

# Conservative Round Scored In Budget Debate

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held in Charlottetown while our good Premier was home for the Easter holidays. Of course, we do not believe in a few days off, but the fact remains that he was not there to meet the teachers, and perhaps it was wise for him not to be there, because the teachers did not seem to like him too well. Perhaps the hon. member from Rustico told him to go away and stay in Summerside until the strike was settled. (Laughter.) We are told that another man played a more important part even than the member from Rustico in representing the Premier. This was the famous acolyte, Mr. Claire Campbell, the man who sometimes assists the Premier and is sometimes assisted by him; and through this week-end Premier, Mr. Campbell, the strike was settled. That is what they say, and perhaps the credit is due him in some measure that the teachers are back at their occupations today. But this would not do it was a "great victory" apparently, and the Liberal Government, and it was necessary to give the credit to the member of the Government who represented the Premier from Rustico. I noticed that he has been in great humor all through the session; to such an extent that I was very much surprised this afternoon at the attitude he took when the bill to put through the machinery for the plebiscite was being discussed. Time and time again I thought that he was leaning more towards Government Control than towards Prohibition. There has been a marked change in him since he has given him the credit for settling the teachers' strike.

### Teacher's Explanation

The Premier says there was a misunderstanding, that there was nothing to the dispute after all; the in-ter-est of the word would fix up the whole thing. That was the word "dependent" before the word "Commission." It was more than that however, for it was suggested by the Premier that he had mentioned the fact that Professor Cyril MacMillan is one of those independent commissions who should come here and study the situation and solve the problem.

Hon. Mr. LePage: The teachers are not satisfied.

Mr. Arsenault: Now don't try to give any more credit from the Premier. I think the Premier suggested that he employ Professor MacMillan, and it was agreed upon by both parties. We are to have an Independent Commission, on which Prof. MacMillan will be a member. This, to my mind, Mr. Speaker, shows the inefficiency of the Saunders administration. They should be getting all the troubles and affairs of this small Province without having to go outside. We are all our domestic troubles when we were in power.

Hon. Dr. Grant: That is what you said about the Duncan Commission.

Mr. Arsenault: I will answer you; just keep quiet a little while. My friends had something in view when this strike was on; it is rather to be expected that we would be in a position to go on in the hope of seeing a promotion coming to the family. But we will ignore that completely; we will look at the whole situation. I take it, as a wrong principle to introduce into this province, to ask ourselves to give in and settle our own difficulties. There was a situation that arose a few years ago in Ottawa in which the King Government followed the same practice. It seems to be a policy of Liberal Governments to do all things that are perhaps hard to do, that may involve political principles, that may embarrass certain members of the Government, to give a Royal Commission appointed to deal with those matters; and now the Premier is introducing in this Province a similar policy of having an Independent Commission. These Royal Commissions are always very expensive. They might be excusable in a large country like Canada where they have to deal with diverse interests all over the Dominion involving questions of creed and nationality; but in this small Province that one can travel over in a day, I think it is a mark of weakness on the part of the Government to call in outsiders to solve our problems.

### Prohibition Enforcement

There is another matter which I have to call to your attention, and that is in connection with the famous Prohibition Act. People are very much interested today in that question, and I think we should say a few words about it. I was surprised as I said a few moments ago, at the attitude taken by the Minister of Public Works this afternoon; and the people will be surprised to know that now he is trying to introduce a

plebiscite on light wines and beer, as well as hard liquor. He suggested that we have a third question on the plebiscite ballot, to find out whether the people wanted that, and if they did, of course, he would give it to them.

Hon. Mr. McIntyre: Isn't that what you were asking them?

Mr. Arsenault: Yes, but you wanted to ask them more than you promised to ask in 1927, because if you had advocated that you wouldn't have got in. My hon. friend from Rustico has changed somewhat in his ideas, too, I believe. I hope he will put himself right before the people, and be able to convince them that he is still hanging on to his principles.

Hon. Mr. LePage: Absolutely.

Mr. Arsenault: I was surprised also at the hon. member from West River, because I took him to be an awfully religious man. Yet he told us that he drank as much liquor as he wanted.

Mr. Angus MacPhee: But I repent. You must make allowance for that.

