

HON PREMIER ARSENAULT'S SPEECH ON ADDRESS

Continued from Page Ten

Crown. Today the French people in this Province occupy the low, swampy lands. That is the history of this province.

I am not upbraiding because we forget those acts of injustice done in the past, when many acts of injustice were being done to every class of people and nationally, but these are the facts, that we never owned the lands, they were given away to favorites and when we became a province it is a question whether we did not have a claim against the Crown for these lands so alienated. Not only did we not own the lands but we had to repurchase them. In order that we might have lands held free from rent, at an enormous expense to the Province; and part of the debt created when we went into the Confederation was created for the purpose of purchasing those lands.

At the time we went into Confederation we were allowed \$45,000.00 for want of public lands. We were allowed to draw as against that up to the sum of \$500,000.00 for the purpose of repurchasing some of these lands still outstanding; and that privilege was taken advantage of to the extent of something over \$700,000.00, so that today instead of receiving as a subsidy of \$45,000 for want of public land, we are actually only receiving the sum of something over \$5,000.00.

I say, then that we never had any public lands, and we had to purchase our public land. It might be said, "We advanced you \$800,000.00 for the purpose of purchasing those lands, and after you purchased them you resold them to the tenants, and the money came back to you." Yes, that is true; the money came back. I don't know whether it all came back, because there were enormous discounts given from time to time especially under former Liberal Governments, but the needs were such that as this money came back to the Land Office, it was used as ordinary revenue, and today not one cent of that capital is in existence.

It has all been expended for ordinary purposes of Government, and all we are getting for want of public lands in this province today is approximately the sum of \$5,000.00. Wherein can the case of Prince Edward Island be distinguished from that of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta? I have placed it before the acting Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, and I have put the question square and fair. And he could not say there was any way in which it could be distinguished, and I feel certain that this is a claim that must prevail in the end.

My friend says rightly that during the war it was not an opportune time to press a claim of this kind. "Now the war is over, what have you done since that? I challenge you to show you have taken any steps to press this claim." We have not been asleep, and we did not allow too much time to slip by before taking steps to bring this matter to the attention of the Government. And shortly after the armistice was signed, in just as short a time as was reasonable to allow those men

to find themselves, proper negotiations were entered into and these negotiations are still pending. And therefore, in this case I will not be in a position to table correspondence in the matter but I will read to my Honorable Friend some extracts from the negotiations that have been going on.

On the 7th day of Feb. a memorandum was submitted to the Minister of Finance, from which I am going to read some extracts. (Here the Premier read extracts from a memorandum prepared regarding the right of the province to similar treatment as had been given to Manitoba.)

As I say this is a matter that is, at present under negotiation and I trust that the result will be favorable to this province.

The claims of the province against Canada are specially reserved. I believe I have dealt with my Honorable Friend's criticism with regard to claims, rather fully, and I think I have disposed of his allegation that we had made no endeavour to present or press these claims.

I would like to deal for a few moments with the matter of schools. The school problem in this province is not a new one; it is not one that arose yesterday, and it is not one that arose last year or the year before. It was a problem when the present Government sat where the Opposition are at present sitting, in those days the then Government appointed a commission for the purpose of investigating school matters. That commission, at an expense of some \$4,000.00 or \$5,000.00 to this province made a report which they placed in the hands of the then Government; that report was tabled in the House, but further than being tabled, absolutely no action was ever taken on that report by the then Government.

The then Government had also in their hands a petition signed by some five thousand rate payers of this Province, asking that the salaries of the teachers be increased. The Government, of which some of my honorable friends formed part, took absolutely no action. It is said that we, since we came in power, and since we obtained the additional subsidy, only devoted a very small part of that additional subsidy towards increasing teachers' salaries. We applied a considerable part of the additional subsidy towards increasing salaries, to the extent of one half the amount received, that is approximately \$50,000.00 of that amount went to increase teachers' salaries by way of bonus, and by way of supplements.

And, Mr. Speaker, you will remember that some years back our friends when they were in power, abolished the supplements, with the consequence that the districts no longer took any interest, because it did not matter how much supplement they voted, there was no equivalent paid by the Government. We claim that by restoring the supplement, and paying 25 p. c. of the statutory allowance, we have encouraged the districts to vote more supplement.

And last year, after the propaganda

was made in favor of an additional supplement the school districts voted \$10,000.00 more than the year before, or an increase of 33 1/3 p. c. a very good increase for one year. I don't say the increase was sufficient; it was good in many of the districts, in probably over 80 p. c. of them the average supplement voted was something like \$75. In other districts, the average supplement shown by the school report was not more than \$35.00 a serious difference.

