

# Serious Agricultural Situation Analyzed In The Budget Debate

## Farm, Fishery, Financial And Other Issues Reviewed In Speech By Mr. H. F. McPhee.

Following is a continuation of the report of the address by Mr. H. F. McPhee in the Budget Debate, Provincial Legislature, on April 8.

"I suggested," said Mr. McPhee, "that there are two important considerations which should guide us in this debate and on the Estimates. First, the state of the country; what public services are required, what is the condition of our industries and our people; what industries require assistance and to what extent are we capable of providing it. Secondly, the record of this Government in meeting its obligations to the taxpayers. I suggest that neither of these prospects are happy for us to contemplate.

"The state of the country in this agricultural province depends primarily on the condition of agriculture. We have the fisheries, and of course the condition of the fisheries is no happier than the condition of agriculture.

"If agriculture is depressed, then the whole provincial situation is unhealthy and unsound, and the whole Province suffers. I do not think I need say anything to convince you that agriculture is at the moment in a most unhealthy condition. That is a matter over which there is no dispute. We know that the farmers are to a great extent producing at a loss, and that they have been able to put aside.

"The problem of the farmers," Mr. McPhee continued, "is not lack of production but a matter of price. Since that is the case, there is some question whether the local Department of Agriculture, whose activities seem primarily directed towards increasing production, may be working at cross purposes to the real difficulties which confront our farmers.

"When the war broke out, the Dominion Government agreed to take steps to protect the consumers throughout Canada," he said, "through a Price Control Board set up and its purpose was to safeguard the ordinary citizen against exploitation of the prices of things which he would consume. This artificial depression of prices is adverse to affecting agriculture. The grave position of our basic and important industry is one which we find to be aggravated by the war, but I submit that just as it was the duty of the Government to act in reference to the protection of the consumer, so it was the duty of the Government to act for the protection of the producer.

### Price Pegging

"The Dominion Government is doing this in some directions. We know that it is doing so on the matter of wheat and the West.

"The price of butter was pegged at a certain figure so that it would not go any higher, and now the Government is trying to consider the pegging of the price of pork so that it will not go below a certain figure. If that can be done in reference to butter and wheat, and if it is good business, it seems to me that it should be good business to do it in reference to the other commodities produced by our farmers.

"Under existing conditions they are producing at a loss. You can't ask them to continue doing so. It is not a question of patriotism that it is put up to the farmer that it is his patriotic duty to produce pork at a price that has been set in Great Britain. But it is not a question of willingness; it is a question of ability. It is no use asking him to produce more when this course will drive them into insolvency. If it is a patriotic duty to produce pork for the British market at the price which has been agreed—and I believe it is—then it is a duty which rests not on the farmers alone but on every citizen of Canada. My submission is that the Dominion Government is to set a minimum price for pork, graduated in natural zones according to the cost of production; because I believe the Western farmer can produce much more cheaply; the price set by the Government should be calculated to give farmers in every section of Canada a reasonable profit, just as in dealing with those people who have war contracts. Let them deal with the farmer in the same way in the sale of pork to Britain, and let the difference be made up by the Dominion as a whole, so that only his ability to assist Britain will be shared by all the people of Canada and not merely by the farmers, who cannot afford to do it.

### Provincial Effort Required

"There is not much that the Province can do directly in this matter, but I suggest to the Premier and his advisors that it is their duty to put it up to the Dominion Government, and insist, in co-operation with the other provincial governments, especially the Maritime governments, that some action be taken not only with reference to pork but other commodities as well.

Mr. McPhee also suggested that there should be closer cooperation between the Canadian and United States governments on the question of potato marketing.

He had read with interest in the press recently a short excerpt from the correspondence which had passed between the Premier of this Province and the Prime Minister of Canada in relation to our farm problems. On Dec. 13 our Premier wrote Mr. King, stating that there seemed to be a considerable undercurrent of feeling among our farmers. I think that is describing it most moderately—which might seriously resent against their productive effort. They had been disappointed to find their situation worse than it had been since the trough of the depression.