Mr. Arsenault: Very well; you repent. But why not let somebody else have a chance to repent? (Laughter.) He even told us that if a man gets full, that is no objection to him belonging to the Prohibition party. Has he got to repent before he joins, or after. (Increased laughter.) We have nothing to say about a man taking a drink of liquor, but what we claim is that we have had a year and a half of the administration of the Prohibition Act under the Saunders Government, that they promised to give effective administration of the law, to render Prohibition more workable, to minimize the effects of drunkenness, to curtail the illicit traffic of the bootleggers; and what do we find today? The same conditions in this Province as were found in Nova Scotia and described a few days ago in the press. They have done everything possible to enforce the law, and yet bootlegging is increasing, smuggling is increasing. And it is increasing here too, because we have too many who do not respect the law. That is one of the principal causes, I believe. We have a divided opinion, and I might suggest that although all the Governments have attempted to enforce Prohibition in the past, the fact that once a man is convicted there is no appeal may be responsible in a large measure for the increasing dissatisfaction with the present enforcement of the law; because a good many people are not in sympathy with that idea at all. In every Canadian there seems to be born an ideal of British justice; the conviction that a man must be proven guilty beyond any doubt before he is punished; that if he cannot be proven guilty he must be allowed to go free, for it is better for a guilty man to go free than for an innocent man to suffer punishment. All those principles seem to be infused into the heart of every British subject, and when a man is denied the right to appeal to the higher Courts to prove his innocence, a lot of his friends begin to talk; the murmur grows and after a while you hear rumblings and protests; the people are dissatisfied and they no longer come to respect the legal enactments which give them that kind of justice. Perhaps there are cases where the right of appeal might be abused, but the good flowing from the extension of his full rights to every citizen would surely justify the few abuses that might creep in. The present condition is one which should be studied seriously by members of this House, whether there should not be appeals granted in certain cases at least. There is certainly a strong demand from many seriously thinking people.

### A Plea For Temperance

I was told of a certain case that was heard not very long ago where a man was charged with unlawfully having liquor in his possession. He was summoned to Court and some evidence was given by a witness, who said: "The liquor that was found was my liquor, and the accused had no knowledge of it whatever." But the Magistrate said: "I don't believe your evidence," and he convicted the man who was charged. Immediately after the conviction, a charge was laid against the man who alleged that he had the liquor, and a witness took the stand and testified that he had heard this person confess in Court to being the owner. So that man was convicted also. Both were convicted and fined—including the one whom the Magistrate did not believe when he gave his evidence. It seems ridiculous, and yet, according to the law as we have it, it is quite possible. In view of these things it would be well, perhaps, for this Government to take into consideration the question of appeal. We on this side of the House do not believe in the prohibition law as it is enforced today. We think it is found-

ed on the wrong principle. We believe that the effort to dwarf the citizen so that they may be more docile subjects, even for a beneficial purpose, is not the proper course. Let us preach temperance by persuasion; let us preach temperance in the schools. I believe every honorable citizen will do all in his power to teach temperance in that way. It is not being taught properly today, by persuasion and example. We should teach a man who is in the habit of abusing liquor that it is not good manners, that it is not polite to take two or three drinks. One drink may be all right, if he is offered a drink; but it is not polite to take the second or third drink. More than that, he should be taught that the second or third drink is just as injurious to his health as the second bowl of soup or porridge at one meal. That is what we should teach our people, to be temperate in all things, and not abuse liquor or anything else. In that way it would be easy to have a temperate people in this Province.

### Cheaper Liquor

But my hon. friends say that we are advocating more liquor. They say that during our term we sold it to the extent of \$180,000, and that this Government last year sold only \$130,000 worth. We all know, Mr. Speaker, that the retail price of liquor has been reduced considerably by the present Government and also by the previous Government; when they went out of power, so that \$130,000 of a turn-over represents just as large a quantity of liquor retailed as \$152,000 represented under the higher price.

Let me say also, Mr. Speaker, that I believe we have a larger number of bootleggers in this Province today than we had some time ago. There are more people in the business. I was surprised last year on many occasions to hear of the new names being mentioned to me—names of men that I did not think for a moment would be in such a nefarious business, and yet I got it on good authority that they were. You would be surprised at the number of people who will yield to the temptation of making a few dollars in this way. In fact, there is a great combine operating today. We are told that they are so well organized that they are keeping outsiders from encroaching on their business. If an outsider comes into the Province and attempts to sell liquor, he is hounded by those bootleggers and put out of business. I might tell you that I was shown two or three youngsters in Summerside of the age of ten or twelve years, and I was told: "If you want a teddy of rum, ask those fellows, they will get it for you." My heart was saddened to see those boys, who should have been in school, in that business.

My hon. friends say there is not as much liquor consumed today. I would venture to say that there is just as much, if not more. A friend from a country district was telling me that years ago, under the Scott Act or before the advent of Prohibition, they used to watch for neighbors coming home from Summerside. If they knew that a certain neighbor had been to town and was coming home that night, they would make it a point to visit him, because they suspected he would have a bottle and would treat them. "But now," I was told, "it is just a matter of going to any neighbor's house. We know that he has not got a bottle, but a keg of rum; and it is just a matter of choosing the most generous man and visiting him." It is quite true that at this time of the year the supply is about exhausted, that the cellars are getting dry; but they will soon be replenished, because the temptation is there. Owing to our long coastline it is impossible to watch the smuggling traffic.

### Hon. Mr. LePage: What has Prohibition got to do with smuggling?

Mr. Arsenault: If you smuggle it they will soon drink it.

