

The Guardian, Charlottetown, Fri., June 8, 1962

ACROSS THE ISLAND

Unusual Deed Not Forgotten

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J.W. PICKERSGILL, former minister of citizenship and immigration, was the national figure the Liberals brought here this week. I believe he may be the last big name Liberal to appear here in the present campaign.

Jack Pickersgill is one of my favorite parliamentarians. I want to tell you why because I think the story is interesting. It happened in the early summer of 1954 and it goes something like this.

My friend, Bill Brennan, was joint chairman for the convention in Ottawa of the Association of Public Utility Commission Engineers. The association is comprised mostly of Americans with a much smaller number of Canadians, and it was the first time they had ever had their convention outside the continental U.S.A. Bill found at the last minute that his co-chairman had neglected to get a top government personality to extend a welcome on behalf of Canada at the closing night's banquet. The Americans had always done it, and Bill felt it was important the same thing be done by a top Canadian personality.

Alerted the afternoon preceding the day of the dinner, I tried to get several ministers without results. It was near the closing of the session, all ministers were extremely busy, and several told me they couldn't think of taking on even that extra chore when their estimates might be called at any time.

THEN I thought of Mr. Pickersgill, with whom I had only a nodding acquaintance at the time. He was tied up in treasury board all day, and it was 10:30 at night before he came into the Commons chamber and I was able to tell him what I wanted, with apologies for the last minute request.

I explained they only wanted him for a few minutes, just long enough to say hello and extend a glad hand of welcome on behalf of Canada. They would understand if he had to leave, and appreciate him for being good enough to come even that long. The engineers had a technical man for their guest speaker.

My friend Jack, as I know him now, said he would do that for me and I went away happy. I was just leaving my 4th-floor office an hour later when the minister's secretary phoned me and said her boss wanted to speak to me. He told me House Leader Walter Harris had just announced that his (Pickersgill's) estimates would be coming on possibly a few minutes before six, and continuing at 8 o'clock when the session resumed.

His Co-operation Amazed Me

I THANKED the minister - remember we were not friends then and did not know each other at all except by name - for having had the kindness and the desire to help

me in the first place, but I was completely amazed when he stopped me with “Just a minute, if the worst does happen and my estimates are called before six, I can slip down to the Chateau Laurier, extend greetings for your friend, hike back to the Cafeteria in the building and grab a sandwich in time to resume my estimates.”

I told him I wouldn't ask my brother to do such a thing, because I knew, as he must have known, that the PCs and other opposition members were laying for him in his first estimates, for he had long been a thorn in their side, as he is even now. But the man insisted he would do the job for us. And that's what he did. Bill told me later that he made a splendid impression, and everyone was happy.

I'm sure there wasn't another minister on Parliament Hill who would have done the same thing. As I've already explained, several turned down the request, on the mere chance they might be called.

THAT'S HOW I came to like Jack Pickersgill in the first place and my appreciation of him has increased through the years. I know I'm biased so far as he is concerned, not because he's a Liberal - for I have warm friends in all the parties who were there then - but because he's such a completely human chap.

Bill told me he met Mr. Pickersgill in the Moncton airport early Monday morning, was invited to sit with him and thoroughly enjoyed their chat on the flight to Charlottetown.

Liberals Optimistic - But So Are PCs

BEFORE I leave politics there's one change in the situation from last Friday when I said nobody was talking. A number of prominent Liberals tell me they see a definite trend their way. Several poll chairmen told me that several nights ago, candidates Allison Gillis and Ira Lewis tell me the same thing here. A prominent 4th Queens Liberal is talking of a 500-vote majority there for his side.

But I detect no faltering in the confidence which the PCs express when I talk to them. Angus MacLean told me Wednesday, for example, that so far as he can judge, things continue to look good. Meetings draw good crowds and there are no more than the usual number of complaints - a chap on the government side always gets a certain amount of beefs.

Fellows like Leo McIsaac, Wilfred Inman and Tommy Dunphy to whom I talk often don't seem unhappy. But I find the average man on the street is still reluctant to take sides openly.

Driscoll's Margin Was 47 Votes

THE PC's margin in Third Queens in 1959 was 47, Russell Driscoll tells me, not the 16 I quoted last week from the Parliamentary Guide. I also checked the 16 figure with the report from the official declaration day returns for 1959, but find Mr. Driscoll is right, although that report did not indicate it.

A mistake in reporting one poll caused the mixup, I'm told by Eugene Cullen, former agriculture minister, who was his opponent, although the error was never reported so far as I can find. I complained about the Guide before, but they've corrected most of the things I criticized at that time.

Tunnel Pins Are Recalled

A FRIEND called this week to say it was the Earl Grey that was shown in the special Board of Trade section run this week, not the Stanley as the captain indicated. And that reminds me of a story B. Earle Macdonald told me recently about a special pin they had many years ago to advertise the Tunnel project.

Frank Hobbs showed me one which belongs to Reggie Brittain who runs Tanton's Tire Shop here. "The pin was given to me by Duncan Stewart of Southport, the man who raised me", Mr. Brittain told me yesterday.

Mr. Hobbs tells me the pins were sold in the Post Card Shop, which stood on the corner of Queen and Richmond, the square where the federal building stands now. It was owned for a time by Lonzo B. McCoy, a brother of Mrs. J. A. Webster, 167 Euston Street, who came here from her Moncton home to work in the shop for a time.

THE ROUND pin, made in England, carried the wording "The Tunnel Route, Cape Traverse, P.E.I. to Cape Tormentine, N.B. We must have it" Cape Traverse was the P.E.I. terminal for the old winter ice boats used at the time. A Tunnel Picnic was held every year at Cape Traverse, Mr. Hobbs added.

Mr. Brittain thinks the pin dates back before 1900 - the date is not discernible - and Ralph Cameron who did the research on the Board of Trade story, says the Board started its tunnel support in 1891. Old minutes, he tells me, said the cost estimate was \$12 million which would have been a great deal of money then.

I've often wondered, though, since I first became involved in the cross-strait transportation promotion argument what would have happened had the tunnel been built then.

Alex Matheson, who was premier at the time, said in the Legislature in February 1956 that plans drawn by Douglas Fox in 1891 called for a tunnel 11 feet in diameter, though I've heard others talk of 13 feet. But either way the tunnel would have been outdated when the gauge of the railway was widened in 1918. The Charlottetown-Borden-Summerside portion was widened by then, Graham Rogers tells me - and the tunnel would not have accommodated the wider, much bigger trains. It was not until 1922 that the rest of the main line was widened, he tells me, though the rest of the road was not widened until much later.

Freight, Express Was Transferred

THE MORE I dig into this story, the more fascinating I find it. Just now I recalled the transfer of freight and express from the standard-gauge cars to our old narrow-gauge ones. Brent Wood of this City filled me in on the parts I couldn't remember.

He tells me that the transfer was done at Borden. They had 40 to 50 men employed on the job. They had a long shed, perhaps 300 feet long, not far from the Borden station where the transfer of goods was effected. This transfer business was finally discontinued when the line was standardized to Souris and Tignish and the main lines were modernized to carry the bigger, wider trains.

Two Outstanding Holstein Sires

TWO OUTSTANDING Holstein sires have been brought from Ontario to the New Brunswick Artificial Breeding Co-op Ltd., which farmers here also use. One of them, Roybrook Newsboy, at \$5500 is the highest priced sire ever brought to the unit, I'm told. The other sire is Glanalcomb Hailstone.