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Discrimination Against Kings County

The following discussion between the Minister of Public Works, Hon. Mr. Elliott and Mr. J. A. Macdonald of Kings, took place, Hansard page 3102—

Prince Edward Island—harbours and rivers—Bonshaw freight shed, 2,900.

Mr. QUINN: Why is this freight shed needed?

Mr. ELLIOTT: This is to construct a freight shed, 30 feet by 60 feet. Warehouse facilities are urgently required on account of the development of the seed potato industry in the district. The annual business over the wharf is between \$30,000 and \$40,000.

Item agreed to.

Charlottetown—reconstruction of railway wharf \$140,000.

Mr. MACDONALD (Kings): Is this wharf being taken over from the railway department by the Public Works department?

Mr. ELLIOTT: An order in council was passed on October 19, 1927, granting authority to transfer from the Canadian National Railways to the Department of Public Works certain wharf properties including the railway wharf, freight shed and portion of coal shed at Charlottetown.

Item agreed to.

West Point wharf repairs, \$4,000.

Mr. MACDONALD (Kings): Before the items for Prince Edward Island are all through, while I do not like to follow the suggestions that were made in the house this afternoon and evening with regard to favouritism in the matter of distributing the money in the Public Works department, yet having regard to the situation that existed last year and that exists this year in Prince Edward Island, I feel it is almost impossible to get away from that idea. A year ago I drew the minister's attention to the fact that out of an amount of \$107,000 voted for harbours and rivers for the three counties of Prince Edward Island, the sum of \$1,000, which was a revote from the year before, was voted for Kings county. This year I find a similar condition existing although not to quite so bad an extent. Out of a total vote of \$229,800, an amount of \$13,000 is voted for Kings county. It seems to me representing the county in opposition and remembering that the other counties have government representation, that our country is being penalized because two years ago it voted against the government. I hate to make that suggestion. I know the minister does not want to play that kind of politics but it is pretty difficult, in view of the facts as we find them, to entertain any other idea. If we did not have needs, and very serious needs, I would not say a word, but I want to call the attention of the minister to this fact. In 1925 a vote of \$38,500 was put through the house for a very important piece of work, namely the strengthening of the Souris breakwater. Souris is one of the most important towns in Kings county and it is an important point serving a large section of the people. As I say, in the session of 1925 an amount of \$38,500 was voted for this work and a contract was let, but for some reason or another the contractor did not perform the work. In the session of 1926 the appropriation was dropped; the contract was not renewed and the work has not yet been done. The breakwater is in imminent danger of going to pieces and if this occurred Souris property would be destroyed. I should like to ask the minister why the vote of \$38,500 passed in the session of 1925 was dropped and not renewed.

Mr. ELLIOTT: The fact that he has the government engineer's report of the imminent danger of the breakwater being destroyed if it is not strengthened.

Mr. ELLIOTT: Do I understand my hon. friend, who is the representative for Kings county, to say that there was \$1,000 expended in that constituency a year ago?

Mr. MACDONALD (Kings): I said that out of the votes passed in the house a year ago, amounting to \$107,000 for harbours and rivers in the whole province, the sum of \$1,000 was earmarked for Kings county.

Mr. ELLIOTT: If my memory serves me aright, an amount of \$60,000 was expended on a potato warehouse on a wharf in Kings county, my hon. friend's riding, which he says was destroyed and again.

Mr. MACDONALD (Kings): I was not speaking about the votes which were the result of the recommendations of the Duncan commission. As a result of the recommendations of that commission there were three votes, one for Prince, one for Kings and one for Queens. I was leaving those out altogether because they are not ordinary votes by this parliament. I was referring to the votes for harbours and rivers for the three counties, and for that reason I did not take into account any particular county.

Mr. ELLIOTT: If my hon. friend wishes to be fair, does he mean to suggest that Kings county last year and this year has not been very generously treated by the Department of Public Works?

Mr. QUINN: I say, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. ELLIOTT: I am not asking you.

Mr. MACDONALD (Kings): I will reply to the minister's question, by asking him another. Does he think it is fair when he votes \$107,000 for the three counties for harbours and rivers generally that only \$1,000 should be granted to my county, which needs public works even more than the other counties? I say this to the minister, and he should know it, that in our county we have a larger proportion of harbours and rivers than in any other county in the province.

Mr. ELLIOTT: My hon. friend, does he not think \$145,000 of this \$229,800 is a revote?

Mr. MACDONALD (Kings): I am aware of that. I have asked the minister a direct question twice about the Souris breakwater, but I will repeat it. In the session of 1925 this government voted \$38,500 for the purpose of strengthening the Souris breakwater. That work was needed at the time, and it has been needed ever since. A contract was let by the government, but through some inadvertence the contractor did not do his work. The votes were dropped in 1926 and again in 1927. That work is very much needed, because there is imminent danger of the breakwater being destroyed if it is not strengthened. Why was that vote put in the estimates in 1925 and then dropped, and why was it not put in again when there is very much greater need for the work?