Hon. Mr. LePage: But Prohibition has nothing to do with smuggling.

Mr. Arsenault: Wasn't that the purpose, to stop smuggling and bootlegging? Or is it only to decrease the amount consumed for medicine? I am told some very amusing stories, which show what a great many people think of Prohibition. I am informed that at a certain dance in the country, held not very far from Summerside, it so happened that a good many of the young people of Summerside were there, and among them were quite a few bootleggers. It happened also that there were a couple of prosecutors present, who had come for a good time. There was considerable drinking on the part of some of the people, and the man who was calling out the dances, on one occasion when a quadrille was being formed, shouted: "Prosecutors in the centre; bootleggers all around." (Loud laughter.) And they danced all night to the tune of "The Campbells (and Saunders) are coming, hurrah, hurrah!" (Increased laughter.) They had a bully time; and on every occasion that they can get they will break the law and enjoy

themselves. And nice people will look on at them; they are not scandalized as they would have been a few years ago. Little by little they get used to it, and it is so hard to have Prohibition enforced under those conditions.

The Premier has complained that some personal remarks were passed about him, and Mr. Speaker, you will agree with me that those things are not kind. I do not want to indulge in any personal remarks; but I think perhaps the Premier is responsible for those unkind words that were spoken of him. The trouble is that we can see in our good Premier, three persons, all of course, human, all liable to err—very seriously, at times. As Premier and Attorney General we criticize him very often. We see also another man in him; that is the man who says, when he is criticized for not fulfilling his promises to the electors, for not appointing Magistrates in the three Counties, etc.—"That is all right; it is our platform, but that was only my personal opinion, it was not the opinion of the party." Let me tell my hon. friend that those promises should be binding on a Premier, that they were not made only to the Temperance Alliance or to any class of individuals but to the whole population of this Province; and he has no right to come now and say that they were his personal opinions. They were included in the platform and they should carry them out. (Applause.)

We also find another person in him, and that is "the Premier, assisted by Mr. Campbell." This combination does not seem to be very popular with the people, and a good many are finding fault; because this Province is entitled to a one-man Premier. We should have a man with all the transcendental qualities of being one and indivisible. For that reason we sometimes discuss him critically.

### Mr. Lea Defended

I might criticize my hon. friend from West River who said he was proud of his Premier. Perhaps there are a great many who are proud of him; he has many qualities that we admire, as every man has; but why should my hon. friend have gone out of his way to attack the Minister of Agriculture, a man who is now sick in bed? Why should he say that this gentleman talked too much, that he was at the head of a department that was not giving value for the money that he spent on it; that a Minister should lead his people instead of being led by them, and so forth? That was pretty severe, coming from a Liberal member in this House. Even the Opposition has not gone so far as to censure him because he represented the Government on that occasion when it was necessary to extend a welcome to the British Parliamentarians on their visit to this Province. True, they arrived here on the Sabbath; but I do not think any man has the right to reproach the Minister of Agriculture for doing his duty on that account, or to attack him, as the member from West River has done, of breaking the Sabbath. After all, that situation had to be met. Those parliamentarians had their programme settled long before they arrived here. It was unfortunate that they had to come on Sunday, but somebody had to meet them. And do we not read in the Good Book that when the Pharisees were scandalized at the healing of the sick on the Sabbath, the Lord said: "Which of you shall have an ass fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?" There was the situation that arose, and we expected the Premier or somebody in this House would thank Mr. Lea for what he did for the good name of the Province, in going there and giving these visitors the glad hand, and entertaining them during their short stay. He had to sacrifice himself. He had to go down into the pit and pull out—the hon. Premier! (Laughter and applause.)

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think I have dealt with practically all the different departments of the Government. I have criticized the administration of Justice, and shown where the Attorney General was a little remiss in his duties. I have criticized the Department of Public Works, and I have at my back others who will review this department at greater length when we have heard from the Minister. I have criticized the Department of Agriculture, and the hon. member from West River has assisted me and has done much of the criticism for me. Now there are no more departments to deal with, and there are none that have not been shown to be inefficient and negligent so I shall resume my seat. (Applause.)

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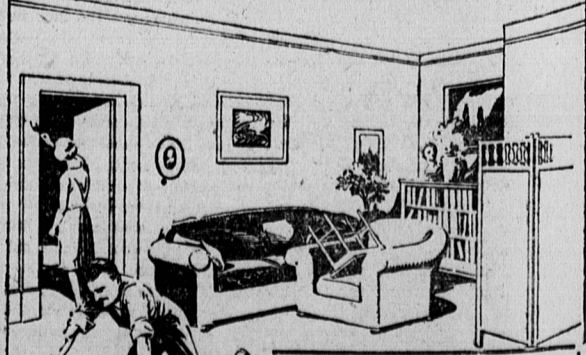
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