

HON. H. D. McEWEN ON BUDGET DEBATE

Speaking during the Budget Debate in the Provincial Legislature on April 3, Mr. H. D. McEwen, Conservative member for Second King's, complimented his hon. friend from Vernon (Mr. Irving) upon the very sensible speech he had just made. He believed every member would agree with him that it was the most sensible speech the House had listened to this session from the Opposition. He would like to have heard more speeches along the same line. Mr. Irving made only one "break," and that was when he said the best government the Province ever had was a Liberal Government. But under the circumstances Mr. Irving could be excused for that.

As Governments are constituted in this country, the people every four years elect men to represent them. The majority of the elected of one side or the other get together and form a Government, by which they carry on business for four years. At the end of that period they go back and ask the people how they liked their administration. If the people are pleased with the Government and think they have done what is right, they return them to power. If their opinion or fashion has been for the Opposition in minority to assume that their whole duty is to find fault and throw mud at what has been done by the Government of the day. That might be all right to some extent, if that fault-finding is of a constructive nature, as it tends to improve matters. But if the criticism is simply made in order to help the Opposition get into power, it is not in the line of statesmanship.

Most of the speeches from the Opposition so far this session, in Mr. McEwen's opinion, have made up the most useless discussion he had ever heard in any House. It reminded him of the scolding tongues of fish-wives, famous in the Old Country. Scolding never gets one anywhere. No Government is perfect, but if the members of the Opposition have any suggestions to make, any constructive suggestions to the expenditure of public money, the Public Accounts are right before them, and it is for them to point to any items therein which they think can be dispensed with. If in their opinion there is something wrong, let them point to it and say that this item should not be there. They will have this opportunity when the Estimates come before the House, and if they can make any suggestion that will be beneficial to the country the members on the Government side of the House will undoubtedly be glad to act upon that suggestion.

There should be more of unanimity, more of a desire to work in the interests of the country and less of the party. After all, what does it matter what party is in power so long as the business of the country is going ahead all right? Mr. McEwen would like to see people care a "hoot" what party is in power; but they insist on that party being a business aggregation which will do things in an efficient manner. The Conservatives have today a large majority in the House. Why? Some years ago, at the last session of the Provincial Government, there was a strong Opposition, and they were anxious to get into power. They framed a policy, not to stand on but to "get in" on. In Mr. McEwen's district, on the good roads question, they denounced the very idea of putting on taxes; they said there was no necessity for further taxation, and that the good road project was only a speedway for automobiles—an infernal scheme. The people took the Bell aggregation at their word and returned them to power. The first thing they did was to go right back on their promises, and they started this good roads policy which they so strongly condemned when in opposition. They found there was not money enough and they "stuck on" about \$200,000 extra taxation. They ran things high handedly for four years and at the end of that period the people simply turned them out, leaving just a "corporal's guard." That shows that you can't fool the people!

Strange to say, the gentlemen opposite are still trying to defend that Bell Government. The Leader of the Opposition stated the other day that the Poll Tax was absolutely all right. What does that mean? It means that when the Liberal party come into power again, if they ever do, the people may expect the re-imposition of that Poll Tax. He stated also that all the schools with an attendance of less than 15 pupils should be closed. Now we know something about the policy of the Opposition! He also declared that the third year students at Prince of Wales College should pay for the tuition they receive. Those are some of the things the people should put in their note-books and remember when the next election comes around. (Applause.)

If the hon. members opposite were prepared to take a little advice, Mr. McEwen would suggest

useful chiefly to politicians at election time. It was a kind of political machine to catch votes with. Liquor was under Government control. A man was "pulled" for selling liquor he reported; and the member he had reported; and the member would whisper to some body else higher up, and the fellow would get off.

This condition of affairs was unsatisfactory, and when the Mathieson Government came in the Temperance Alliance brought the matter up, and Premier Mathieson said to them: "Make out the kind of law you want, appoint a Commission and take it out of our hands altogether." The idea was to take the matter absolutely out of politics, that no one could say that the Government was any longer responsible. As a result, we have today a law which is enforced, not by the Government, but by an independent Commission.

