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DEBATES OF THE LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY OF
UNITED CANADA

Volume IV

Part II

1844-45



DEBATES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF UNITED CANADA

1841-1867

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General Editor

Elizabeth Gibbs

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Volume IV, Part II

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Edited by

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PRESSE DE L'ECOLE DES HAUTES ETUDES COMMERCIALES

5255, avenue Decelles, Montréal 250, Québec

Report on the
Petition of
A. M'Leod.

Ordered, That the Report of the Select Committee, to which was referred the Petition of Alexander M'Leod, of the township of Stamford, in the district of Niagara, be now committed to a Committee of the whole House.

The House accordingly resolved itself into the said Committee.

Mr. Chauveau took the chair of the Committee, and after some time spent therein,

Mr. Speaker resumed the chair,

And Mr. Chauveau reported that the Committee had come to a resolution; which resolution was again read at the Clerk's table, and agreed to by the House, and is as followeth:--

Resolved, That this House doth concur in the Report of the Select Committee, to which was referred the Petition of Alexander M'Leod, of the township of Stamford, in the district of Niagara.

Resolved, That a Select Committee, composed of Mr. Dickson, Mr. Price, Mr. Duggan, and Mr. Macdonald, of Cornwall, be appointed to draw up and report the draught of an humble Address to Her Majesty, in accordance with the said Report.

Compensation to
Officers of the
House on the re-
movals of the
Seat of Govern-
ment.

Mr. Prince moved, seconded by Mr. Dunlop, that it be an instruction to the Standing Committee on Contingencies, to consider whether an allowance, as an indemnity, to the various officers of the House may not be made, to compensate them for the extra expense incurred in consequence of the removals of the Seat of Government.

The question having been put on the said motion, a division ensued, and it passed in the negative.

Preservation
of Salmon.

Mr. Merritt, from the Committee of the whole House on the Bill to repeal and reduce into one Act the several Laws now in force for the preservation of Salmon, in that part of this Province formerly Upper Canada, and for other purposes therein mentioned, reported, according to order, the amendments made by the Committee to the said Bill; which amendments were again read at the Clerk's table, and agreed to by the House.

Ordered, That the said Bill, as amended, be engrossed.

Elementary
Instruction.

The Order of the Day for the House in Committee on the Bill to make better provision for Elementary Instruction in Lower Canada, being read,

The House accordingly resolved itself into the said Committee.

Mr. Thompson took the chair of the Committee,¹

Several important amendments were made in the Bill.²

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and after some time spent therein,

Mr. Speaker resumed the chair,

And Mr. Thompson reported that the Committee had made some progress, and directed him to move for leave to sit again this day.

Ordered, That the said Committee have leave to sit again.

Then the House adjourned until three o'clock, P.M., this day.

3 O'Clock, P.M.

Public
Improvements.

An engrossed Bill to correct and amend an Act, passed in the 4 and 5 Victoria, chapter 28, entitled, "An Act to appropriate certain Sums of Money for Public Improvements in this Province, and for other purposes therein mentioned," was read for the third time.

Resolved, That the Bill do pass, and the title be, "An Act to correct and amend an Act, passed in the Session held in the fourth and fifth years of Her Majesty's reign, intituled, "An Act to appropriate certain Sums of Money for Public Improvements in this Province, and for other purposes therein mentioned."

Ordered, That the Honourable Mr. Robinson do carry the said Bill to the Legislative Council, and desire their concurrence.

Elementary
Instruction,
Lower Canada.

The Order of the Day for the House in Committee on the Bill to make better provision for Elementary Instruction in Lower Canada, being read,

The House accordingly resolved itself into the said Committee.

