

# Fixing Responsibility For Conference Failure On The Sirois Report

## Onus Placed On Federal And Provincial Leaders In Eloquent Address By Mr. H.F. McPhee

Speaking in the Provincial Legislature on April 8 in the Budget debate, Mr. H. F. McPhee, Third District of Kings, reviewed Premier Campbell's statements with regard to the failure of the Dominion-Provincial Conference on the Sirois Report and indicated where responsibility rested, not only on the dissenting Premiers of Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia, but on the Prime Minister of Canada and the provincial Premiers (including Premier Campbell) who failed to urge on the Dominion Government the necessity of having a non-political representation. Mr. McPhee's reply to the Government's question on this question was one of the high spots in the debate, and won grudging applause from government supporters as well as enthusiastic endorsement from his Opposition colleagues.

Mr. McPhee stressed the serious importance of the Budget debate as a preparation for the most important work of the session, namely, the consideration of the Estimates. "There are," he said, "two considerations which we should keep in mind in approaching this important question. First, the state of the Province in considering the money which we should vote, and the ability of the people to provide the funds. Second, the record of the Government in relation to its expenditures in the past.

"On this occasion there is another consideration; we must look at all these things against the background of the War.

"The speech of the Premier in moving us into Supply was characteristic of his speeches in this that it was not alone in style and delivery; but I do not think that it was a Budget speech," Mr. McPhee continued. "Condensed a little it would have made an excellent preamble to a Budget speech. It failed to deal with a great many things the Premier is bound to deal with in a Budget address, such as the details of our sources of revenue, and of the Province's ability to furnish them, also the record of the Government in reference to various departments, and the purposes of the expenditures. Otherwise the speech was excellent. It was unfortunately about three-quarters preamble and one-quarter Budget speech.

### No Ottawa Conference

"The Premier did refer at considerable length to one matter, the Sirois report, and the Dominion-Provincial conference called to consider it. I am not suggesting that it was not quite proper for the Premier to deal as he did with that matter. The result — or the lack of result — of the conference deliberations has, of course, a bearing on the problems which will very shortly confront us; that is the matter of Supply. It is very proper that we should approach this problem knowing that we must rely solely on our own financial resources; that with the 'inexp' of provincial and Dominion governments as we find them, there is apparently no hope for any sympathetic consideration of the difficulties of this Province within Confederation, and that we must find the solution of our financial problems alone. I think that, so far as the Sirois report has a bearing on our deliberations, this is the conclusion we must reach.

"The Premier gave us a very detailed and officially correct account of what had happened. I was a little disappointed, because I was hoping that he would have given us the happenings 'of the record.' When these Liberal Premiers got together, there must have been many passages that would be

interesting and of assistance to us. But we got the official text, and with that we must be content. The failure of the conference is, of course, a matter of great regret. One does not have to subscribe to all the findings of the Report or even to any of them to be bitterly disappointed that the conference concluded as it did. Consider the great expense on all of Canada incident to the preparation of this report; the expense incident to the Commission itself, and to the provinces in preparing their claims; the lengthy period involved and the supreme importance of the objectives; all this expense and preparation and labor, and the only result is disillusionment and an extension of that disillusion which unfortunately during the past few years has separated the provinces one from another.

### Villains In The Drama

For this failure the Premier blames three men: Hepburn, the alleged arch conspirator, Aberhart and Estlin. These were the villains who wrecked the show. I certainly do not intend to say anything in the way of extension of the part they played. None of the Premier's critics or the leader of the Opposition said in this connection were too strong, because it was quite apparent that these men put before the general good of Canada at this serious time their own personal and political considerations.

Even though that is so, I cannot agree with the Premier that these men were alone to blame. Other men were to blame. The Dominion Government was to blame for the failure of the conference. The Prime Minister himself, I think, approached the conference with very little enthusiasm. Before these provincial Premiers, with their lengthy retinues, were called to Ottawa, the Dominion Government should have ascertained what their attitude was going to be.