Mr. ELLIOTT: I suppose the various officials who have had to pass upon these votes from time to time have decided that something else was more urgent. That is all that I can say.

Mr. MACDONALD (Kings): Does the minister expect me to be satisfied with suppositions? If so, he is making a mistake. I am not satisfied to take what he supposes at all, and it is no fair to ask a member to accept his suppositions in the matter. If anything could most strongly bear out the charge of favouritism and discrimination against Kings county it is that one fact that a vote was put in for this work when the county was represented by a Liberal and dropped out of the estimates the following year when he failed to secure reelection, and the vote has been dropped ever since. The minister's answer is not satisfactory. I want something better than that; I want some facts.

Mr. JENKINS: I should not like the impression to go abroad that Kings county had been discriminated against in any way by the other members from the province. I know my hon. friend from Kings wants to be fair to the representatives of Queens and Prince. At all times I have endeavoured personally to co-operate and do anything I could to help the people of Kings county. I want that distinctly understood. When construction of a warehouse at Georgetown was mooted last year I tried everything we could to support the request. Even from a selfish point of view, Mr. Chairman, it was our duty to do what we could to establish a warehouse at that point, because Georgetown harbour, is open very much later in the season than Charlottetown harbour, and a considerable quantity of our potatoes and other produce going forward must be shipped through that port. Therefore, as I say, it was essential that we should push for Georgetown if only from a selfish point of view. I think my hon. friend from Kings would not want the impression to go abroad that my colleagues and myself from Prince Edward Island were in any way responsible for votes not being put in the estimates for his county. Kings county needs more money. Mr. Chairman, and I think there should be more warehouses established there, because the potato business is growing very rapidly, and I feel sure if the minister can see his way clear to do anything for Kings county next year, even in the supplementary estimates this year, my colleagues and myself will be only too pleased. I am quite sure that the member for Kings would not want to convey the impression that we were endeavouring to block expenditures for his county. Personally I say from the floor of this house that I am not doing so. On the contrary, I repeat that my colleagues and I are endeavouring in every way to co-operate with the people of Kings

county. I only make that statement in order that my position may be clear before the people of my province.

I want to thank the Minister of Public Works for the consideration he has given to our province. A great deal of fault has been found with him to-night, but I sincerely appreciate all he has done for our county for the building of a wharf at Charlottetown, which work was done last year, and numerous other works throughout the province, all of which were necessary. I am sorry to hear so much criticism of the Public Works department because, speaking personally I have always found the minister a first-rate fellow. He is willing to meet any reasonable demand. Our friends on the other side must remember that a great deal of money is being spent in places where we have no representation in accord with the government, notably in Toronto, for instance, and I think the minister has been very fair to constituencies that did not have representation to this side of the house. I have always found him very reasonable. I wish to add my word of tribute for the good work he is doing.

Mr. QUINN: I would not say a word at this stage of the debate but to the credit of the Minister of Public Works when a question is asked, he has not asked me the question which I attempted to answer on behalf of twenty-five per cent of the representation from Prince Edward Island. The last speaker, who represents part of seventy-five per cent of the representation of Prince Edward Island, has tried to point out that the Department of Public Works has been very fair, but I ask was the minister fair when he tried to place the credit of Kings county on an expenditure of \$80,000? May I say, and my friends to the right of the Minister of Public Works will bear me out in this, that Kings county is the only county in Prince Edward Island whose harbours are open to shipping throughout the winter, and naturally a cold storage potato warehouse would be placed in that county. Now when this expenditure is made in Kings county to look after the shipping requirements of the whole province, why should the minister endeavour to place that expenditure to the credit of Kings county?

Mr. MACDONALD (Kings): I was glad to hear the remarks of my hon. friend from Queens (Mr. Jenkins). I wish to assure him that there was no intention on my part to charge either him or any of his colleagues with being a party to discriminating against Kings county. I want to be fair to them because I have always found them absolutely fair with me. But certainly the votes that have gone through the house to-night are not fairly the county, nor were the votes that were passed last year. With regard to the frostproof warehouse which the minister referred to as having been built in Kings county last fall, I think the remarks of the member for Queens make it clear that that was not a county affair, but provincial. I wish to express the appreciation of the people of Kings county for the building. It was late in the season before the contract was let, but from December up to the 14th of January five large steamers loaded at the warehouse. I think this justifies the expenditure. But I do wish to get an answer from the minister in regard to the vote for the Souris breakwater which was placed in the estimates, passed by the house, and the contract let in 1925. Why has not the work been carried on since?

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N.Y. Cen. & Hud. Riv. R.R.	184 1/2
Con. Gas Co. (N.Y.)	161
Hud. Motor Car Co.	89 1/2
International Paper Co.	80 1/2
National Petroleum	42 1/2
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Southern Pacific	125 1/2
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