Mr. Thompson took the chair of the Committee,

MR. PAPINEAU charg((ed)) Mr. Lafontaine with using unfair means against the Bill.³

M. LAFONTAINE ... ((a dit)) que bien loin de s'attaquer à la mesure, il l'avait empêché d'échouer, et qu'il l'avait soutenue avec fermeté. Seulement il avait dû, lui et ses amis de la chambre, insister sur des

amendemens nécessaires, afin que le bill fut d'un plus grand avantage pour le pays.⁴

((Mr. LaFontaine was several times interrupted by)) MR. MORIN ... jumping up from his seat and shouting, at the top of his voice, "Les Ministres, ils sont couverts de boue", which ... he repeated ... several times.⁵

The Attorney General ((MR. JAMES SMITH)) took occasion to observe, that if the Ministers were "covered with mud", it was a proof of the dirtiness of those who threw it upon them, as well of the harmlessness of their attempts at mischief.⁶

MR. MORIN said that he would justify his assertion. The Ministers pretended to have among them persons who represented the people of Lower Canada; while in fact those persons did not represent them at all; but worse than that, they had attempted to corrupt those gentlemen who really did represent the wishes and views of the people of the eastern part of the Province.⁷

The Attorney General ((MR. JAMES SMITH)) would be glad to know upon what so serious a charge as that of corruption was founded.⁸

MR. LAFONTAINE immediately rose and said he was prepared then and there to prove attempts at corruption on the part of some members of the Ministry.⁹

Several of the Ministerial side cried out loudly for the facts.¹⁰

MR. LAFONTAINE would reply to that question, for he was sorry to say that the charge was too true. He then stated ... that the hon member for Megantic had been several times applied to on the subject of making roads through various counties, by hon. gentlemen who represented those counties; and that upon such occasions he had always met the applicants by saying - "Oh! Sir, it is not our fault." "Government is very poor", and other dark and mysterious expressions¹¹, ((such as)) "You don't support the Government"; this had particularly occurred with his friend the member of Rimouski (Mr. Bertrand) who was so replied to first by Mr. Daly and then by Mr. Papineau, and in the latter instance several other members were present.¹² He said that these base overtures had ((also)) been made to the hon. members for ... Berthier, and L'Islet.¹³ After explaining thus (sic) in English Mr. Lafontaine repeated it in French in order, he said, that Mr. Bertrand might fully understand him, and substantiate his statement if true, or if untrue contradict it.¹⁴

MR. DALY ... denied that he had ever had any conversation with any member which could bear the interpretation which had been given it by the hon. member for Terrebonne. He called upon the hon. member for Ri-

mouski to give the House a statement of the particulars of what had passed between them.¹⁵

DR. TACHE rose amid loud cries of "Rimouski", to explain the circumstances which had occurred when he had applied to the honourable member for Ottawa on a similar subject. It was in the reading room and in the presence of the honorable member for Rimouski, and that of Mr. Chauveau. He (Dr. Taché,) had pointed out the advantages of a road through his own county and the honble. member for Ottawa had then said that his remarks were very true, and he would be very glad to do something for that part of the country; but that he (Dr. Taché) did not support the Government, and that really he could not help his constituents.¹⁶

MR. BERTRAND said that on occasions when he had pressed applications for roads upon the Ministry, he was told that the fault of not having them rested not with the Ministry, but with the people of Lower Canada.¹⁷ He was willing to believe that when Mr. Daly so spoke he was joking. With Mr. Papineau, however, the case was different; he (Mr. P.) seemed to be quite serious, and said that he regretted he could not do more for his countrymen, but that they gave him no support in the Parliament, - if they did he might do something for them. His (Mr. Bertrand's) reply was, must we sell our conscience to procure justice in this House.¹⁸

MR. PAPINEAU denied ... that he intended to corrupt any one¹⁹.