"I don't know, Mr. Speaker, that our farmers get their feet out of the depression. It is about the only 'trough' they have been able to get their feet into. Writing

a nice letter to Mr. King, as one Liberal Premier to another, is not going to help them very much. There are only three Premier in Canada who are not Liberal in the strong political sense. But now is the time to disregard that situation. I suggest that even if the attitude you take brings difficulty—political difficulty—and disturbs the Dominion Government, that is the way it must be handled. Nice polite letters from one good Liberal to another Liberal are of little avail.

Premier Campbell: "Do you think my letter was too polite?"

Mr. McPhee: "Yes, I think it should have been a vigorous one."

Continuing, Mr. McPhee quoted further from the correspondence. (Guardian, April 5) noting Prime Minister's reply that "low prices on potatoes were hard to avoid because of increased acreages and yields in Canada and the United States. Potatoes were largely marketed domestically, and it might be that some voluntary limitation of production might help.

"That is as far as Mr. King could offer suggestions to cure the depressed condition of agriculture in this Province. Don't grow quite so many potatoes."

### Mr. King's Attitude

Continuing from the correspondence, Mr. McPhee read: The phenomenal increase in Canada's hog population had made it impossible to carry any agreement with the British Food Ministry should provide an outlet for larger quantities of pork, even if prices were somewhat lower. Mr. King said:

"Mr. King suggests there that an effort would have to be made by the Dominion Government to have the British Government agree to an increase in the amount of pork to be supplied, even if we had to agree to a lower price. I don't think Mr. King was really cognizant of the situation, because a notice from Mr. Gardiner's announcement that a further large quantity of pork was to be taken, and the announcement that it was not any representation made by him, but rather that it came from the British authorities.

"I don't think Mr. Gardiner made any announcement as to prices in reference to pork; but if Mr. King is proved to be right—if the price of pork instead of increasing to where our farmers can produce it at a profit, goes down below where it has been, then of course everything I have said in regard to the situation is more strongly emphasized.

"And I am afraid the money which my friend the Premier is going to furnish by way of a bonus is not going to relieve the situation very much. It may pay the farmer's pocket, but it does not smoke too much.

"Mr. King says further in his correspondence with our Premier: 'From the outset of the war the price of agriculture has been depressed. Mr. King regards it as a national problem and as a result of loss of markets in continental Europe, the Canadian farmer has become casualties in this war.'

### Logical Conclusion

"We know what Canada's attitude has been and could be to our war casualties. We know that the Dominion will at once provide for them because they are war casualties. Mr. King admits that agriculture is a war casualty and I submit that agriculture in this Province is harder hit than in any other province of Canada. But if agriculture is a war casualty, then it is perfectly logical and reasonable that some extraordinary provision be made in reference to agriculture as a war measure.

Mr. McPhee: "Yes, I was a bit disappointed that we didn't get the whole thing. While it is not in order at all, I would be greatly obliged if the Premier would table all the correspondence that passed between himself and Mr. King and any of the other ministers in reference to this important problem."

Premier Campbell: "I think Mr. King definitely stated that the potato market had nothing to do with the war."

Mr. McPhee: "We know it is to a great extent affected by the situation in reference to fertilizer; and we know that the situation in reference to fertilizer is a war situation. And I think the general disturbance in commodity prices would affect potatoes. For instance, the price of wheat had something to do with the price of potatoes. I think Mr. King is making a statement which he would be unable to support if he says that the situation in reference to potatoes is not one that is attributable to the war."

### Fishermen's Problems

The unfortunate position in which our fishermen find themselves is also regrettable. The chairman of the Fishermen's Loan Board (Hon. Mr. Cox) referred to this situation of course, and suggested that we have to provide the fishermen with loans, and that the chairman says they are not nearly great enough, suggests at once the actual condition of the fishermen. Because if there was a healthy condition, this Fishermen's Loan Board would not be needed here at all.

