

# TWO-EDGED SWORD IS FREELY USED BY THE MEMBER FOR COLUMBIA

**Appeal for Statesmanship in Government Instead of Politics  
is Made in Fine Peroration by Mr. H. E. Forster—  
Liberals Must Clearly Define Real Constructive Policy  
to Win Confidence—Has Some Suggestions Himself—  
Government's Land Policy Self Evolved.**

(World's Special Service.)

VICTORIA, March 17.—Declaring that too much time was taken up with party politics and too little with real government, Mr. H. E. Forster, M. P. P. for Columbia, the only Independent member in the House, treated both the government and the Opposition to a few rounds without gloves yesterday afternoon. While holding that the government had committed many "torts" in its administration of affairs, the member for the mountain constituency stated that it was his opinion that the attack of the Liberals, generally speaking, had been badly directed and that the real sources of mismanagement had been left unassailed.

Also, Mr. Forster bluntly intimated that if government were to continue along the same type of party lines as in the past he had not any more faith in the Liberals than in the present administration. The temper of the people was changing and it was about time both parties became aware of it, he said in effect. In many ways the crazy desire for speculation by the people themselves was directly responsible for the acts attributed by the Liberals to the administration. The European war and the sacrifices entailed had re-adjusted many warped views and philosophies. The people wanted good government, and it was time for the parties to enunciate policies that struck deeply at real problems of finances. In this connection he frankly asked what the Liberals had to offer as a basis for favorable consideration by the people, and concluded with several suggestions off his own bat.

"I first wish to congratulate the House on the acquisition of the two new members elected at the recent elections, and who, being leaders of the Liberal party, can, therefore, ably represent the views of that party," he said at the outset.

## No Support Pledged

"Personally, I desire to say a few words on the debate because I am in the fortunate position at the present time of being not tied down to support the policies of either the government or opposition, and am, therefore, able to view things from the standpoint of the man in the street—so to speak—who wishes to consider both sides of any question and form his own judgment.

"There are a few points about the government policies and the criticisms of the same that I intend first to mention briefly, and they appear very different from what either the government or the opposition would have us believe, when looked at impartially and from an independent point of view and that leads to some questions of policy about which the ordinary man would be glad to have a definite statement from the opposition. From what I understand from the minister of lands speech, the government intends to let these matters, to which I am about to refer, hang fire until after the war.

## The Land Policy

"We will first consider the much-talked of land policy so praised by the government, on the plea that it has brought in vast sums to the provincial treasury, to say nothing of the sums still owing on account of land sales, and so condemned by the opposition on the plea that it has alienated vast tracts of land that would otherwise have been available for settlement.

"When we come to inquire into the so-called government land policy, and to ask when and how they inaugurated it, we arrive at this curious and interesting conclusion: That apparently the government never inaugurated any such thing, nor were they primarily responsible for the large revenue from the land sales. They are taking credit for something they had practically nothing to do with, and the Liberals are, therefore, equally wild in their condemnations. You will find that the government were quite apathetic as to the disposal of the provincial lands, at any rate for a long time—in fact, just as apathetic as they have been to the mining industry, and that it was not until the land boom started, and there was a rush to purchase these provincial lands, and a large and increasing revenue arose from this source, that they began to take credit to themselves for having a land policy, and to boast it was such a paying one. As a matter of fact, they had nothing to do with the sudden increased revenue from this source. It was the land boom and the speculator in his greed to get hold of cheap land, which he expected to turn over quickly at a handsome profit, that caused money to pour into the treasury, and not any government action.

## Staking By Agents

"Then with regard to the staking of land by agents—a point which has

been condemned in certain quarters—the custom by which an agent could stake large blocks of land in other people's names, prevailed in this province many years before this government came into power. People frequently used this custom to stake mineral claims, and occasionally timber tracts as far back as I can remember, and I have been in the province for 26 years. They did not formerly stake much land under it, as before the land boom few wished to buy land even at a dollar per acre that was subject to a 4 per cent. wild land tax.

"It is quite true that the government amended the Land Act in 1907, but the amendments were only important in so far as they more definitely stated how land should be staked, etc., for pre-emption and purchase purposes, a point which was very indefinite and hazy before, especially when staking for purchase purposes. Apparently the old Land Act had nothing in it to enable the government to make certain that the applicant or his agent or client had ever actually staked the land he applied to purchase, and further the statement in the 1907 act that an agent could stake land, etc., only made it plain to those not acquainted with the recognized custom that this could be done, and introduced no new feature in the Land Act.

## Increase of Price

"The second important point in the 1907 act, was the increasing of the minimum purchase price of government land to \$2.50 per acre, as far as I can see this is the only basis of a land policy the government had, with the exception of reserving from entry certain areas in the northern country and along the new lines of railway.

"If we look up the records we find that before as well as after 1907 most of this land was staked by agent.

