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Throne Speech Reflections

IT WAS amazing to learn from reports given by our equally amazing finance minister Premier Bennett at Thursday's opening of the British Columbia legislature, that the province's revenue had reached an all-time high in the 1956-57 fiscal year. It was all the more startling because only a short time ago Mr. Bennett seemed to be having trouble finding enough money to go round. On the one hand he tells us that he underestimated revenues by a paltry $46,000,000. On the other, the government was recently unable to come up with the District 52 school board cheque and and the school board had to borrow the money itself and, under the customary Social Credit system, pay the interest on a loan forced on it by the government. Then again, while telling us that B.C. has made a lot of money the premier casually mentioned that we are short $12,000,000 in cash on hand. Worse still, he says, "contingent liabilities" (Mr. Bennett's way of saying these funds do not belong to the provincial debt) have risen a whopping $100,000,000, to make a total for last year of $241,334,638 or only $30,000,000 short of the year's revenue. But, before we have time to cry havoc, we are told that the Pacific Eastern Railway made money last year and we are completely saved by the fact hard-drinking British Columbians contributed some $25,000,000 in liquor profits to keep our heads above the water in the whisky. Financially, then, we have no alternative but to believe that Mr. Bennett's higher than high financing has kept B.C. out of the hands of the United States moneylenders for another year.

Should the amendments of the Public School Act alter the curriculum to include high finance then there is a good chance that the present younger generation will understand Social Credit methods of financing. With Mr. Bennett at the helm, ably assisted by Mr. Einar Gunderson, B.C.'s finances have been a mass of confused mumbo jumbo for the last six years.

Welcome indeed in the Throne Speech Thursday was the government's plans for new forestry legislation and a study of the Columbia River hydro-electric survey. With Mr. Gordon Sloan managing our forest business there is every possibility that a fair and profitable deal will be forthcoming both for big and small loggers and the people of British Columbia. On the hydro matter we must be assured that the government, in its boundless enthusiasm, doesn't leave us high and dry with neither power for ourselves nor equitable returns for our resources.

More aid to municipalities, superannuation improvements for city employees and changes in the Municipal Act are glad tidings for Prince Rupert City council.

Provincial civil servants, however, cannot help but be suspicious of the fact that the only mention of them is an amendment to their health insurance scheme. This we believe falls far short of the salary demands made last year by the province's 12,000 civil servants. It deepens the belief that Mr. Bennett considers the civil servants' two five-day weekends at Christmas and New Year's plus their issue of Centennial buttons, constitutes the pay increase they can expect. If so, then the premier would be wise to reconsider.

Apart from the hope of an improvement in B.C.'s education system, the most significant part of the throne speech to Prince Rupert is the government's proposal to spend $80,000,000 on the province's highway system. That gives Mr. Bennett's government an excellent oportunity to prove its worth. A million dollars of that allotment could well be spent in completing the Port Edward to Cassiar Cannery road and the remainder, and more if necessary, could finish the paving of Highway 16 at least between Prince Rupert and Terrace. Completion of these two projects would do much to show the residents of this district that our premier's words are something more than a big wind from the south.

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As I See It

by

Elmore Philpott

MP's Far From Home

OTTAWA—With all the election talk in the air, a good many of the freshmen MPs are asking themselves how they ever came to get dragged into this thankless game anyway. They are just getting to know their way around, when out they all go.

Of course all newly elected MPs go through this let-down stage. Most of them get over it, but some never do. A surprisingly number of one-time MPs drop out, voluntarily.

If you can take at face value what most of the old-time MPs around here say, then a young man should avoid politics as he would the plague. That advice stems from the firm belief that you just cannot afford to become an MP unless you hold some other job, or have some other source of income.

The old-timers have seen too many good men come and go to assume that there is any such thing in Canada as a really safe seat, or what they used to call in England a "pocket borough".

THE life of a Canadian MP is not too bad if the MP comes from central Canada—that is, anywhere within range of a single overnight train journey from Ottawa.

If you are one of the lucky ones, then you can leave your wife and children at home, and rent yourself a room in Ottawa. If there is nothing of world shaking importance coming up on the Friday, you can leave for home by the Thursday night train, and arrive back in Ottawa early Monday morning. That is, you can have three full days out of every seven at home with your own family, and with your own friends. But for those MPs who come from the far west or the far east in Canada the story is very different. It is a very difficult life for a younger man with children of school age.

There just is no way of fitting in the family time-table with the time-table of parliament. For instance, you never know when parliament is going to open, and even less do you know when parliament is going to close. So if the younger MP from B.C. or Newfoundland moves his wife and children to Ottawa, to fit in with the school year, he may be absenting himself from his constituency, for several months of the time when he most needs to keep in circulation at home, to keep in close touch with what his constituents are saying and thinking.

