

Prince Edward Island's Constitutional Rights Being Sacrificed for Party Interests

The Canadian Press reports from Ottawa of February 8th, credit Hon. P. J. Veniot, Postmaster General, with the following:—

"Mr. Veniot declared that the recommendations of the Duncan Report had been fully implemented with respect to Prince Edward Island, and this fact had already been pointed out by one of the members from that Province."

Hon. Mr. Veniot is evidently acting on the previous statement and assurance given in the House by Hon. John E. Sinclair, that he was entirely satisfied with the way the Government had carried out the Duncan Report recommendations in so far as it was possible to do.

Such an admission as this sent broadcast throughout the Dominion leaves a false impression and will do the case of Prince Edward Island incalculable injury. As an instance, look at the interpretation the Hon. Mr. Veniot has placed on Mr. Sinclair's statement when he announces "that the recommendations of the Duncan Report had been fully implemented with respect to Prince Edward Island."

Is Mr. Sinclair advancing the interests of Prince Edward Island by permitting such unjustifiable statements to be sent broadcast absolutely contrary to the facts? Will any prominent shipper, business man, or farmer in this Province endorse Mr. Sinclair's statement?

What did the Duncan Report recommend as regards Transportation for Prince Edward Island? We quote from the Report which is dated 23rd September, 1926, the following:—

"We recommend that the Railway Administration should be asked to make a survey of what is required in this connection, and that the Department should make capital provision for the improvements to be undertaken within the shortest possible time."

"Car Ferry. The terms and conditions upon which Prince Edward Island was admitted into Confederation in 1873 contained the following provision:—

"Efficient steam service for the conveyance of mails and passengers to be established and maintained between the Island and the mainland of the Dominion, Winter and Summer, thus placing the Island in continuous communication with the Intercolonial Railway and the railway system of the Dominion."

"The present Car Ferry affords a much improved service as compared with that which the Island formerly enjoyed, but in recent years traffic and freight have considerably increased and will continue to increase, particularly at certain seasons of the year"

"Although the ferry boat service is unsatisfactory, the railway administration admitted that there was need for supplemental provision being made in the form either of a second ferry boat, or a special freight boat. We recommend that the matter be gone into from the point of view of placing at the disposal of the Island such satisfactory means of communication as will ensure as regular and complete a service as can reasonably be made. We further recommend that, so far as the ferry boat service is concerned, it should not be run as part of the railway operations, but should be run by the railway administration under separate account for the Department. We feel that, by reason of its association with railway accounts, this service does not get the attention it should receive."

Hon. Mr. Sinclair and Hon. Mr. Veniot have the audacity to get up in the House of Commons and make the statement that the Government has carried out the above recommendations in so far as it was possible to do so, and that the recommendations had been fully implemented as regards Prince Edward Island.

Can Mr. Sinclair be acting in any other capacity than a tool of the Government, in making such a statement?

Is Mr. Sinclair alive to the fact that this Island Province has constitutional rights that have been violated for upwards of fifty years in the matter of continuous communication with the mainland both Winter and Summer?

Do the people of the Murray Harbor Branch line districts with their costly, inadequate and out-of-date narrow gauge railway endorse Mr. Sinclair's statement?

Do the travelling public and citizens generally endorse Mr. Sinclair's statement when Passengers, Mails and Express coming by the Ocean Limited from Montreal are held up at Sackville for 22 hours at least four months of the year?

It is over two years since the Duncan Report was issued, admitting and establishing our rights as a partner of Canada and the second Car Ferry so much needed to promote our Agricultural, Fishing, Commercial and Tourists interests, has not as yet been ordered, and it will probably take two years to build a modern boat to meet the Island requirements. Was Mr. Sinclair and Mr. Veniot justified or in keeping with the facts when they broadcast such statements? The greatest difficulty Boards of Trade and Politicians have been up against is in combating the propaganda in the Press in Central and Western Canada to the effect that the Duncan Commission recommendations have been fully implemented, and now an Island representative acting as a tool for the Mackenzie King Government is prepared to sacrifice the interests of his Province and fall into line to save the party from its record of negligence towards Prince Edward Island and in defiance of the Duncan Report recommendations. While it cannot spare a few hundred thousand dollars to broaden the Murray Harbor gauge, it goes on spending millions of dollars for Railways, Hotels, and Immigration purposes all across the continent, but continues to ignore Prince Edward Island as a Province and partner of Canada because the representative from the Island is unfaithful to his trust.

What did The Patriot, the Liberal mouth-piece, have to say about transportation and the need of a second Car Ferry, when the Conservatives were in power away back on the 11th March, 1920, almost 8 years ago. We quote:—

SECOND CAR FERRY STEAMER

(Patriot, Thursday, March 11, 1920.)