These are facts that anyone can verify by investigating for himself, and as there is so much misconception on the part of the general public regarding them, I thought it advisable to bring them to your notice. The turmoil over the government's so-called land policy resolves itself into a case of the government on the one hand trying to take credit to itself for this large revenue from land sales, when, as a matter of fact, it was the speculative mania of the public that was responsible for it, and of the Liberals on the other hand coming back at them and using another phase of this sale of provincial lands as a club against the government, and I say justly punishing them for taking credit when it was not due.

## Definite Policy Necessary

"However, these sales of land have led to a situation that requires some definite statements of policy in regard to it before a general election, from both parties. The present situation is that the province has a large sum of money owing to it from sales of land on which the initial payment of fifty cents per acre has been made, and I believe most of it was surveyed at additional expense to the purchasers, and there is a desire on the part of a large proportion of the public to get back this land. The purchaser is also, in most cases, anxious to get out of his bargain, and would willingly take back his fifty cents per acre and give up his bargain; therefore, what is to be done about it?

"The enforcing of the payments due on these land sales is impossible in most cases, also the paying back of the fifty cents per acre is practically out of the question, as this would involve a serious inroad into our none too full treasury of nearly \$1,500,000.

"Then, according to the agreements of sale, the government could cancel these land contracts and take back these lands without repaying anything. But is this advisable, in view of the fact that it would be said that the British Columbia government in its dealings with the investor was too harsh, and capital might therefore avoid this province. The minister of lands, last Friday, stated what the government policy is to be in this regard. Therefore, I say it is up to the opposition to formulate their policy to deal with the question, and I am sure the general public will be greatly interested in hearing what it is to be.

## The Timber Question

"Then as regards the timber question. An enormous revenue comes from this source every year, and yet the lumber industry has not flourished in the last ten or twelve years. It has been crippled by high taxation and the province benefits to an unreasonable extent from this source. Therefore, a statement from the opposition would be in order as to how they intend to handle the situation.



by any chance they come into power. Will they encourage the lumber industry and give it a better chance to thrive by reducing the taxation? Thereby they would ensure employment to a large number of men, to the advantage of the country, but at the expense of the revenue of the treasury? Or will they still leave it overburdened with taxation? The government apparently proposes to follow out its present policy in regard to the lumber industry.

#### **That Poll Tax**

"Also, is any move to be made to reinstate the poll tax? And if so, with what provisions to exempt those who already pay other taxes? This should certainly be done in order to tax the thousands of those, particularly foreigners, who at present pay nothing to the up-keep of the administration.

"In considering the government's policy regarding other industries, look at the agricultural industry in the dry belts and see how the government hits this in their water legislation. In their greed for revenue, they confiscated old water rights—a principle that is absolutely un-British—and then enforced excessive fees for water licences and imposed other restrictions, and useless red tape, thereby making it more and more difficult for the farmers and fruitgrowers to succeed. What does the opposition propose in regard to water legislation and aid to agriculture?

"Judging from the red tape in this and other recent acts, it looks as if the government had been legislating more for the benefit of the lawyers than the public, and the public would be glad of assurance from the Liberals and a definite statement of policy to remedy these defects. Where is their policy?

#### **The Mining Industry**

"As regards the mining industry, it is lucky that so far the government has left it alone, and owing to their apathy it has escaped their claws, and is one of the industries that has gone ahead. I trust that there will be no tinkering with the Mineral Act, and that anything done in regard to the mining industry will be in the nature of preventing wild-cattling, which it may be necessary to legislate against in view of the prospective revival and in the way of assisting development. What is the opposition's policy with regard to the mining industry?

"In reviewing the way the government has dealt with the disposal of the provincial lands and timber, I cannot see that the province has got the worst of the deal as far as revenue and alienation of land go. What policy the government did develop in these matters was more in the nature of killing the goose that laid the golden egg.

#### **Results of Policy**

"Take their policy as regards timber lands: Any lumberman will tell you what he has to put up with. If the lumber manufacturer wishes to build a large mill in order to produce lumber cheaply, he has to secure a number of square miles of timber lands to ensure having sufficient timber ahead to last until he can at least pay for his mill and get fair interest on his investment. When he does secure these timber limits, he is up against a tax of \$115 to \$140 per limit per year, besides a royalty on the lumber when cut. If he could obtain the market for his product, his policy would be to butcher his timber limits, and use only the most easily cut and cheapest to manufacture of the timber, and to do this as quickly as possible, and then throw up his timber limits that have been so treated in order to avoid the high yearly tax. You can hardly say such a proceeding would be in the interests of the people of the province, who desire to see their timber conserved, rather than butchered and a large proportion wasted.