A good many of the MPs from distant places like B.C. do not bring their wives or children to Ottawa. Hence they never see each other for weeks, or even months, on end.

All MPs and Senators are entitled by law, to free transportation by train. Each MP from the most distant points is also allowed to travel by plane for one round trip per session.

Here again, there is no particular complaint from the men who represent Ontario or Quebec ridings. But there is a strong move afoot to permit the others to go home at least once every one or two months, by plane.

The above explains why there is more restiveness amongst the young Tory backbenchers than there usually is in this parliament of Canada. In the Diefenbaker landslide of last June, an extraordinary number of younger men were carried in. The great majority of these are not finding it any too easy or pleasant to make the sacrifices of family life and business connection.

OF COURSE every job has its advantages and disadvantages. But the points I have mentioned explain why it is not always possible to get a younger married man to stand for parliament—or if he does stand and get elected—not always easy to keep him on the job for a second or third term.

THE LETTERBOX

The Editor,
The Daily News:

I see by your newspaper that the city is preparing to call for tenders for the museum.

I would like to know whether we have a democracy or dictatorship in city government. It was only last year that a plebiscite was held as to whether a museum would be built and it was turned down.

Now, because the Centennial Committee hope to build for less the City have arbitrarily decided to go ahead, thereby ignoring the wishes of the taxpayers.

On every side of us we hear people wishing for the essentials, such as sidewalks, sewers, decent streets etc. which cannot be built for lack of funds, but still money can be put out for non essential buildings.

Some of us thought things would be different with the new Mayor. Why trouble to have an election if the results are going to be ignored.

Are all the taxpayers going to lay down and take this kind of treatment?

Yours truly,
A. P. Peake,
Prince Rupert

The OLD SWEAT by Doug Smith

There is a race of people in this world who will always be an enigma to their friends and enemies. Just when you reckon that you have them figured out, they do a double-take and confound you. I refer to that well-ordered citizen known as an Englishman.

Around about this time of the year in '41 I used to favor a little Chelsea pub known as the Pig and Whistle. It was here one night that I ran into Hans and Peter, two Dutch refugees.

Hans and Peter were celebrating. They were celebrating the fact that they had escaped the Nazi iron heel in Holland and had just received good paying jobs in London. This was their first pay night and they howled loud and awful.

Now any ex-serviceman will tell you that the normal pub owner in wartime England was a fairly understanding fellow. He had to be to get along with a mass of Canadians, Yanks, Aussies, Poles and Frenchmen, all eager to tear the town apart.

It was when Hans and Peter refused to honor the publican's "Time, gentlemen, please," that he became annoyed and called a copper.

The English bobbie is also a patient and understanding soul. But when Hans and Peter tried to wear his tall hat and refused to move along he rustled them off to the chokey.

The next day they appeared before the magistrate. His Honour dressed them down in righteous wrath and fined Hans five shillings. He then proceeded to do likewise for Peter. But Peter could neither speak or understand English. So the magistrate conscripted Hans to act as an interpreter. He then carried on with his wrath and fined Peter five shillings.

Just as both boys prepared to leave the court, Hans was called back. The court clerk then proceeded to pay him 15 shillings for acting as an interpreter.

It does sound a bit daft, doesn't it?

Court of Revision To Hear 30 Cases

Court of Revision will deal with 30 appeals against property assessment in its first session February 1, City Assessor Harold Alderdice reported today. Deadline for filing appeals was January 17.

CROWD COMMONS CHAMBER — Some of 700 persons who lined up for the 576 available seats in the House of Commons to hear the vote on Liberal and CCF non-confidence motions are shown here. Both votes — including the Liberal motion which was the first for Lester B. Pearson as Opposition leader — were defeated. The line began to form two hours before guards allowed spectators to take seats. (CP Photo)

INTERPRETING THE NEWS

U.S. Ease Rigid Policy On Summit Conferences

By GEORGE KITCHEN
Canadian Press Staff Writer

The United States appears to have softened its approach to the vital question of a summit conference. The negative reaction to Soviet overtures has been discarded. Instead of "no, but," the American response now is in terms of "yes, certainly, provided . . ."

The change essentially is in emphasis rather than in fundamentals. There is no change in the basic U.S. position that the Soviet leaders must provide evidence, at the foreign minister's level, that a summit conference would prove fruitful.

But the U.S. does seem now to be trying to convince the free world, and perhaps the Russians as well, that its position is not as rigid as it may have appeared in the past.

EXTRA MILE

Diplomats and other observers in Washington detect such a shift in recent foreign policy pronouncements by both President Eisenhower and State Secretary Dulles. Both emphasized a positive approach on the summit question.

Eisenhower did so in answering the recent Bulganin letter. His reply expressed a willingness to meet the Russians, provided such a conference was adequately prepared, and advanced a seven-point program on which the president was prepared to negotiate.