In referring to the appointment of the board of the handling of canned lobsters the hon. member spoke with approval. About this I have no exact knowledge, of course, but I read a report in the newspapers and put by Mr. Hatfield in the House of Commons in regard to the operation of this board, together with the answers tabled by Hon. Mr. Michaud, Minister of Fisheries.

It was asked: "How many cases of canned lobsters were handled during the 1940 season through the government grading and purchasing depot at Charlottetown?"

The answer was: "Total number of cases received, 2,556. Number of cases graded, refused by packer, 880; Rejections 146."

It was asked: "How many cases were passed in each of the following grades: (a) grade A; (b) grade B; (c) grade C; (d) grade C minus; (e) grade D; (f) grade D minus; (g) grade B n; (h) grade B minus; (i) grade C minus; (j) grade C minus, 50 cases."

"Two things struck me in reference to these answers; either the depot was not operating when this would be the result, or it is a terrible reflection on the Fisheries Department of the Dominion and of this Province that out of 2,556 cases only 250 were passed, and those in the lowest grades which can be accepted. Somebody is to blame, and I say that it is a reflection either on the operation of the depot or on the Provincial or Federal Departments in reference to the operation of the canneries.

### Wartime Industries

Premier Campbell: "Not necessarily."

Mr. McPhee: "Or a combination of both."

Premier Campbell: "Those are the two horns of a dilemma."

Mr. McPhee: "To what else would it be attributed?"

Premier Campbell: "The technical requirements of the United States market."

Mr. McPhee: "Does the Premier suggest that the technical requirements of the United States market were not ascertained until the goods were in the way? Or that there was no attempt by this Department and the Federal Department to see whether local canneries complied with the regulations?"

Mr. McPhee: "It wouldn't pay them to comply with them."

Mr. McPhee: "Then what is the use of the Board, if you are running it simply to set up a scale of requirements which will come since the not comply and with which it won't pay them to comply? What is the use of it? It seems to me to be absolutely senseless."

Premier Campbell did not reply.

Dealing with war time industries, Mr. McPhee said the construction of the airports at Charlottetown and St. Eleanor's could hardly be placed in this category, because they were presumably located here for strategic purposes. "We would hardly argue," he said, "that they were put here for political purposes. That is something we had not asked for at all—a little contract to Hall and Stavert for machine tools. I don't know whether in that case, it would be well to ask him to press further or not. Perhaps it would be better for him to leave it alone.

"We now have a debt of about nine and one-half million dollars," continued Mr. McPhee. "I don't know what our population is at the moment. We have lost a lot of men by enlistment, and a lot of war employment in other provinces which is not open to our men. But even if we had 50,000 we would have a per capita provincial debt of about \$100; that would be a debt per family of about \$500, including the families of the men in whom you give relief, the families of the old age pensioners, — on every family in the Province. That represents a very serious situation.

"I have heard on many occasions the seriousness of this situation denied. I have heard it suggested that we could stand a debt twice as great; and I have heard discouraging things said about the situation. My hon. friend the Minister of Agriculture throws up his hands and says, 'We will never pay it off!'

### Travelling Expenses

Continuing after recess, Mr. McPhee recalled that the Government, when it took office in 1935, instituted the policy of paying all travelling expenses of ministers and members of the Government on a mileage basis. In the result only one car was retained as peculiar to a minister and the expenses of that alone were paid on other than a mileage basis.

"Nevertheless," continued Mr. McPhee, "I find on page 103 of the Public Works report an item of \$1,143.37 for the servicing of automobiles. I do not suppose anybody will suggest a moment that all of that was spent on supply of gasoline and oil for one car. The Minister's car is a fairly new one and it seems to me that a trifling matter. It seems to me that somebody else has been dipping into this account, and that cars other than the Minister's car are being supplied with gasoline, and I mention this by way of illustration of the many things which can be found in the Public Works report which are not explained. I emphasize what I have been saying.