Mr. McPhee: "I don't think that I can extend the blame to other 'bad boys' got hold of him that he repudiated it. But so far as the other Premiers are concerned, I don't think there was anything to indicate that there would be agreement.

### Should Have Known

"Moreover, the Prime Minister had every reason to know the type of man with whom he was dealing. He had worked with Hepburn, and he should know all the tricks which he was capable, because he used them. With Hepburn turning the lesson against Mr. King himself, he had reason to know him still better, and he should have made sure in advance before these provincial Premiers were called in with their retinues, what the attitude of the great province of Ontario was going to be.

Mr. McPhee: "Might I ask my hon. friend a question. Does my hon. friend mean that he should have ascertained in advance what the attitude on Ontario was going to be towards the adoption of the report, or the discussion of the report?"

Mr. McPhee: "I don't think it was understood that the Government of Ontario was more or less opposed to the adoption of the report."

Mr. McPhee: "Not more or less. As I go on I will explain. That is the first point: that the Prime Minister and his advisers were also at least partly responsible for the failure of the conference. But there is a second point. Before this conference was called it was suggested time and again by the independent Press of Canada, that a conference called for this purpose should be representative of the people of Canada as a whole, and that it should not be a political conference. The real cause

HON. H. F. MCPHEE

for the failure of the conference was the insistence by the Dominion Government that it should be a purely political conference. The failure, so far as that is concerned, rests squarely upon the shoulders of Mr. MacKenzie King and his advisers.

This was not an ordinary Dominion-Provincial conference called to consider ordinary administrative problems. It was called to retrace the framework of Confederation. Any Canadian should admit at once that for a conference of that kind, the participants should not be designated by their party stripes; that the mere fact that we have a government representing slightly more than 50 per cent of the electorate could exclude the remaining portion of the people from representation.

Does anyone think that if the representation from Ontario had consisted, not of the Premier of Ontario and his political henchmen, but of a real representative body from Ontario, — that the Ontario delegation would have walked out? It is not conceivable that the same is true of Alberta and British Columbia. So I say that the blame does not rest wholly on those dissenting Premiers. The principal blame rests upon Mr. MacKenzie King and his advisers.

### Provincial Premiers

"That is so far as the Dominion is concerned. The blame so far as the provinces are concerned is this: that the provincial Premiers should have recognized this situation also. They should have insisted that their delegations be non-political when they went to this conference; and if the Premier of this Province failed to do so, they must take his responsibility for the failure of the conference.

"When we come to consider the reasons for failure, therefore, find the blame to lie in three quarters. We find it to lie on the dissenting Premiers of Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta; on the Prime Minister of Canada and his advisers; and also on those Provincial Premiers who failed to advise Mr. MacKenzie King and his colleagues that they should make the conference a political gathering. Resuming the debate in the afternoon session, Mr. McPhee said he was not able to state whether any responsibility rested with the Premier of Ontario, the Legislature. "I do not know," he said, "whether our Premier took the political view as did the Prime Minister of Canada, or whether he took the broad Canadian attitude which was advocated by the Press of Canada. I shall be glad to learn of any representations he made in this connection."

(Premier Campbell did not reply.)

### An Opportunity Missed

"There is another matter in which the Prime Minister of Canada could not escape responsibility. The conference was a large and expensive one. I have before me the Hansard for the Dominion-Provincial Conference. From this I have listed the names of those who attended. There is the Dominion list, and the list of all the provincial representatives, including the representatives from this Province — Hon. Horace Wright, President of the Executive Council; Hon. Thane A. Campbell, K.C., Premier; Hon. J. D. Chery, Minister of Public Works; Hon. Mark R. McGuigan, K. C., Minister of Education and Public Welfare; Randolph Carruthers, Provincial Auditor; Walter Shaw, Deputy Minister of Agriculture. That was the retinue which accompanied our own Provincial Premier to this conference, and the retinues which accompanied the other Premiers were correspondingly large.