Diplomats also found a conciliatory tone in Eisenhower's state-of-the-union message to Congress where he said Americans would "always go the extra mile with anyone on earth if it will bring us nearer a genuine peace."

NATO PRESSURE

Dulles, in a recent address before the National Press Club in Washington, went to great lengths to accentuate the positive side of the U.S. approach to a summit meeting. Exhibiting a flexibity and mellowness that surprised many in his audience, Dulles strongly emphasized the U.S. desire for fruitful high-level talks.

Some observers attribute the modified American reaction to heavy pressure exerted on the Eisenhower administration, both at home and from the NATO allies abroad, to soften its response to Russian suggestions for face-to-face discussions.

For one, Canada's External Affairs Minister Sidney Smith several times has criticized the U.S. state department for its quick, negative reaction each time Moscow proposes a summit get-together.

LETTERBOX

IDENTIFICATION NEEDED

The Editor,
The Daily News

I have been instructed by the executive board of Local 708 to pass along the following to you.

Your reporter has made frequent visits to our offices for any information which might be available from us about the current strike. This as we understand is part of his job, and part of the business of gathering news. We have made no objection to his coming into our offices up to this point, but we have found out that he has been mixed in with the crowd at times, and not recognized as a reporter. This we do not appreciate, as it could be easy for him to pick up "information" which might not be correct, and if published might bring unfair publicity to us.

As a result of this, you are asked to instruct your reporter to wear "conspicuous identification" as a "PRESS" button. This is in the interest of local 708, and fair reporting of news for the public.

If we cannot have this request granted, then we might be forced to keep the reporter out of our offices altogether.

Yours truly,
B. J. Fortune,
Corr. Sec'ty.

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REPORT FROM

PARLIAMENT HILL

. . . by Frank Howard

MP Skeena

The Galleries were, figuratively speaking, packed to the rafters on Monday and Tuesday of this week. The occasion was the "maiden" speech of the newly elected Liberal leader 'Mike' Pearson.

Newspaper gossip for the past week has been that the Liberals would move a want of confidence motion and thereby defeat the Government. After this of course there would be an election.

If the people came to the House of Commons expecting a drama to be enacted, they were disappointed. Mr. Pearson did move an amendment to one of the Supply motions, but what the amendment called for was the resignation of the Government and asked that the Liberals take over again as the Government without an election taking place.

This, of course, was absurd for the Conservatives still have the command of Parliament and have not been defeated on the floor of the House of Commons. The day after Mr. Pearson made this amendment there was general dismay, general sorrow, and general sympathy for Mr. Pearson, for it was quite obvious that he failed to put the necessary spark into the Liberal Party, which they so badly need.

I spoke with the wife of an exceptionally well known Liberal after yesterday's sitting and she told me that she was almost in tears over Mr. Pearson's pitiful effort.

One other important fact emerged from the last few days activities. The Liberal caucus did not decide that Mr. Pearson should do as he did. This move was obviously designed by the Liberal "brain trust" about five weeks ago and Mr. Pearson was apparently told that he must carry out their instructions.

Fishermen in Prince Rupert will be pleased to know that we have finally been successful in breaking down part of the resistance by the Department of Public Works to the building of safe harbor facilities at Wiah Point.

The attitude at first was the project would cost too much and consequently couldn't be justified. The Department was thinking in terms of $1 million or more. Fishermen know that this is absurd and that the work could be done for much less than that. After the election last summer I made it a special point to go over to Wiah Point to see for myself, for certainly one look is worth a thousand reports.

After much correspondence and personal representation on my part the "Minister finally communicated with me on December 31 and pointed out that the Department of Public Works is going to carry out an extensive survey this coming year in order to get information concerning the harbor bottom and the breakwater."

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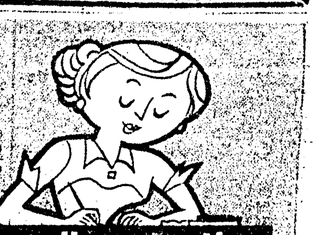
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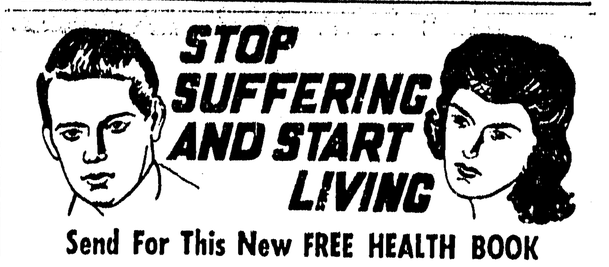

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OLD BUT USEFUL — This old horse-drawn snowplow was pressed into service to help clear Montreal streets of a seven-inch snowfall. Owned by Henri Gasson, the horse is the only one still used by the city for snow removal. (CP Photo)