"We find that last year the work of the Public Works Department was financially curtailed. This year it is the express policy of the Government to practically abolish capital expenditure. That should mean, of course, that we could get along with much smaller staff in that department than was necessary during those years when large amounts of money were being expended.

"We were disappointed to learn that in the Tax branch, although a substantial part of the work of that branch was assumed by the Dominion Government, there was no saving at all in the matter of salaries and no decrease in the matter of staff.

It seems to me that there is a great deal of duplication in the matter of travelling expenses. We have travelling expenses for the employees of the Department of Public Works, and the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Education, and the Department of the Public Accounts under the heading 'Field supervision.' We find travelling expenses for Mr. Stewart, Mr. Breton, Mr. Wright, Mr. Lockhart, and Mr. Reid. Of course, I believe Mr. Breton's work is of such a character that he, and nobody else, can do it. Those travelling expenses, as I understand them, are intended to cover hotel bills; the mileage is the actual use of the car for travelling from place to place; so that these items do not include the actual cost of a large number of trips which the officials took or the necessity for them. I am not prepared to criticize them in the matter of travelling expenses. It seems to me that in these items there is a great deal of duplication in the matter of travelling expenses of these various officials. For instance, the employees of the Office of Public Accounts have large travelling expenses because they have to go throughout the province, checking up on the pensioners. Would it not be possible to have some of these officials in some way, so that one of them, in going to some part of the province, could do the work of two or three and be going in going to the same place? Would it not be possible for the field representative to check on old age pensioners and get the necessary information in the way of a number of men to travel over the same road and get extra expenses and mileage?

"When we go into the Estimates immediately after the conclusion of this debate, we must look into the work of each department and ask ourselves whether, because of the limitation of its activities or because of the nature of its activities, it is not producing the results that they should, any reduction in the staff can be made with a view to obtaining some amelioration of the financial position of the Province."

### Rural Electrification

"I was interested in the announcement of the Premier made in his Budget address that the Government had under consideration the expenditure of the Province on rural electrification of the Province. I thought it was something that the Government had given intensive study for some time, but as I have the opportunity to refer to our question, we know it was just a letter that the Premier received from the Nova Scotia Power Board, about the 31st of March, and that the expenditure was referred to the extent of this Government's activity in the matter.

"I would be delighted to see our farmers supplied with cheap power. But I am concerned that the Government is to restore the farmers to solvency. How many of them are in a position to install electric lights, when their power is available? I believe the expenditure on rural electrification would be around \$150 for installation. The possibility of this opportunity coming only indicates the extent of the problem, because so few of them would be in a position to take advantage of it.

"Reference has been made to the Marketing Act. The Premier has announced that he has referred the Act to the Supreme Court for a decision as to its validity as provincial legislation. It seems to me that if this course was necessary, it has been very hardly taken. It is some considerable time since the Act was passed, as if the Government had doubted as to its validity and felt that this was the course which should be taken, then we should have seen the submission to the Supreme Court. It should have been made without delay.

"We were led to understand, however, that the Act was introduced last year, that it was modelled on an Act of the Province of British Columbia which had already been tested as its validity, and after a great deliberation drafted our Act so as to avoid any difficulty in that connection. But I fear, in reference to this proposal, that the Government has been afraid to politically afraid to state its policy because of a fear of alienating a certain section applied to political purposes. I do not

That is something, I think that should never be said. I think however, a public man feels, he should be able to say a word of hope to those who look to him for guidance, and not take the pessimistic view.

Mr. Dennis: "It is true."

Mr. McPhee: "That is his confirmed opinion, that he will stand in the broad hours of daylight? And other members of the Government have suggested that we could stand a debt twice as great. This is based on the theory that the per capita debts of other provinces are greater than ours. Of course there is no comparison at all. The ability to carry a per capita debt depends on the resources of the province. The debts of some of the provinces were incurred in the purchase of development of the assets; hydro, mines, forests, etc. But we have nothing of this kind to set off against our debt. Who is going to pay it? Assuming that the Minister of Agriculture is right, and that our people are to have still some vigor and hope left in them, how are they going to pay it? The answer must come from the farmers from the top 400 inches of the soil, as a late Premier of this Province used to say. It is because we must look substantially to the agricultural industry for the restoration of our proper financial position, that the situation is so grave. We find the debt is growing year by year, and that the amount of it is increasing under the leadership of the present Premier."

