Budget Debate In Full Swing

Criticisms Of Opposition Leader And Mr. LePage Replied To By Hon. A. F. Arsenault And Mr. D. F. Bethune.

Yesterday afternoon and evening saw considerable progress made in the budget debate in the Legislature. Mr. W. M. Lea, leader of the Opposition, was followed by Hon. A. F. Arsenault, Mr. B. W. LePage, and Mr. D. F. Bethune, the latter moving the adjournment at 10.55 p.m., when the House adjourned to 10 a.m. this morning.

Following the Premier in the Budget debate on Tuesday evening, Mr. Lea said he was interested to note how responsibility had "sobered" the present leader of the Government. He was amazed, however, at the pessimism with which the Premier regarded the financial situation.

There was no province that was in such a good financial position as Prince Edward Island at the present time. He. Mr. Lea, could show that the net indebtedness was something under $3,000,000 There were also some $300,000 of assets the Premier had not mentioned which were due the Province and for which we should receive almost full value.

The Premier had not dealt with the increased earnings of the Province in reviewing the mounting expenditure, Mr. Lea complained. "I will admit, however," he said, "that he was much more fair tonight than he was a year ago."

During the last ten years the earnings from livestock and potatoes were over $3,000,000 and this increase would not have been as great if the roads had not been improved. This was "a revenue earning investment," which the Liberal Government had made.

The new revenues derived from the Domicile Companies Act was credited to the Liberal Administration by the Opposition leader.

Answering criticism for not having issued debentures to pay the bank overdraft, Mr. Lea said, "we are all very wise after the fact but how did we know that the market was going to be unfavorable?"

While the indebtedness had admittedly been greatly increased in recent years there was sufficient revenue to pay interest on sinking funds and to leave an amount greatly increased over what the previous Stewart Government enjoyed.

Credit for establishing "the Dalton Sanatorium" was taken by Mr. Lea. He hastily corrected himself and said, "I mean the Provincial Sanatorium. I don't know why it is that the Dalton Sanatorium comes to my mind all the time."

Hon. Dr. MacMillan: "It's on your conscience." (Applause).

It had fallen to the unhappy lot of the Liberals, Mr. Lea said, to spend a great deal of money because the Conservatives had neglected public works.

Continuing the debate on Wednesday afternoon, Mr. Lea said he wished to correct a statement of the Premier to the effect that the present practice of the bank is to compound the interest on the overdraft monthly. The practice is to compound it quarterly. The interest on overdraft when the Liberals were in power was 5½ per cent and this, compounded monthly, was comparable favorably to the interest payable on debentures.

The Premier's statements regarding interest charges in last year's Public Accounts, made at the last session and during the election campaign, were criticised as misleading and inaccurate by Mr. Lea, who said the purpose had evidently been to pursuade the people that the Liberals had doubled the indebtedness.

Mr. Lea's Figures

According to the Public Accounts Mr. Lea said the net debt at Dec. 31, 1931, was $2,954,955.59. In the Public Accounts Committee report of last year the liabilities were shown at $2,919,000. Against this were assets of $292,000, leaving a net debt of $2,629,000, or an increase of $328,534. This, he said, was the extent to which the Liberal Government went behind.

The present Government finds itself largely in a difficulty of its own making, he said. It is reaping what it sowed when it criticised the Bell Government for increasing taxes in an endeavor to balance the budget and particularly when it attacked the Bell Government's poll tax. Mr. Lea lauded the advantage of this taxation measure. If the Conservatives had been "statesmen instead of little politicians" they would have shown some way of making up this revenue. The revenue lost in poll tax and further reductions in other ways had lost to the Province at least $600,000.

"We too could have cancelled the poll tax, but we realized our responsibility to the electors," Mr. Lea said. He, Mr. Lea, had been called "the father of the Tax Act." This was not correct, but at least he had been consistent in his belief that taxes, to be equitable, should be paid by all sections of the people. He had never complained about paying his own taxes and had always been thankful that he was farming in a Province where taxes were so low.