It is a question that must receive due consideration. My friend said that I made announcement at a certain meeting. Yes, I addressed the farmers' institute, and the Co-operative Egg & poultry Association and there in the presence of some two or three hundred farmers, I made the statement that a good increase had been made in supplements, last year; a good answer had been given to the appeal made on behalf of additional pay to teachers, but that it was not sufficient, but that I had confidence in the people of this Province, that when they realized their duties in school matters and the seriousness of the situation they would rise to the occasion, and without the necessity of any legislation, do their duty in that respect.

Strange to say, that statement of mine, expressing confidence in the people, that when they realized their duty they would perform it, met with not very hearty applause; but when another gentleman in this Province got up and said "No, the Premier is not taking the proper means by depending on the people; his confidence is misplaced. What the Government and Legislature should do is to impose a tax on the people themselves." That statement was received with applause.

Are we then, to conclude from the sentiment expressed at these meetings that the people of the Province are desirous that the Government, impose and collect a tax, for education instead of the people retaining the privilege of taxing themselves, and collecting their own taxes at a much lesser expense? I don't know whether those gathered there realized the matter fully, and whether that was the expression of the opinion of the people of this Province. From discussing the matter generally with the farmers throughout this Province, did not find that expression of opinion met with any great approval.

There is one thing, however, which devolves on the Legislature, and on the Government, and it is this: I believe no school should remain vacant by reason of insufficient supplement being voted by reason of insufficient salary being offered. I don't believe that the Government, or any individual, has a right to step in between employer and employee, and fix a rate of wages. I do not believe that in a democratic country that would be tolerated.

Then, if certain school districts can make arrangements with a competent teacher to teach in that district, at a certain salary, has the Government a right to step in and say "No, you shall not do that; you, a free and independent people will not have the right to choose a teacher, at a salary, agreed on, we will step in and say you shall not hire him at a certain wage?" It is a question whether legislation of this kind would be justifiable. But the Government has a right to see that the children of this country shall be educated, and if a certain number of people in a district refuse to vote an amount sufficient, some pressure should be brought on that district, to make them vote an amount sufficient to employ a teacher in order that the school may not remain vacant.

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Mr. Speaker, when the House adjourned at one o'clock, I was discussing the educational question in this Province, and was saying that we had a right to see that no schools remained vacant by reason of insufficient amounts voted by the districts. It might be a matter well worth considering, whether the districts, for the purpose of levying money for supplements, should not be larger. There could be a great deal said in favor of levying money for supplement all over the Province.

There seemed to be a sentiment as expressed at the meeting I already mentioned, whether they represent the sentiments of the country or not, I am not in a position to say; there was a sentiment that the Central Government should levy an amount sufficient to be designated as an educational tax, and set apart for the purpose of supplementing teachers' salaries in the rural districts.

The people who passed these resolutions were delegated from agricultural societies. I do not know whether before they came to the conference they had discussed the matter with their associates, and spoke for the farmers generally, or whether they only spoke for themselves. There should be some means of seeing whether they desire the Government to levy a tax for educational purposes. I think it might be best to leave it to the rate payers of school districts

to pronounce on the question by a plebiscite, and to accept their verdict in the matter. I say it is a matter well worth considering, and the Government will give consideration to that feature of the question.

I do not intend to take up the matter of agriculture. That is a matter that comes within a department and the head of the department is well able to deal with the question. But there is one question raised by His Honor in the speech, that deserves some consideration; that is the question of improvement of roads. And there will also the question of fertilization.

Your are aware, Mr. Speaker there is now before the House of Commons a bill having for its object the improvement of roads in Canada. Transportation begins at the farmer's door, and ends at the point of destination. The weight of the load that you can carry over a road is only as great as the worst part of the road you have to go over. You may have ten miles of first class roads, but in that ten miles you have half a mile bad, then you have to govern your load according to what you can carry over that half mile.

Therefore, it is a question that affects every man within the Province who has any transportation to do. The matter of good roads has been one that has been up, not only in this Province but in all provinces of Canada, for many years. We have seen that Quebec and Ontario, and other provinces spend enormous sums of money in the improvement of roads.