This should be apparent to everyone, yet the member from First Prince (Mr. Blanchard) in his speech "roasted" the Government because so much liquor is being bought, notwithstanding the fact that the present Government have no more to do with the enforcing of that law than the men in the First Islands.

The Prohibition question seems to be a live one today among some people, and a good many members have expressed their faith in the efficacy of the present law. They have assured the House that they "don't touch it" themselves, and it is a man requires some courage to get up in the House and make an honest confession. (Laughter.) Mr. McEwen declared he had that courage; he was not particular what people thought. He would give his honest opinion, and it was this, that there are a whole lot of temperance people today like the proverbial ostrich—they think they are safe because they have their head in the sand.

We have a Prohibition Act, Mr. McEwen believed, which is not enforced and cannot be enforced. He was as much in favor of prohibition as any member, though he did not pretend not to take a drink occasionally. There are a whole lot of people who will take it behind the door. They are what are called hypocrites.

MR. McARTHUR: Is the hon. member reflecting on members of Opposition or not?
MR. McEWEN: Not all of them. (Laughter.) I don't think it applies to my hon. friend, because I think he is just like myself.

Continuing, Mr. McEwen said that while the Prohibition Law would be all right if it could be enforced, it was useless to deceive ourselves as to the actual conditions that exist. We cannot get away from the fact that we have moonshiners all over the country, in nearly every school district, concocting the vile stuff that is going to have a serious effect on the coming generation, if continued. Here in Charlottetown bootleggers are thriving. He was in a certain place a short while ago getting a shave, and a man said to him: "I will bet \$20 that I will take you to twenty-three places on this block where you can get a drink of hot Scotch or rum."

MR. McEWEN: Did you go?
MR. McARTHUR: I didn't bet.
MR. McARTHUR: What block is that?
MR. McEwen believed this man was telling the truth because that was the condition all over the country, is that satisfactory? What is the use of talking nonsense? We may think we have Prohibition, but we haven't got it at all. If we had a plebiscite taken today on the question every bootlegger in the Province would be canvassing for Prohibition, because they are the living on it and making money. He was informed that bootlegging is becoming alarmingly prevalent among young boys.

The fact that the Prohibition law cannot be enforced should be realized. The speaker cited the example of Ontario, Quebec and the Western Provinces. He was not advocating that the Government make profits out of the liquor business, but what was to be done? We must face the fact that liquor is being sold. Should we allow the bootlegger and moonshiners to make all the money? In the face of the present public attitude towards the Prohibition law, the whole British Navy could not enforce it. If people cannot get it from abroad they will go into the woods or swamps and make it.

Mr. McEwen wished it plainly understood that he was speaking for himself and not for the Government or for anyone else. He was convinced that if light beer and wines were permitted to be sold in the Province, at moderate prices, it would put the bootlegger out of business quicker than anything else. He believed time would prove him to be correct.

There was one thing fortunate about the present situation—the members of the Opposition cannot blame the provincial Government for what is taking place. The enforcement of the Act is entirely in the hands of the Prohibition Commission, and the gentlemen composing this Commission are business men who have made a success of their own affairs and in whom the public have every confidence. They will do their best, and that is all that can reasonably be hoped for.

Last year when the House met, the actual condition of affairs regarding the Sinking Funds was discovered at a late hour. It was found that they were absolutely depleted of all the security placed there by the former Government. The depletion of the debenture account was a serious matter for this Province. People who know about bonds know that if you put a Provincial bond on the market it is put there under certain conditions and by a certain act of the Legislature, and the persons who buy the bond buy it on the strength of that Act. The Act requires a certain amount of money to be available as security for the payment of the bonds. Three members of the House, including Mr. McEwen, were appointed a committee to report on this matter. A careful investigation was made and the conclusion reached by the committee was that if the matter was not