The road gravelling policy of the late Liberal Government was dealt with, credit being taken by Mr. Lea for increased potato shipments due to this expenditure. The Liberal Government's information with respect to local gravel was that it was not suitable for road making.

"There may have been some gravel in the mud that this Government has put on the roads," he said, "but I would not call that a gravelling policy." The gravel used last fall was "at least 50 per cent clay" and the work would never last over the period of hard flint gravel such as the Liberals used.

He did not object to the use of this material within a reasonable distance of the pits, but the cost was entirely too much to distribute for 20 miles. For permanent jobs, he predicted, the Government will find it necessary to use imported gravel.

The criticism has been made, Mr. Lea continued, that when the unemployment relief was given the money went to men who did not require it. In some cases, he said, well-to-do farmers, sons of federal ministers and others received $40 a day for hauling gravel for unemployment relief. Some men had purchased new trucks to take advantage of the grant; and others who received work had substantial accounts at the bank. It was never intended that the grant should be used in that manner.

Heard No Criticism

The total amount spent by the Liberals in four years on public works was, Mr. Lea said, $1,500,000. In all the last campaign, the speaker had not heard one criticism as to the general policy of the then Government. A great portion of the Liberal expenditure was for steel bridges, ferries, etc—work in the same class with the necessary expenditures which will now have to be made in rebuilding Falconwood Hospital and Prince of Wales College.

The road machinery expenditure of the Liberal Government was also defended. The Liberals had "plowed the ground" in this respect and had shown that they were progressive.

"We can account for all the money we expended and if we had not made these expenditures, the motor vehicle tax would not be what it is today," he declared.

To "the sagacity of one of the Mr Campbells" Mr. Lea credited the introduction of the Domicile Companies Act from which source revenue this year is estimated at $40,000.

Special statutory consideration by the Liberals to encourage in this Province the winding up of wealthy estates and, by succession duty amendments, to make the Province "a cheap place to die in," were also referred to.

With regard to subsidy settlement Mr. Lea d'd not dispute that the late Liberal Government had failed to secure anything but, he continued, the present Government was in "exactly the same position." It was felt by the Liberals that they would gain greatly by waiting until the claims of the western Province were settled. "Unfortunately the other Maritime Provinces would not co-operate with us or we would have got a subsidy. But we found we were alone."

The previous Stewart Government by reducing taxes had "prejudiced" the Liberal Government's case in the matter of pressing subsidy claims at Ottawa, he complained

Agriculture

The importance of promoting agriculture, particularly at this time, was emphasized. Mr. Lea had always regretted, as Minister of Agriculture, that the business men and business organizations in this city and elsewhere did not realize the importance of spending more money in their department. Our farmers see now the value of the live stock industry; butter prices have increased 10 cents a pound within the last few days and there were other indications that the time was opportune to stress the benefits of dairy farming. He would strongly suggest that the vote for Agriculture be not reduced and that a special drive be made this year to improve the live stock industry, especially in view of the slump in the potato market.

Mr. Lea commented heatedly on an alleged campaign statement of the senior member for Charlottetown, to the effect that "because he (Mr. Lea) was a farmer he should be the last farmer Premier of the Province."

Hon. Dr. MacMillan: "I never said that, at all."

Mr. Lea complained that Dr. MacMillan should have apologized for statements made at the Capitol Theatre and insinuated that he, Dr. MacMillan, was not a gentleman because he did not do so.

Disapproval was expressed by the Opposition leader at the separation of the Provincial Police and Prohibition forces. He also commented on disturbances at the Prince and Queens County Jails which he understood had taken place since the Conservatives came into power He recalled criticisms which the Liberal Government had received in this connection.

Government members "had been driven into behaving themselves" with respect to the Prohibition Act, Mr. Lea taunted. He referred to the defeat of Government Control in 1927 and went on to discuss the attitude adopted by the Conservatives at the last election towards the Ticket of Leave Act.

