton, St. John or Montreal is allowed to return to this Province with two or three bottles of whiskey and without interference on the part of the authorities? Is it not the case that officers supposed to enforce this law have been unofficially cautioned by the Commission that they must not interfere with people returning from the mainland who have in their possession two or three bottles of whiskey?

It is all very well for the government to claim that they are enforcing this law more rigidly, but those who are familiar with the conditions know that all they are doing is hounding the poor and letting the rich go free. Evidently it is the policy of the Government and the Commission to so harass the under dog that when the plebiscite is taken in 1929 they will be an overwhelming majority against the continuance of Prohibition! At the last election a small percentage of voters decided that Prohibition should be the law for at least the next two years, and it is our duty and our intention to see that for that period, at all events, the Government shall keep to its policy of Prohibition. It is not for us as a party to pull the Government's chestnuts out of the fire!

It is unnecessary for me to deal further with the matter as it has already been referred to by previous speakers, but I should just like to take exception to the Premier's strong assertion that he was an out-and-out prohibitionist. Personally I know and believe he is an abstainer, but when it comes to politics he is just as much a "Government Controller" as he is a Prohibitionist. Sir, you will remember the Premier informed us that he was approached by a delegation in Summerside after Mr. Stewart had declared his policy in favour of Government Control. The declaration made by the Ex-Premier was on March 15th, and the delegation to which the Premier refers waited upon him at Summerside on the following Sunday, that was March 20th. The Premier did not tell us what actually took place at the interview between them, but that he was not then a convinced political prohibitionist is evident from the following letter which he wrote the next day, March 21st, and sent out to his leading supporters in the various centres throughout the Province.

HON. MR. SAUNDERS: I rise to a point of order again. That letter was not a letter of mine, and my hon. friend knows it. That is the letter that the Guardian newspaper had to retract after I challenged them and drove them to it. **MR. MCLURE:** Not this letter. There was no retraction from this

letter, Mr. Speaker. He says it is not his. Well, his name is signed to it, and it is worth reading anyway. With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall read it: "Dear Sir: "Some of the executive members of the East and West Prince Liberal Association feel on account of Premier Stewart's pronouncement in favour of Government Control of Liquor as one of the planks in the Conservative platform as the next ensuing Provincial election, it might be advisable to call an informal meeting in your district of some of the prominent and outstanding Party workers to consider this question, and to advise me just what course you think our Party should adopt. I think it would be advisable to have such a meeting at once as no time should be lost.

I have reason to think that the election may be called on at an early date, possibly the middle of May. For that reason our Party must be prepared to announce its policy at an early date. I also feel that the meeting should not be too large, as it might only lead to some acrimonious discussion without any tangible result. I do, however, think it best that both sides should be well represented at such a meeting—this is, those who favour the present law, and those who are opposed to it.

"Kindly do not let our Conservative friends know anything about such a meeting, the chairman of your meeting should also make it quite clear that everything should be strictly in our Party's interests and of a confidential nature. We need no remind you how carefully guarded the Government kept all their discussions and kept their own Counsel. Please impress this on all who attend your meeting.

"You should also bring to the attention of the meeting that our success at this election means more than on any former occasion. We will be getting at least \$160,000.00 additional subsidy and it will simplify the work to such an extent that I am sure whichever party succeeds on this occasion will be there for the next fifteen years. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that you do all you reasonably can to have your meeting view the situation with an open mind, and do what you consider is the best interests of our Party. You can then report to me that the meeting is in favour of Government Control, in favour of retaining the Prohibition Act, or are evenly divided on the question, as the case may be. This will enable me to come to what I hope may be a conclusion in the very best interests of our Party.

Yours truly,
 (Signed) Albert C. Saunders.
 Now I only read that letter for this purpose: When the Leader of the Government said that Ex-Premier Stewart had not consulted any of his friends with regard to the policy he was going to pursue, what has he to say of the action he took as shown by this letter. I do not know whether he wrote it or not. It purports to be signed by Albert C. Saunders. He has not yet denied it, so we will take it for granted that it is absolutely correct. (Applause.)

He was not taking his party followers too much into his confidence, either! He particularly asked his correspondents to avoid having too many at their meetings. Two or three were all that he requested, and he warns them to keep their meetings private, the same as the Conservatives had done. Yet, he has the audacity to come here and state that Ex-Premier Stewart did not consult the Conservatives on this very important matter.

He says in different places in the letter: "We must look out for the best interests of our Party." The conclusion one would naturally draw from that, would be this: "If Prohibition is going to be in the best interests of the party, we will adopt it as a platform; if not, we will take something else."

I have read that letter to show that sometimes, while a man might be a total abstainer and all that, he may still be only a political prohibitionist. The promises with regard to legislation are few and have reference to subjects already dealt with in preceding clauses in the Speech. We are told that the Public Accounts for the last year and the Estimates of expense for the current year will come down in due course and that the latter have been prepared with every regard to efficiency and economy. I trust that this may be the case, and it will be our duty when they are submitted to us to closely examine the items and see that they are in accordance with the promise.

You may be assured, Mr. Speaker, that so far as this Loyal Opposition is concerned, not very large in numbers but earnest and devoted in the public service, we will make it our duty to see that the public interests are protected and that the Government shall as far as is possible, be kept from undoing the good work carried out by its predecessors. (Loud Applause.)

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