Public Apathy

Continuing, Mr. McPhee said that a few years ago the prospect of such a debt would have caused general alarm throughout the Province. The people today, unfortunately, have become accustomed to it. They used to ask, 'Do you think there will be a surplus this year?' Now they just wonder how big the deficit will be. The Premier, he added, has been brought about in part by highway expenditures and in part by too much extravagance in the various departments.

"The Premier's opposition," said Mr. McPhee, made reference to the sinking fund, particularly to the sum of \$80,000 which was withdrawn from the sinking fund reserve to pay for the sinking fund appropriation for the past year and reduce the deficit.

Premier Campbell: "It was not withdrawn from the sinking fund reserve to help provide for the sinking fund appropriation for the year 1940."

Mr. McPhee: "That was the purpose of the reserve fund."

Mr. McPhee: "It should not have been withdrawn. All the sinking funds including the reserve before the withdrawal were directly available to the sinking fund provision as applied to this \$80,000 on the basis of the funded debt is only about 1-2 per cent. You will agree with me that the average term of bonds that that appropriation is greatly inadequate.

"It is admitted that a 3 per cent sinking fund in respect to a twenty year term of bonds is inadequate. But a number of these bonds are for short terms, and the sinking fund appropriation for a short term should be proportionately greater. The Premier's proposal of appropriation is to have funds to meet the bond when it matures.

"Suppose the \$80,000 had not been transferred from the sinking fund to the reserve fund. If the appropriation would have been roughly \$200,000. That is slightly over 2 per cent on the total funded debt, and that is still grossly inadequate. The Premier says that there was justice in making the transfer from the reserve because, according to the appropriation on the basis of the average term of the specific statute, that amount was not sufficient. That is true, but that is not the real test. The provision had been made; the money had been put in reserve. It constituted part of the sinking funds. With it, the sinking funds were inadequate, and yet, in order to make a better showing on the current account, it was withdrawn. If that had not been done the showing on Current Account would have been \$80,000 worse than it actually was.

Real Deficit Camouflaged

"I suggest itself to me that this was done for that specific purpose. It was not done in the regular way in which the Government would be set aside as a sinking fund when they asked us to vote Supply last year. If that amount had been set aside, the ordinary deficit would have been \$138,000; it would have been roughly \$280,000 instead of \$120,000.

"A peculiar situation exists in regard to the Government's debt, and especially in regard to last year's borrowings. We find that last year the Government put out a bond issue of \$1,400,000. That issue was made by authority of the Act of 1940, and that statute gave authority to issue bonds for the paying off bank overdraft and to provide payment for permanent public works and for other purposes. I tried to see what had become of that \$1,400,000, but it was very elusive. There was \$100,000 of the bank overdraft paid off. The bank overdraft in 1940 was slightly in excess of two million dollars and in 1940 it was slightly below two million. It was \$1,284,000 at the end of 1940 so I suppose it is correct to say that part of the borrowing was applied to pay off bank overdraft to that extent. The rest of the authority was for permanent public works.

"Within the total item for capital expenditure there are a great many items—such as 'national cash register,' distribution of seed barley, fishermen's loans, etc. which are not really permanent works; but even if we take the whole of the item, what do we have? There was a total capital expenditure of \$1,400,000. If we suppose we take \$500,000 of that as permanent public works, we will have bank overdraft, permanent public works and refund of debentures totalling \$900,000. That is the authority was for, for those purposes. There was \$1,400,000 borrowed. It has gone somewhere; and I confess that I don't know where it has gone, have not been able to trace it through the Accounts.

