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# DISCUSSION ON ESTIMATES CONTINUED IN LEGISLATURE

## Opposition Members Probe into Details of Government's Policy in Connection With Interest, Provincial Secretary Treasurer's Department, Public Works, Ferries, Roads, Bridges and Other Items.

Provincial Legislature, April 27th.  
Afternoon Session

At 4.45 p. m. the House resumed in committee, with Mr. D. C. McDonald in the chair. Discussion on the Item of Interest (\$59,300) was resumed.

MR. J. D. STEWART asked if this amount covered all the interest charges of the Province.

PREMIER BELL: That is expected.

MR. STEWART: It did not last year.

PREMIER BELL: The interest will vary according to whether or not it is paid on loans. There are loans in the Provincial Treasurer's office and as these increase the bank account decreases, because the loans account has increased about one half percent of the interest was saved this way, amounting to \$1,500.

MR. STEWART: That is good financing, and I am quite prepared to give you credit for it, but why not come out squarely and say that the total interest amounts to \$74,500?

HON. MR. LEA: That includes the highways account.

MR. STEWART: Is not that interest charged on the Province?

HON. MR. LEA: Not on ordinary receipts and expenditure.

MR. STEWART: Have you not got to vote that interest? What right have you to pay the interest without having it voted by Parliament?

PREMIER BELL: You are desirous of mixing the interest in the two matters.

MR. STEWART: It is you who is mixing it, so that it cannot be found.

PREMIER BELL said the interest was accounted for in a very simple way. The Province is doing a larger business now than before, and the increase of business accounts for the increase of interest. There is \$200,000 more revenue; that is coming from taxes and as it does not come in until late in the year the Government is obliged to go to the bank to draw the money as it is needed. The interest for the present year is substantially the same as last. There is \$29,620 on the bank in loans and \$29,620 more on debentures. About \$1,800 more was paid to the banks last year. This was not notified until the bank sent their statement. A proportion of it should have been charged up in the Road Account, which had not been done. As to the authority to pay interest out of the loans, that was one of the first obligations of the loans. It did not require more than statute authority.

MR. STEWART: Do you not vote it?

PREMIER BELL: No, we don't need it.

MR. STEWART: But you are voting it on the debentures.

PREMIER BELL: When we borrowed the money we borrowed it first for the purpose of expending it on the roads, and when a certain sum is reserved for interest and sinking fund, I don't think we need any special authority to pay that interest because it is authorized in the very nature of the transaction.

MR. STEWART: It is almost impossible to get my hon. friend down to the interest on the highways. He says we did not vote interest payable on debentures, yet his own statement contradicts that.

On bank overdrafts, \$29,620, and on debentures, \$29,620, it is right here in the Estimates he is proposing to pass. If he votes them on one way not on them all? The statute provides for every one of them and the interest also, and makes them a charge on the revenue of the Province. You have no right to provide this interest except by a vote of the House. Suppose anything were to happen the next year, where would you vote your item of interest? You have no right to tamper with the revenue of this Province, whether it is in the shape of automobile fees or anything else, without a vote of this House. I cannot understand why you are doing it, unless it is to cover up the fact that out of the revenue of this Province last year the interest paid was \$74,000 in round figures.

MR. STEWART: How could you get that authority. This Appropriation Act does not give you that privilege. This Government has been talking a great deal about other governments enfringing on the rights of parliament. Here is a case in point.

PREMIER BELL: We have Parliament's authority.

MR. STEWART: You have not. The item was carried.

The Land Office item, \$375, carried.

LEGISLATION, \$20,250.

MR. BRODIE: We had no right to increase our salaries.

THE CHAIRMAN: The sessional indemnity is fixed by statute and cannot be changed here.

MR. BRODIE: I was expecting to see it changed when the Premier brought down his budget.

MR. DEWAR: We have good constitutional authority that any item can be decreased.

MR. STEWART: Why should this be voted if it is fixed by statute? Interest is fixed by statute and it does not seem necessary to vote it?

THE CHAIRMAN: (after a silence) Are you putting that question to me?

MR. STEWART: I am putting it to the promoter, of course. Perhaps he does not wish to explain it.

PREMIER BELL did not reply. The item was carried.

The Legislative Library item, \$1,925, carried without discussion.

LEGISLATIVE GRANTS (\$8,100.)

MR. STEWART: The Premier made a verbal reply to my question with respect to making available the funds left by Lady Wood towards the Halifax School for the

PREMIER BELL: Perhaps you will give the details.

MR. STEWART: The details are contained in your own public accounts. I do not propose to hunt them up for you. You will find them there, all right.

PREMIER BELL: I doubt it.