The memorial addressed to the Hon. J. D. Reid, Minister of Railways and Canals, and D. B. Hanna, President of the Canadian National Railways, has been prepared by Messrs. W. F. Tidmarsh and Nelson Rattenbury in this city on behalf of producers, exporters and merchants of the Province.

This memorial asks for the following improvements in our transportation service:—

(1) Another Car Ferry steamer, equal in power and capacity to the Prince Edward Island;

(2) For the completion and standardization of the Prince Edward Island Railway as rapidly as circumstances will permit;

(3) To operate on the branch line between Tormentine and Sackville (until such time as the second steamer is on the route, when it may be possible to carry cars from terminal to terminal without change) more modern and up-to-date passenger coaches, with a diner attached; coupled with more powerful locomotives to ensure faster time;

(4) To use on the Prince Edward Island branch modern and up-to-date coaches with chair cars attached to express trains, together with more powerful locomotives;

(5) That connection with the Ocean Limited, of fast express between Montreal and the Maritime Provinces be made at Sackville, so as to place Prince Edward Island in respect to passenger and mail service in the same position as the provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Strong arguments are used in the memorial why such improvements should be carried out. It is pointed out, for instance, that almost the whole traffic of the Island is centred on the Railway and Car Ferry, and the branch line between Tormentine and Sackville.

The memorial goes on to say:—

"That the Car Ferry, in order to handle the traffic during the crop movement last Fall, was obliged to discontinue connection with the Ocean Limited from Montreal, thus delaying passengers and mails for Prince Edward Island twenty-two hours at a season of the year when such delay caused great inconvenience to the travelling public, as well as inconvenience and loss to importers and exporters, shows that the capacity of the Car Ferry was over-taxed during the period referred to."

That notwithstanding the sincere efforts of the Railway officials to handle the heavy shipments that offered during the crop movements, considerable congestion occurred. Shipments were delayed, and in consequence of the congestion products that would have gone upon the market during the Fall months are now held in store here.

That each year the Car Ferry has to be temporarily removed from the service to undergo necessary repairs. If this removal takes place in the early Spring, as was the case last year, the movement of the clean-up of the crop of the previous year is interrupted, and if later in the season the tourist traffic is temporarily suspended and travel diverted to other places, causing, in either case, both inconvenience and loss to the province.

That since the inauguration of the present system of transportation production has increased, and with still greater extension of shipping facilities will, in the opinion of your memorialists, increase indefinitely.

That the extensive fisheries of the Province can never be fully developed until the Railway is standardized throughout its entire length, so as to enable fresh fish to be loaded on cars at fishing centres, and carried to destination without breaking bulk.

That if an accident should happen the Car Ferry the whole system of transportation, as it affects this province, would be suspended indefinitely and incalculable loss would result.

That the annual deficit against the Prince Edward Island Division of the Canadian National Railways, which is more apparent than real, should not be considered as a deterrent to further improvement of the system. Under the present system of accounting the entire operating expenses of the Prince Edward Island Division is charged direct to the Division which receives credit only for the freight, both inward and outward, pro rata in proportion to the distance hauled. The balance of the receipts accruing from the long haul is absorbed by the system in general over which the traffic passes.

Your memorialists are of the opinion that when the short haul, the large quantity of freight originating in or destined for Prince Edward Island are taken into consideration, the present system of accounting is not equitable and should be revised.

The Summerside Board of Trade has been agitating on this very important question, and with all the Boards of Trade on the Island acting in harmony, their united efforts should have some effect.

It is probable that the Railway Department will reply stating that it intends to pare down the estimates "to the bone" this year. But the importance of the present work which is asked for by the memorial is one which requires immediate attention; it would be false economy to delay it much longer.

We have no doubt that every person approached, will sign the Memorial, which has such an important bearing upon the welfare of this province.

We can hardly believe that the Government will refuse the request for a second Car Ferry. From a monetary standpoint alone, it would be good policy on the part of the Government to provide it. It would mean increased production, greater transportation and more prosperity. Not only for the people of this province, but for Canada generally. This matter is of such supreme importance that it would be a crying shame to relegate it to the shelf, or to let it be dealt with by subordinates. If it can be successfully shown that it will not pay to provide another Car Ferry then, let us have the facts and the figures; but we claim that it will pay from every standpoint. Aside from this altogether, the trade of Prince Edward Island must suffer immeasurably if another steamer be not provided. The present Car Ferry has done magnificent service, and time and again The Patriot has given credit to it, and it is no disparagement to state that one Car Ferry is altogether inadequate for the service.

We are also delighted to notice that in the Sixth Provision of the Memorial, the memorialists state that "connection with the Ocean Limited and fast express be made at Sackville, so as to place this Island, in respect to passenger and mail service, in the same position as our two sister provinces."