"The Premier suggests that the capital expenditures were made the previous year. But in so far as that goes, so they will be included in the bank overdraft for which specific authority is given, and that could not be considered under two headings.

Teachers' Salaries

"I had intended to deal with the great problem of education but I am going to refer to it only briefly. One of the speakers who preceded me suggested the possibility of a grant which approaches them from that point of view.

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## Named to Administer Ship-building Program



Maritime Minister How has announced at Ottawa the appointment of six directors to the Board of War-time Merchant Shipping, recently formed to administer the Canadian shipbuilding program. H. R. MacMillan, formerly chairman of the War-time Requirements Board, is president. Other members of the Board are seen above. James D. McKenna, of Saint John, N.B., is the sixth director named.

H. R. MACMILLAN, President

GEORGE C. McDONALD

ALFRED H. PARADIS

A. E. ARSCOTT

AUSTIN C. TAYLOR

HON. F. B. MCCURDY

R.A.F. Route to Rumania is Clear



Rumania's oil wells, perhaps as important as any single factor in Hitler's offensive, are no longer protected from British bombing attack by a 'neutral barricade' R.A.F. planes from Malta and other Mediterranean points can now fly directly across Yugoslavia and Greece without fear of invidious German wrath against three nations, against which the Nazis are already fighting.

think anyone can express himself too strongly on that point. I have some information in this regard which I claim to be the youngest child in the world to be awarded the performer's licentiate of the Royal Academy of Music. Licentiate of the Guildhall School of Music, Licentiate of Trinity College of Music, London (cap and gown).

With one exception she has been prize-winner of every solo singing, sight reading and oral contest she has entered. She has composed since she was seven.

WESTMORELAND WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

The April meeting of Westmoreland Women's Institute was held at the home of Mrs. Fred Fall with ten members and one visitor present.

The meeting opened by repeating "Institute Ode" followed by "Creed" in unison.

The minutes of last meeting were read and approved. Collection, 45 cents. A box of clothing was packed for the Refugees.

Resolved that Institute send for material to make quilts for the school.

The following new Committees were appointed:

School; Mrs. Heber Canfield, Mrs. MacVittie.

Sick; Mrs. Bert Frowdsale, Educational Program; Mrs. Robert Mayhew, Mrs. Fred Wilson, Social Program; Mrs. Roy Crossman, Mrs. Vernon Moore.

Lunch, Grace Moore, Mrs. Bert Frowdsale, Mrs. Robert Mayhew.

Next meeting to be held at the home of Mrs. Heber Canfield. Roll call to be answered by "An exchange of flower slips."

The Questionnaire on Home Economics was discussed.

Meeting adjourned and remainder of evening was spent in reading and contests. Lunch was served by Committee in charge.

Girls Prodigy TOURS AMERICA

LONDON, April 16 (CP)—Bronwyn Morris-Jones, 13-year-old musical prodigy, shortly will leave Britain on a tour of Canada and the United States.

Bronwyn, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. Morris-Jones of Northampton, holds nearly 150 awards for Eisteddfodau, and won six firsts in her last festival year at the age of 12 against contestants of the Royal Academy of Music.

It is claimed she is the youngest child in the world to be awarded the performer's licentiate of the Royal Academy of Music, Licentiate of the Guildhall School of Music, Licentiate of Trinity College of Music, London (cap and gown).

With one exception she has been prize-winner of every solo singing, sight reading and oral contest she has entered. She has composed since she was seven.

Serious Complaints

"Because of this there is one matter which I wish to draw to the Government's attention. It is a matter which has been suggested to me; I am not able to vouch for the truth of it. That is the question of political patronage in reference to the various war activities referred to in the matter of enlistment. It has been suggested to me that political influence has been exercised in reference to the enlistment of certain of the training centres and recruiting centres. It is true it is a most serious matter. I am prepared to give the Government the information confidentially, and I am prepared to pay our taxes freely, we do not want any of it applied to political purposes. I do not

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