MR. STEWART: You admitted it last year to my hon. friend from New Perth. I don't know why you want to get out of it now. That over-draft of 1919 was there, as ours was last September, because the taxes were not in. You admitted that you had an over-draft at the same time. That could have been paid afterwards out of revenue. If you are doing bigger business today, your argument amounts to this, that the more taxes collected the more interest you must pay. You are mixing up the Provincial accounts and scattering interest charges everywhere, and as a result these books contain a great many errors. I pointed out one which has since been corrected, and there are others. Take Receipts and Expenditure in the Outside Auditor's report and in the Provincial audit and they do not correspond. There is a difference in the amount of the interest on the sinking fund. There is not even a correction to show how this has occurred.

PREMIER BELL: My argument is that the larger the taxes are the bigger the business of the country. Money is expended in the early part of the year, before the taxes are in, and it must come from the banks. If the taxes were taken they would go against that over-draft in 1919, but that did not amount to very much.

I challenge that statement that \$74,500 interest was paid last year. We are paying more interest today because of the increased quantity of business.

MR. DEWAR said the House should vote the interest money on the highways before it was appropriated. The item should be kept separate. If it is true that there is \$18,000 interest to be paid then it should go to that account. A great deal of this interest was evidence of maladministration.

MR. STEWART: It is not correct in the book-keeping. On Page 11 of the Public Accounts we read: Interest on debentures \$7,500; Add these grant over-draft, \$7,500; Add these two items to your regular interest charges last year of \$59,000 and you will get it makes \$74,500, does it not?

PREMIER BELL: Are you adding the two together?

MR. STEWART: I am adding together all the interest that your Government paid last year.

PREMIER BELL: You are adding the highways general interest as the ordinary general interest.

MR. STEWART: Why not? Do you not pay the interest at the bank? You collected the money from the people.

PREMIER BELL: Ah, that is what you say.

MR. STEWART: You paid that much interest didn't you?

PREMIER BELL: We paid it out of the highways account.

MR. STEWART: Do you propose to vote that this year?

PREMIER BELL: We do not propose to vote farther than what we have.

MR. STEWART: You are going to propose to appropriate that money without a vote of this House?

PREMIER BELL: We have that vote.

MR. STEWART: How could you get that authority. This Appropriation Act does not give you that privilege. This Government has been talking a great deal about other governments enfringing on the rights of parliament. Here is a case in point.

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not compliment him upon his reply or his method of handling this matter, disclosed by his reply. He said he had been speaking to Mr. Gaudet and various other persons and Mr. Gaudet apparently had made some statements which were not favorable to an application to the Court to be presented to the Court, but at any rate there was another method, and that would be to pass an Enabling Act in this House, as was done in the case of the Connolly estate. It was made a perpetual corporation as all perpetual trusts should be. This is eminently a case where this House should intervene so as to make the fund available. There is no reason why this should not have been done by this Government. I made the suggestion last year, and still nothing has been done.

PREMIER BELL said he would be only too glad to take any legitimate means to augment the revenue. (Laughter). This matter was mixed up in the drawing of the will. The will named the Chief Justice and the Attorney General as trustees. The original men acted, but the present Chief Justice and Attorney General does not perpetuate the trusteeship. His own impression was that it would be better to make some re-arrangement. He believed under the circumstances that the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition was the best way to cut the Gordian Knot. Part of this money goes to the Indians and that should be handed over to the Dominion Government. The balance should be placed in trust and the interest, applied, one half to support our deaf and dumb children at the Halifax institution, and half to the charges for the blind. There was probably not more than \$300 or \$400 a year coming from this source. More was expected but it appears that some bonds in England, depreciated.

MR. STEWART: That simply goes to show the necessity for taking action before. I pointed it out last year and it could have been seen to long ago. If we went to the Court of Chancery there would be a considerable bill of costs to pay and the matter could be arranged without that in this Legislature. If you pass an act appointing a corporation you will have no further trouble when a trustee dies. If this fund had been in the charge of five trustees there is a possibility that the amount lost through depreciation of English bonds would have been less.

The item carried.

The Item, General Miscellaneous Expenses, \$3,500 carried without discussion.

PAUPERS, \$3,800.

MR. LePAGE said the Infirmary is filled and there is not any room to take care of a great many destitute persons. A little more should be allotted to serve in this kind, which makes it possible at a small fee to keep poor people with their relatives.

MR. ARSENAULT referred to the past severe winter. He knew of many needy cases. He was sorry to hear that they had not received the help they deserve from the Government. It was unfortunate that the estimate is not larger. Mr. Arsenault cited a distressing case, which the Premier had promised to look into. A poor man had been kept for over a year at a dollar a week. He died and Mr. Arsenault understood that this paltry sum had not been paid by the Government. Letters of distress are not answered by the Government and this is very discouraging. In one case in Summerside, threats have been made to take a person to Charlottetown and to leave him in the office of a certain Department. In fact he understood that this had been done before.

The item carried. The Items Postage and rent of Post Office Boxes, (\$2,500); and Provincial Auditor's department, (\$2,700) passed without discussion.

(To be Continued)



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