The appeal to elect the Stewart Government in order to obtain a subsidy increase had been an important factor in winning the election for the Conservatives, he declared.

"The doing away of the Techincal School established by the Bell Government should weigh heavily on the conscience of th's Government", Mr. Lea thought. Whatever courses the Premier may establish in Agriculture, he suggested that anything less than a four or five months' winter course will be of little value.

The External Audit, Mr. Lea thought, was "worthless". The Provincial Auditor, whose ability and integrity he commended, could, he said, have given all the necessary statements. The extraordinady pre-election expenditure on road work, incurred by the Liberal Government was defended on the ground that employment was badly needed at that time. Tenders had been called wherever possible and the money had not been wasted. He wished to know if the purchases now being made are made on tender. Mr. Lea disapproved entirely of the appointment of a Purchasing Agent.

D'smissal of "nexpensive and inoffens've officials" in the Provincial Building was criticised by the Opposition leader.

HON. MR. ARSENAULT

Congratulations to the Speaker and deep regret at the untimely death of the late Hon. Leonard McNeill were voiced by the next speaker, the Hon. Adrian F. Arsenault, (Third District of Prince).

Listening to the remarks of the Opposition leader, Mr. Arsenault understood more clearly why it was that the Liberals had been defeated. The Opposition leader complained that the people never appreciated the Bell Government and Mr. Bell's "modest surpluses" — which turned out to be paper ones; he also complained of the Conservatives having fostered indignation meetings at that time and prejudiced the people against paying taxes.

Analyzing Liberal arguments advanced in support of the Bell Government's poll tax, Mr. Arsenault pointed out that the tax was never collected and cited a Liberal member from Summerside who admitted in the House that he had not himself paid it.

Mr. Arsenault twitted the Opposition leader on his remarks on taxation. They had sounded like extracts from another speech, but Mr Lea had replied that good or bad his remarks on this subject were original. It was interesting indeed to know that notwithstanding all that has been said in the past, we have one man in the House who can give utterance to thoughts that have never been expressed before.

It was ridiculous, Mr. Arsenault said, to contend the potato industry had been developed due to the road-making activities of the Liberal Government. For some time after taking office, this Government had had trouble with the prisoners of Prince County Jail. However, the prisoners soon found that irregularities would not be tolerated as they had been tolerated under the Liberal regime. An investigation was held and the troublesome prisoners were confined to their cells and placed on rations of hard tack and water. The present jailor has asserted his authority and the Government has confidence that these disturbances will not be repeated. If there is any further trouble, even stricter measures will be taken.

Prohibition Enforcement

Liberal insincerity in the enforcement of the Prohibition Act was scored by the speaker. The people have confidence in the Stewart Government's assurance that it will do all in its power to enforce all laws.

The Opposition leader's complaint of "attacks" made on him by the Minister of Public Health during the election campaign were answered by Mr. Arsenault. Mr. Lea had quoted a statement which did not convey the meaning of the Minister's remarks.

Mr. Lea: "He didn't say what he meant?"

Hon. Mr. Arsenault: "He said what he meant, but you didn't read all he said."

Mr. Lea's lack of an election platform and the general record of his administration had been considered by the electors and the result was that the Lea Government was voted out of office. Mr. T. A. Campbell had complained of his defeat in the by-election preceding the general election, and also that as a result he had been compelled to seek election in the First District of Prince One would think from the tone of his complaint that he was representing some far-off district at the North Pole, instead of a District of which any representative should be proud. Mr. Campbell's position on his own showing reminded Mr. Arsenault of "Mahatma Gandhi and his goat."

The previous Conservative Government had been criticised for not building ferry boats, but the fact was that the old boats were serviceable at that time and it was sound economy to use them as long as possible.

Despite the Opposition leader's deprecatory remarks about local gravel, Mr. Arsenault had found in his own district that shore gravel had been used with good results The roads can now be regravelled, if necessary, every three or four years, and the cost will be less than the imported material.