settled up within a few days, before the Budget, and if the fact got abroad that the Sinking Funds of the Province were absolutely depleted, it would put the Government in a very serious position. The recommendation of the committee was to replace the security at once. Some of the large bond houses of Canada were communicated with and bonds were purchased at 99, the lowest price possible at that time, and the Sinking Funds were again made intact. Some time ago, it was said that too much had been paid for the bonds. It is true that after the purchase the bonds did drop half a point, but they came back shortly, and today those bonds, instead of being at 99, can be turned over at 107½, which is proof that it was a good sound investment. Of course had the Government known that within a few days the bonds would drop slightly, they could have waited; but it is impossible to foresee these things. If members were wise enough to know infallibly when to buy, it would be a profit, probably would not be in politics at all, or in any other profession but that of buying bonds. No man can do that; the best that can be done is to act with common sense.

In this case events have proved that the Government made a wise investment. (Applause.)

If the Government were to take the advice of the member from Summerside (Mr. McArthur) those bonds could be turned over today with a profit of something like \$5,000. If the hon. members know of any Government security equal to that that can be bought at par, it would be advisable to replace them, and take the profits on these bonds that we have. But let us be mighty sure that they are equal to the bonds we have!

The speaker was of the opinion that while it might be perfectly legal for the Government to undertake buying and selling bonds, as suggested by Mr. McArthur, he, for one, would not like to see the Government go into the bond business. The bonds might drop and not come back again; then we would be in a hole.

Members should get away from carping criticism and small politics as much as possible. The people are the judges of parties today, and it all depends upon the actions of a Government how long they will remain in power. There was a time when the Liberal party had the better men, but the party has degenerated. Some day in the future they may come back, and the Conservatives may go the other way. But in the meantime the Conservatives are in power. It is up to the Government to do its best to make the country better and more prosperous.

In all well regulated businesses there is a fixed time for stock-taking when the merchant figures things up, to see just where he is at. He looks at the balance sheet for the last year's business, and if he finds that any particular line was not profitable, he cuts it out. He then lays plans for future business. Should we not do the same thing as a Province?

In starting to take stock, where should we commence? First, let us look at the face. The Leader of the Opposition talked about the great prosperity and contentment on the Island. The speaker took issue with him on that. He did not believe this Province is progressing. He was not pessimistic—a pessimist is a dark fellow who always sees trouble ahead, and never sees anything else. The optimist, on the other hand, is continually seeing something good coming around the corner. These are two extremes that are not desirable. What we want to take is the middle course and view things as they really are. It is certain that the very near future something must be done by the Federal Government and the Maritime Provinces as a whole, to better conditions in this part of Canada. The present discontent cannot continue; some readjustment must be made. If the members in this House keep repeating that everything down here is all right, what will they say to us at Ottawa? They will say, "What are you coming up here for? You have all you want down there." It is better to tell the truth. (Applause.)

About fifty years ago this Province entered Confederation, and our population was in the vicinity of 108,000. From 1870 to 1873 there was a season of great prosperity throughout the Maritime Provinces, and things were booming. Then the railroad business started up. From that time up to the present there has been a gradual decrease in our population, until from 108,000 it has shrunk to about 75,000. The last census showed a population of 83,000 for this Province, but there have been losses since. These figures show that we as a Province have practically lost twenty-five per cent. of our population since Confederation. Nova Scotia is complaining, but they have increased by about fifty per cent. since 1867. New Brunswick about the same. Quebec and Ontario have increased in that time over 100 per cent. All over Canada there has been an average increase of 64 per cent. in population during the period that this Province has gone from 108,000 to 83,000.

The speaker was not crying down the Island. Why should he? There are at least six generations of the McEwen family in the Province. But can one be found fault with for trying to make things better for those who come after, and for their children's children? Will he be able to stay here and make a living? Those people who came from Scotland a few days ago—do they love Scotland less because they leave it? No, they had to leave because there were other reasons that drove them out of the mainland, the hope of better and brighter opportunities for their children.

It is something to think over that there are more Island people in the New England States than there are on P. E. Island today, according to the latest statistics. We know we have here fertile farm lands and a fine class of people. We have some up-to-date farmers; but we have some who are not so prosperous. In the news-

papers it can often be read where so-and-so died in some part of the Island, leaving four or five sons; one in Western Canada, one in the States, and so forth,—and "John, at home!" There is generally only the one boy at home.

