

# ROAD SYSTEM IS CRITICIZED

## Opposition Members Raise Vigorous Objection to Estimates for Highways.

### SAY DEPARTMENT USED FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES

## Parker Williams Clashes With Several Government Members.

VICTORIA, B. C., April 1.—Charges that the province's roadwork had been used for political purposes featured yesterday afternoon's debate on the estimates. Several interesting passages at arms between Mr. Parker Williams and government supporters enlivened the proceedings.

M. A. Macdonald expressed interest to know who made up the estimates of the roadwork and the Hon. Thomas Taylor said they were drawn up in the department on the strength of reports presented by the road superintendent. In addition there was usually some correspondence with people in the various districts. Mr. Brewster said that while the opposition had no information to say that the vote for any one riding was excessive, he thought an equitable basis among the various ridings could be reached with a much smaller total appropriation. He thought no more than was absolutely necessary for maintenance should be voted. Parker Williams spoke of his difficulty in getting a good sized vote for Newcastle, and in doing so paid a unique tribute to Sir Richard McBride. He said that the former premier could usually be reached in an argument because he would talk back, but the other ministers would not talk back and he could get no satisfaction from them.

### Estimates Mislead.

"These estimates are misleading to the people of the province," said Parker Williams. "for they don't realize that we are going back several millions a year. The reason the cut is not made this year is simply to keep a bold face on until after election. I am in favor of a 10 per cent cut on the whole thing this year, although even then if this government is in power next session they'll be making a great deal different budget from what even that would be. Of the 142 votes that we've passed there are not half a dozen that we could not cut considerably, and say honestly to the people of the province that we did it from a sense of duty."

"If the votes are made up by the road superintendents," asked M. A. Macdonald, "based on their particular needs, how comes it that they are exactly the same as last year? That shows they are not based on any business system. As a matter of fact, in order to get any share of this money, I know that men are required to become members of Conservative associations, and I don't believe the province gets 50 cents on a dollar of value for this money. This vote is regarded as the particular appropriation for the followers of the party."

### Mr. Taylor Explains.

Hon. Thomas Taylor said that the similarity of the estimates was based on the fact that little or no new work was being done, and that the same amount was required for maintenance in one year as in another. The minister resented the statement that value was not received for the money spent. Mr. Williams' suggestion of a ten per cent cut all around was not practicable.

Mr. Williams and Mr. J. H. Schofield (Ymir) clashed in regard to the road superintendent's work in that district. The member for Newcastle and Dr. Young also had a wordy battle in regard to the relative road grants for Newcastle and Atlin. The former said there were not over 150 voters in Atlin; Dr. Young claimed 830.

### Clash With Mr. Miller.

Mr. Williams then began to deal with Grand Forks riding and got into a controversy with Mr. Ernest Miller about the appropriations for that riding. Finally he made some allusion to Mr. Miller manipulating a hotel licence.

Mr. Miller—Will the member make that statement definite? I have never had anything to do with a liquor licence in my life.

Mr. Williams—He knows what I mean.

Mr. Miller—I insist that he either withdraw that remark or make it clear.

Mr. Williams—Well, if the member says he had nothing to do with a licence it is possible that he did not.

Mr. Miller—Since the member for Newcastle has threatened some time ago that he intends to misrepresent me whenever he can I suppose that is the best apology I can get from him.

The Socialist member went on to say that in two years after Mr. Miller was elected from Grand Forks the

road appropriation in the district had jumped from \$7500 up to \$65,000 and said that a Socialist member had preceded Mr. Miller in the riding.

Mr. Miller thought the government should not be blamed because the Socialist member had not attended to the needs of his riding. Mr. Williams said the member for Greenwood had also got a very substantial increase in his first two years of office.

### **Whole System Wrong.**

H. C. Brewster said that the whole system was what was wrong. The first error lay in the lack of system under which the province was settled. Settlements of a few farms had sprung up in widely scattered districts hundreds of miles from transportation. An agitation had sprung up for a road and because these people had votes the government in order to elect its candidates had had to build them. It was an insult to the intelligence of the members to say that no political influence had been used in the construction of roads. He could prove it in specific instances. Mr. Brewster said that in Alberni, his own riding in 1912, the vote had been greatly increased the year before the election, because the road superintendent was the candidate.

Mr. H. E. Forster, the independent member from Columbia, wanted to know why it was that Revelstoke, with about 20 per cent of the mileage of Columbia, had a larger vote, and the minister said that it was because of the difference in climatic conditions which made maintenance more expensive. He also said that a great deal of development south of Revelstoke city had been necessary on account of the increased population in that area.

### **Work Done by Aliens.**

Mr. Taylor at another stage of the debate explained the use of interned alien enemies on road work. He said that they had been used chiefly on the roads around Vernon, but this year would not be used exclusively in that district. An arrangement with the Dominion government whereby the men were paid 25 cents a day had enabled the government to have a great deal of work done at the small cost of \$37,200. The work done had all been work that would not have been done by the ordinary system. This year's vote is \$30,000 and part of it will probably be spent on the Banff-Windermere road.