"This great gathering of provincial Premiers and their advisers were assembled there, and it would appear to everyone that even if an agreement could not be reached on some discussion of the Sirois Report, at least the opportunity would have been taken to discuss those many grave problems which confronted Canada as a whole. I shall not attempt to take up your time in enumerating those various problems, but I suggest that the problem of which we are particularly cognizant and which is particularly grave in this Province. That is the condition of agriculture. I think that the opportunity should have been taken, when all the provincial Premiers and their advisers were together there, with the Prime Minister and the Dominion Minister and their advisers, to see if some solution could not be reached on this and on kindred problems. But no such opportunity was taken, and I suggest that the responsibility for this lies on the Prime Minister of Canada. I notice in this report that a suggestion was made along the lines that I have suggested. For this I am quoted as making this statement in commenting on the refusal of himself and the Premiers of Ontario and British Columbia to discuss the Sirois Report.

"That does not mean that we are not ready to discuss the

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### When They Had Gone There

when they had gone there with their retinues at great trouble and expense, that they should take this opportunity to discuss those grave problems common to the provinces and the Dominion, but that he refused to entertain the suggestion. And the only thing he could suggest was that if any one of them wanted to see any of the Ministers at Ottawa, they could do so independently of the rest.

So it is idle to say that the responsibility for the failure of this conference rests upon the shoulders of three provincial Premiers alone. Those men are to blame, and very much — to blame; but there also rests a grave responsibility on the shoulders of Mr. MacKenzie King and his advisers, and also on the shoulders of the provincial Premiers to the extent that I have indicated.

I have dealt with this issue at considerable length for the reasons I have suggested at the beginning; because when we discuss the Estlin matter tonight, we will discuss them with this knowledge, that no longer will we have the hope in relation to this mountain of debt which condescend to the dark.

"Shrapnel."

The shells which ordinarily break out in the sky like little golden-red pin-points, were exploding above the smoke and mist that shrouded London, and we could not see them. Then we heard aircraft above us, the sound was the irregularly throbbing engine-beat that most Londoners associate with enemy planes.

The Peril Moving Above

You try to calculate, no matter what mental discipline you apply, whether the aircraft are approaching, whether they are overhead. If they are overhead, they cannot hit you; you draw a breath and count one peril past, even though you know the peril now moves on, like a shadow moving over other humans. But last night the sky seemed at once to be full of planes. The sound of engines throbbing echoed from all quarters of the compass, now quieter now louder. And now the guns were barking, and in the distance, bright flashes would light the lower sky and the black perspectives of the shuttered streets, as instant as summer lightning.

Automatically you count — one second, two seconds, three — and you hear the reports, and you don't know whether they are bombs or guns. Then they seem to be coming nearer, and you still don't know whether it's bombs or guns.

The wardens' post was in a basement at the end of the square. The little room was shored up with beams and pillars of steel. There were maps of the borough on the walls, telephones, rescue equipment, gas-proof clothing. All was quiet in the post's sector. Indeed, the wardens go out in pairs on their rounds. A little man who was a grocer came with us. He was very fearful, and showed it. My friend and host showed no emotion, except what seemed to me an exaggerated phlegm. He set a very slow pace for our round, frequently pausing and looking up at the night, not even taking care to do so.

Later on, he told me why "I've schooled myself deliberately to take it slowly," he said, "even when there's no need for it. Because then I'm more used to it when I have to work in the thick

### Night in London

An officer of the Queen's Canadian Fund for Air Raid Victims, recently in London, writes the following dispatch. It gives a word-picture of London during a night raid, and it sketches one of those innumerable human tragedies in which the Queen's Canadian Fund, operating through the Lord Mayor's Fund brings human and sympathetic relief.