The Attorney General (East) ((MR. JAMES SMITH)) put it to the hon. member for Terrebonne, whether the statement the House had just heard was sufficient for such a charge against the administration as that of attempts at corruption. He had said the very same thing himself, once to the hon. member for Portneuf and the honble. member for Montmorenci, but of course only in joke; and he would appeal to either of those gentlemen, whether, when he had done so, they had ever supposed he was making corrupt overtures, or attempting to cajole and bribe them. That very morning he had told the hon. member for the County of Montmorenci, who was pointing out very properly how desirable a certain road would be for the city of Quebec; that for certain weighty considerations he would see what he could do. That if he (Mr. Cauchon) would only give the Ministry one half of the able support which he rendered to the opposition, there would be nothing in the world that the Administration could refuse him. He was quite sure that the character of the hon. member for L'Islet was such as to prevent his hon. friend from Megantic from attempting to corrupt him even if he had been inclined to do so.²⁰

The hon. members from Cornwall ((MR. ROLLAND MACDONALD)) and Dundas ((MR. GEORGE MACDONELL)) ((defended)) ... the Ministry.²¹

The latter was however cut short ... by the chairman, (MR. THOMPSON) leaving the chair, declaring that he would no longer listen to such--²²

((MR. JAMES SMITH requested Mr. Thompson to return to the Chair.))²³

MR. THOMPSON resumed the chair²⁴.

M. ARMSTRONG voulait faire ajouter ((un proviso)) à la 22^{me} clause, qui dispose en termes généraux que les propriétés imposables seront passibles d'une cotisation proportionnelle à leur valeur jusqu'au montant alloué à même les fonds des écoles, et en sus de l'impôt particulier dont il est parlé dans la section 34. L'amendement de M. Armstrong tendait à substituer une contribution volontaire de la part des habitans des paroisses ou des townships à la répartition que le bill leur rend obligatoire.²⁵

MR. LAFONTAINE combattit ... la proposition de l'honorable membre pour Berthier, faisant voir que les ex-ministres étaient liés, par leur réélection, au principe de l'impôt obligatoire, suivant les moyens de chacun, en faveur de l'éducation. Que l'amendement en question faussait essentiellement le principe, et rendrait la loi parfaitement illusoire dans la pratique. Un autre inconvénient du système de souscription, c'est qu'il ouvrirait indubitablement la porte au favoritisme, et rendrait par là la loi odieuse, loin de devenir populaire comme le désirait le député de Berthier. Au lieu que la taxe obligatoire pèsent (sic) également sur les contribuables, en prenant les moyens de chacun pour base, les mettrait dans les conditions d'une parfaite égalité légale, et les ferait aussi concourir au but de la loi avec toute la spontanéité que ne manque jamais d'imprimer le sentiment de la dignité publique ou nationale.²⁶

M. ARMSTRONG ... ((rappela)) à l'honorable membre pour Terrebonne qu'il ne pouvait pas lui reprocher de s'être jamais égaré du sentier suivi par la phalange du Bas-Canada. Il admettait que les ex-ministres pouvaient avoir été élus sur le principe de la taxe pour l'éducation, cependant il ne se croyait pas lié à ce principe vis-à-vis de ses électeurs qu'il dit ne s'être pas prononcés là-dessus; il y croyait le comté de Berthier adverse, et c'était pour cela qu'il avait introduit son amendement. Que quant à ses principes politiques, ils étaient les siens (à lui M. Armstrong,) et du moment qu'il différerait de ses honorables amis sur ce sujet, il se croirait obligé de se retirer; à tout événement, on pourrait le mettre de côté. ... ((Il dit que)) son amendement ... était moins une déviation du principe de taxation que la cotisation volontaire admise depuis l'introduction de projet originaire Il fit allusion à l'ordonnance des municipalités, et ... ((dit)) que c'était à l'horreur qu'on avait des taxes qu'elle avait dû son insuccès M. Armstrong reconnaissait ... qu'il n'y en avait pas de plus zélées pour le maintien des écoles locales que les classes moyennes de son comté, car elles n'avaient pas, comme les plus riches habitans, les moyens d'envoyer leurs enfans aux collèges.²⁷

L'amendement de M. Armstrong fut rejeté à une très forte majorité, les seuls membres qui l'appuyèrent étant MM. ARMSTRONG, DESAULNIERS, DEWITT, LANTIER, LAURIN et ROUSSEAU.²⁸