Unemployment Relief

Strong denial of the sweeping charge that the unemployment grant had been misused for political purposes under the present Government was made by Mr. Arsenault who cited the satisfactory manner in which the grant had been administered in his own district. It was unfortunate that one in the responsible position of the leader of the Opposition should give publicity to heresay reports of men with alleged bankrolls receiving unemployment relief.

The huge pre-election road expenditures of the Liberal Government were cited. In one district alone—First Prince — $83,000 was spent last summer. "They were bound to have an Attorney General this time and were going to build a gravel road to take him here," commented Mr. Arsenault drily.

The present Government will endeavor to give the people good roads within the means of the Province but the Government did not intend to throw away money in extravagant expenditure in this or any other matter. The people now realize that rigid economy must be practised in the Department of Public Works. It is easy enough to spend a lot of money on the roads, and this, Mr. Arsenault pointed out, had been the policy of the Liberal Government. With all this expenditure was the Province any better off after four years of Mr. McIntyre's administration of the Public Works Department? Mr. Arsenault did not think so. He had nothing against the former Minister; he was a likeable gentleman, genial, sociable, generous,—but extravagant.

Mr. Lea: "That spoils it all!"

Today, Mr. Arsenault said, we are getting back to the sturdier, more economical practises of earlier generations.

The suggestions of one member of the Opposition that Prince of Wales College had been burned because a Liberal official at that institution had been replaced by an appointee of the Conservative Government was strongly denounced by Mr. Arsenault, who said the person capable of making such an insinuation was not a loyal citizen.

Health and Education Portfolio

The appointment and installation of Hon. Dr. MacMillan as Minister of Public Health and Education was a measure of which this Government is proud. This portfolio was one of the recommendations of the Education Commission and legislation to provide for it had been passed by the Liberals who however had failed to fill the position. The appointment would save the Province many times the Minister's salary.

The revelations contained in the report of conditions at Falconwood by Doctors Flemming and Mitchell of McGill University were referred to, also the classification of patients now being made by Dr. Clark, an expert psychiatrist from Ontario. This information will be of great assistance to the Government in determining the best type of building, equipment and method of treatment in reestablishing the institution.

The superiority of old-time school readers over modern ones was maintained by Mr. Arsenault. The present Minister of Education, he believed, was well qualified to decide on the selection of the proper school books to be used.

Mr. Arsenault reiterated his belief in the possibility of establishing fruit canning industries in the Province, including in certain sections of Prince County, the growing of cranberries and other small fruits. This had been made a subject of jocular reference by the Opposition but the matter was too important to our farmers to be treated as a joke.

Tobacco growing was mentioned by Mr. Arsenault as an industry which might be developed advantageously; also tanneries, as suggested recently in the press.

The prospect of formulating plans for developing Empire markets at the forthcoming economic conference at Ottawa was referred to as one of the hopeful indications of the immediate future.

Some sign of co-operation from the Opposition rather than carping criticism, would, Mr. Arsenault believed, be more appreciated by the people and more in line with the best interests of the Province.

MR. B. W. LEPAGE

Following Hon. Mr. Arsenault in the debate, Mr. B. W. LePage congratulated the Speaker on his elevation and extended sincere sympathy to the families of the late Hon. P. A. Scully and the late Hon. Leonard McNeill.

Unfortunately, depite a bountiful harvest for which we should be thankful to Providence, agricultural prices have been lower than at any time in the last forty years. At that time prices of other commodities were correspondingly low and the farmers had a different living standard. Today agricultural commodity prices are out of all proportion to the price of other articles.

This condition Mr. LePage attributed largely to the tariff protective policy of the Federal Government.

Instead of practising "rigid economy" as the Conservatives promised to do, this Government's policy could better be described as "wilful extravagance," Mr. LePage said. He criticised the expenditure of $5,500 on Ministers' cars, also the creation of the portfolio of Health and Education and the expenditure of "huge sums of money" in scraping the roads. Had the money "wasted in graveling" been given to the laboring men it would have been better economy. Mr. LePage criticised also the appointment of a Purchasing Agent and the qualification of the appointee.