BY SHOLTO WATT

One night I went out with the warden on his rounds. He is my host and good friend. All day long he works in a Government office, and in the evening he comes home for dinner and goes out afterwards to take his duty as air raid warden. It was a fairly "bad" night. We each wore a tin hat, carried a gasmask and flashlight. On the way to the wardens' post we passed through one of the old-fashioned little squares of Bloomsbury — silence and heavy, black air. Suddenly there was a noise like spattered infrequent hailstones on a metal roof. It ringed its rounds, ceased, then started again, click-click-click, in the darkness.

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### TO BE CONTINUED

MT. ALBION SCHOOL Report for the month of March. Grade IX—1, Johnna Myers; 2, Alma MacNeil; 3, Etta Jenkins. Grade VII—1, Morris Jenkins; 2, Catherine MacNeil.

Grade V—1, Charlie Ballem; 2, Chester Jenkins. Grade IV—1, Stuart Jenkins; 2, Willie Myers.

Grade II, Sr.—1, Beth Stewart. Grade II, Jr.—1, Wendell Jenkins; 2, Hudson Jenkins.

Grade I—1, Judson Myers; 2, Lillian Myers; 3, Mary Wood. Grade I, Jr.—1, Eva Jenkins; 2, Collins Wood; 3, Doris Wood.

Perfect attendance — Johnna Myers, Etta Jenkins, Morris Jenkins, Charlie Ballem, Wendell Jenkins. Highest average—Stuart Jenkins, 97%.

Evelyn Robertson—Teacher.



MEALTIME ABOARD CORVETTE Members of the crew aboard a Canadian corvette in active service crowd around the table at mealtime in the fo'c'ste. The salty tang of the sea and the hard open air work of seaman's life make for hearty appetites. Many corvettes are now built in Canadian shipyards for the Canadian and British navies. Each costs approximately half a million dollars.

### Stock Note

disclosed a figure sitting in the ruins beside us. It was an old woman who would not answer when we spoke to her and who stared straight ahead, unmoving, when the wardens turned their dim lights upon her.

### Shelter "Regulars"

In the shelters — mainly reinforced basements — there were not many people. Nearly always just the old "regulars," those who decided that they preferred the shelter to their homes at night. I judged that they could not have been one in ten of the local population. The others evidently thought it better to take a slightly greater chance in the lower rooms of their own homes as they enjoyed considerably greater comfort. So the wardens laughed and joked with them, cast an eye to the equipment, exchanged news with the shelter warbs.

Outside, "he" was dropping flares. Pretty things, that, cast a sinister moonlight on the city, that were a breathless pleasure to watch till they were shot down and you returned to your senses.

There were fires, too, North, towards the railway stations, the sky reflected a big blaze or at least several smaller ones. South, towards Kingsway, there were tongues of fire on some tall buildings. You do not run and gape at fires in London at night. For one thing, you know the flames are there; for another, the Germans have the unpleasant habit of using fires as a target.

"So, we don't go up there. There's time to bomb up that street. All the people have been blighted out. There's nobody there at all."

"What happens if incendiary bombs fall there?" "Somebody goes and puts them out, that's all."

"With the time bomb liable to go off at any minute?" "It would be worse if the street caught fire."

We were back at a corner of the little square. A corner of a building had been sliced off, and the street was piled with rubble, except where a passage had been cleared for traffic. I peered at the heap of broken wood and lumps of stone, of fragments of furniture. "Yes," said my friend, "that is the Children's Hospital."

Down the street a faint blue light above a door showed where the headquarters of the rescue squad was placed. A little beyond, a large white "S" on a black board, fixed to a post in the sidewalk, was faintly illuminated from above. It marked one of the shelters we had visited. The curbs, lamp-posts, were whitewashed; but it was so dark we could not see the markings.

IN HER RUINED ROME We had still a long way to go. It seemed to me that we were out for hours, peering the nightmare streets with a forced and unnatural slowness. When we came to one intersection of narrow streets, a vivid flash suddenly bared the devastation of the place. All four corners of the crossing were in ruins; in the middle of the crossing was a huge crater. As we stood there, a second flash

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