We must "take stock" and see just what is the matter with conditions, and when the trouble is located a remedy should be applied. The Maritime Provinces must receive fair play or there will be "something doing." In 1912, when Quebec was given 350,000 miles of Hinterland, away up to the north, it was thought a useless possession, but no person can tell the potential value of that property. Ontario was also given 149,000 miles of land and Manitoba 170,000 miles. Altogether they have acquired a total of some 700,000 miles of territory, of which we were entitled to a proportionate share. That would have meant 14,000 miles, equal to seven times the present size of this province!

Are these not things which should be made right? For that reason the Government should press our claims at Ottawa, and the Opposition should co-operate in a united appeal in the interests of the Island, so that our children and children's children can live in comfort and prosperity in the land of their birth, and not be forced to emigrate elsewhere.

Mr. McEwen recalled that in 1873 we had four furniture factories on the Island, making furniture for all the people and exporting a considerable quantity to the mainland. He could remember a machinery firm, right in Charlottetown, making the best shingle machine used. We had tanneries all over the country; tailor shops where every one's clothes were made and shoemakers who really made boots and shoes. We had breweries where they made beer, and where our farmers sold their barley and made as mighty good prices and made money out of it. If the beer was



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As bad as they tell us today it is on the constitution, it is a wonder that any of us are here at all! In those times, the wool would be taken from the sheep's back and made into clothing for the children and other members of the family—right on the Island; and the boys and girls were satisfied then to stay home and help in the work.

In 1871 there were 49 schooners built on the Island. There were square-riggers and all kinds of craft, and the harbor was filled with vessels. There was a big trade with the West Indies and all sort of stuff such as oatmeal, etc., instead of being imported, was produced right here and exported. We made all our own harness—a big item in itself in those days. Today, the harness shops are empty trying to exist.

Carriage factories were located in every village and several in the Towns. These employes were workers, blacksmiths, painters, boot-makers making almost everything used by our farmers from wheelbarrows to the very best carriages. In fact in those days almost everything worn by our people as well as most of our machinery was made right here by our people and as a result all this money was kept at home and circulated locally. Compare these conditions with those of today when almost every thing worn and used by our people is made for us in the factories of Quebec and Ontario and remembering our loss of population then tell us that we are prospering. "It faces the land to hastening his prey, where wealth increases and men decay."

When Federal matters are discussed we talk one way, and when we argue from the standpoint of P. E. Island we must talk another way. Members of this Legislature are here to represent the Island, and they must look to the interests of the Island. It has been said that no policy from a Federal

standpoint will suit all Canada alike. Quebec and Ontario want high protection because they want to sell manufactured goods, but how does that affect us? We have to act as scavengers and sell our stuff in all parts of the world, because these manufacturing provinces raise everything that we raise. We, in this Province, have to look to foreign markets for what we have to sell. The present tariff may suit Canada as a whole, but it certainly does not suit this Island. All these facts we should take with us and go as a body and lay before the authorities at Ottawa the true situation, namely—that we are slowly bleeding to death, and that if they have a heart in them they will not see the baby Province go out of existence entirely.

If things keep on as they are, how long will it be before this Island has nothing left but one huge fox ranch? Mr. McEwen believed it was only a question of arithmetic. Why should that be in the best little spot on the Universe? What is it that we want? The delegations that go to Ottawa must go through a certain political etiquette. If you are a "friend of the party" and there is a plum hanging on the tree which is going to drop shortly, and you are likely to catch it, you must be pretty nice and mannerly. In the past, if you are an opponent of "the party" you will simply be listened to and told that the matter will be "taken into serious consideration," and that is the last you will hear of it. But let us go to Ottawa as men representing no party, but the Maritime Provinces, as men desperately in earnest, not with gloves but with the bare knuckles, and with a hard fist to put under the noses of the Ottawa gentlemen and say: "Here, more subsidy as a partial recompense for what we lose in other ways, or look out for trouble." One delegation from the Mar-

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