The road graveling last fall was done on roads not properly prepared. He cited Rustico Beach.

Mr. J. A. MacDonald: Tell us about Oyster Bed Bridge."

Mr. LePage said he did not want to be interrupted. He complained of wasteful expenditure on road work at Rustico Beach which was worse than useless. He hoped that "Providence would carry that work away, because it spoiled the beach." Out of 44 men employed on that job only three were Liberals, he said, adding that he knew what he was talking about in this matter.

Mr. D. F. Bethune: "You've got another 'think' coming."

At Nine Mile Creek, Mr. LePage maintained, 600 tons of gravel were hauled at a cost of $3 per ton. Pure gravel could have been landed there from Nova Scotia at $2.75 per ton whereas the local material was only 50 per cent pure.

Two wealthy men had been given work under the unemployment grant on the Nine Mile Creek job, Mr. LePage averred. One of them "owned half a dozen houses in Charlottetown."

The Premier, Mr. LePage said, had been elected on the issue of pressing for subsidy settlement. Six months have elapsed since the election and nothing had yet been done in this connection. Old Age Pensions had also been promised and yet there was nothing about this matter mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. This notwithstanding that there was no difference between the situation now and before the election.

Hon. Dr. MacMillan: "We are hear of you now."

Mr. LePage: "I think the Province would be just as well clear of you."

Hon. Dr. McMillan: "They didn't say so, though."

Takes Credit

Credit for building the Provincial Sanatorium, Mr. LePage said was due to the late Liberal Government. He reviewed public works expenditures amounting to $1,616,800 which the Liberals had made and which he said had properly been charged to capital account. Notwithstanding this, and deducting revenue assets, the net Liberal debt at the end of their four years was $2,954,895.49 or an increase of only $934,234.80 during their term.

"We built the Sanatorium," Mr. LePage again declared. If a Liberal Government had not been in power "there would be no Sanatorium there today."

Dental clinics should be held in different parts of the country under the direction of the Minister of Health, he thought.

Mr. LePage was "not quite sure" that the Stewart Government was enforcing Prohibition as well as the Liberals did. At any rate, it was the Liberals who had saved the Prohibition Act in 1927. Two members of the present Prohibition Commission he thought were not in heartfelt sympathy with the act because they had previously supported Government control.

Mr. LePage's Understanding

Mr. LePage said he was sorry to hear the Premier say that the Provincial Police now had nothing whatever to do with enforcing the Prohibition law.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: "I did not say that."

Mr. LePage: "That is my understanding."

Hon. Mr. Stewart: "I am not responsible for your understanding."

Mr. LePage: "I thought you meant what you said."

Hon. Mr. Stewart: "I certainly meant what I said but I did not say what you quoted me as saying."

Conditions at Falconwood Mr. LePage said, were not "half as bad" as the McGill doctors had made out in their report Anyway the place was dirty it could have been scrubbed out with soap and water

Continued on Page 7)

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BIRTHS

BRYANTON—At the home of her sister, Mrs. Elmer Bryanton, Kensington, March 11, 1932, to Mr. and Mrs. Angus McLeod, Halifax, a son, Angus Elmer.

DEATHS

GILLIS—At Shamrock, March 15, 1932, Hugh Gillis in his 75 year. Funeral Friday at 2 p. m.

POLLARD—At Alberry Plains, Mar. 16th, William Pollard, aged 36 years. Funeral from his late residence at 8.30 Friday morning, to Vernon River Church.

MACLEOD — On Feb. 29th, at Rochester, New York, U. S. A., Alexander J. MacLeod, a native of Heatherdale, Prince Edward Island.

Card of Thanks

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Godfrey, Kingston, wish to thank their friends and neighbors for the many acts of kindness shown them during their recent sad bereavement. 1516-3-17-1i.

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