It is the intention of the Dominion Government to appropriate the sum of \$20,000,000.00 for the improvement of roads, this amount to be expended at the rate of \$4,000,000.00 a year spread over a period of five years. That bill is now before the House; I do not know whether it will go through or not. It is up to each province to say whether they will take advantage of this amount of money or not. When the question came up it was a question of how this money would be divided among the provinces. The first proposition was that the division be made according to population. There were those members in the Dominion Government, who would not agree to that. They said that if the money was divided according to population, the bulk of it would go to the larger provinces.

Some years ago when it was proposed to make a grant for agriculture an amount of \$20,000.00 was set aside for each province, and the balance given on population basis. The same basis was proposed to be used in the division of the road grant. It was then proposed that of this grant of \$4,000,000.00 a year, the sum of \$10,000,000.00 should be granted to each province, and the balance divided according to population. The members who were friendly to the small provinces prevailed, and the end of it was that the appropriation was made on the basis of a flat grant of \$50,000.00 to each province, and the balance divided according to population; and on that basis Prince Edward Island would be entitled to get as much as the larger provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and I understand that on that basis this Province would be entitled to the sum of \$120,000.00 or \$125,000.00 per year for five years. However, in order to get that grant of \$120,000.00 or \$125,000.00, which is a free gift from the Federal Government the provinces must put up 50 p. c. to the Dominion Government's 40 p. c.

It is my conviction that if an intimation is not given from a province that it intends to take advantage of the grant, that province will forfeit its amount, and its share shall be divided among the other provinces. It would require a great deal of consideration before a government of any province could well refuse to take advantage of this amount.

It may be said you are imposing certain liability on the province, it is very true, but after all is there anything of more importance, from the farmer's standpoint, and agricultural standpoint, than the question of good roads. It is what everybody has been crying for, and I always think expenditures made for the betterment of roads are always justifiable.

There has been a sentiment spread in this Province; I don't know whether my Honorable friends of the opposition are responsible to any extent for that sentiment, that it was the intention if this grant was accepted to build a highway from Tignish to Souris, an automobile speedway so-called and to spend the money there and leave all the adjoining districts—some of them fifteen or twenty miles distant—and to impose taxes on them and leave them without benefit of this road improvement.

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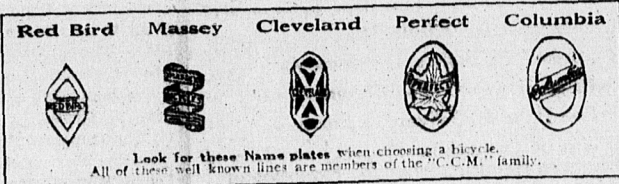
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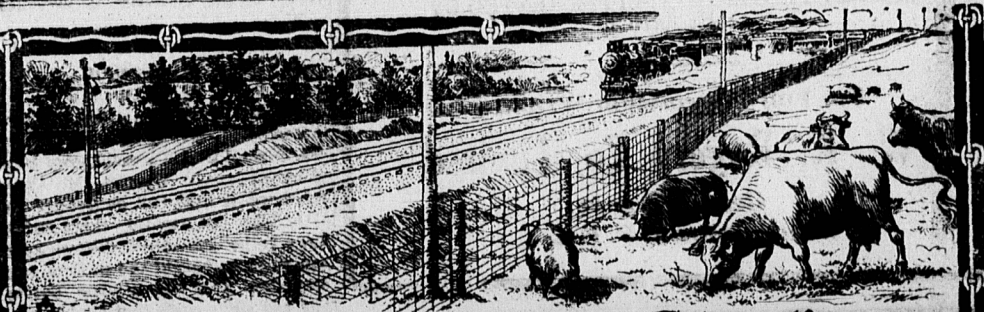
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far as the matter has been discussed, is nothing of the sort. The intention of the Government would be to connect, by improved highways, the different parts of the Province—the different settlements with shipping points, and once the different settlements of the Province are so connected we would have a main improved highway; so that if you had improved highway five or six hundred miles long, in

this Province, there would hardly be a man distant from any of those highways, more than a very few miles.

Moreover, once those highways had been improved with this money, it would release the other road money, for the purpose of improving the by-ways; so, eventually, you would have all the roads uniform. The improvement of the highways, is a matter more of less of engineering skill. Before any attempt at improvement could be en-

tered upon, it would be necessary to employ competent engineers to go over the roads, ascertain the grades, and survey the roads, in order that proper drainage could be obtained, because the first principle of road making, as I understand it, is thorough drainage, and unless you have thorough drainage you could not have good roads.

(To be continued)

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