#### **"Bleeding" the Industries**

"To my mind, instead of encouraging the industries of the country, the policy of the government has been in all cases to bleed them to the fullest extent in order to obtain revenue, and I claim that where the people have their true grievance is with regard to the terrific waste and extravagance shown in the spending of this revenue. It was a case of easy come, easy go. And there seems to have been no one in the government with sufficient business ability to see that the people got even a moderately fair return for this expenditure. Look at the loose business methods, to say nothing worse, employed in the acquisition of the Songhees and Kitsilano reserves, and the extraordinary commissions paid. But what are these in comparison with the buying back the mountain tops from the C. P. R. for the enormous sum of approximately \$1,500,000. They pale into insignificance. I refer to the blocks of land acquired by the C. P. R. under the British Columbia Southern land grant, and the balance of which the government bought back from the railway company after the latter had picked out everything of any possible value in the way of agricultural, grazing or timber lands. In fact, the C. P. R. sent their cruisers even after the deal had been consummated to make sure that they had not overlooked anything of any possible future value, and reserved a few more scattered areas of land that might prove of value later for tie timber, etc. And then for the absolutely waste lands that were left the government paid some \$1,500,000. This was, I presume, the equivalent the C. P. R. got to match the assistance given to the C. N. R. and P. G. E. railways. But the C. P. R. got the cash, where the other railway



companies got their bonds guaranteed.

## Railway Transactions

"This deal illustrates too well the utter recklessness of the government when handling the people's money, and as there are so few people who really understand this transaction, and it affects so greatly the district of Columbia, I have the honor to represent, I will go into a few details concerning this B. C. Southern Railway land grant, and take one of these blocks in Columbia district, i.e., Block 4596, and containing about 840,000 acres, as an example. As you are aware, this land grant was given under the stipulation that the land should only be free of taxation providing the land was sold under the British Columbia Land Surveyors' classification at government rates per acre. But what happened? In all sales of any of this land grant made by the C. P. R. they made several reservations, the chief one being the timber which had to be bought separately. This was an infraction of the terms of the land grant, and, therefore, left them open for taxation, and a suit was entered against them by the government at Nelson for taxes which the government won. Instead of an appeal being taken, the matter was apparently left in abeyance at this point by both parties and the next thing we heard of it was that the government had agreed to buy back the balance of this land grant after first letting the railway company pick out all the land of any value for any purpose whatever, and in spite of the fact that if the government had forced payment of taxes the railway company would have let this land revert to the government again for nothing.

"During this period, another transaction in connection with another part of this land developed, and some

60,000 acres was reserved for an irrigation scheme, to exploit which a company was formed called the 'C. V. I. F. L.' Of this company, one of the chief C. P. R. officials in Calgary was president. And the C. P. R. land agent in the district, vice-president. And although no one else could buy any of the 60,000 acres at the government rate, at the same time this land was not taxed until the sale was actually consummated to the irrigation company. The only excuse I heard made on the part of the government for buying back this land, was to get it back for the settlers, and also that the prospector could purchase the surface right of any mineral fields located in the area. But where is the settler who wants to farm mountain tops out of this Block 4596? And as to the prospector, the Mineral Act provides that he shall take \$5 an acre for his surface rights if he wants them, and, therefore, the railway company would in any case have been obliged to sell to him at this price.

### **Frying Small Potatoes**

"Now, why do not the Liberals have more to say about this deal? It is much more important than these minor matters they are harping on, all the time, and they know all about it, as I noticed it was briefly mentioned in the early part of last year by one of their speakers."

The speaker then criticized the "Crisis," stating that the opposition to the government might better have taken up the main facts that have caused so much dissatisfaction with the government, "namely, the mistakes they have made in the handling of the province's finances."

### **"Present Extravagances"**

"Now, to mention a few of the present extravagances of the government that should be curtailed," proceeded Mr. Forster. "let us consider

our method of policing the province. Throughout the province we have our provincial police force under one department of the government with its office staff to administer it. We also have a force of game wardens doing police duty of another kind, and with its office staff. Further, we have a force of fire wardens with its office staff. All these forces doing police duty, and each with a separate office staff. Surely this is unnecessary. Look at the prairie provinces. The mounted police there do all this work, and do it far more efficiently than our various police forces do at such greater expense. Why cannot we have one police force, and under one administration staff to do all this work, and have them mounted where possible and uniformed and perhaps under military discipline, as the prairie provinces do?

### **Mounted Police Suggested**

"The mounted police system in vogue there has proved itself over and over again to be far the best to police a large territory with a scattered population. Less than one-half the number of men employed in this province for these various duties at the present time, would do this work and do it better, and at far less than one-half the cost, when we consider the reduction in the administrative staffs that could be effected. Surely this is an opening for an economy, and economy with better service.

"Next in the handling of the public works we require a more efficient and less wasteful system. Our present system as inaugurated by the minister of works has proved itself to be extravagant and unsatisfactory, and no one but the party heeler and the politician commends it. Under it the worst evils of the patronage system flourish, and for that reason alone, it must be bad.

"Why the patronage system is en-



couraged and kept up it is hard to realize. It is a pitfall for the politician. It gives a cheap semblance of power that he is greedy to grasp, and he never seems to realize the trouble he is laying up for himself in doing so, nor does a government under which this system flourishes, until too late. And now that the people of this country are realizing the evils of the patronage system better they are up in arms against it, and are looking for a party to do away with its evils before giving their confidence again. It is just the same in Alberta and Saskatchewan under Liberal government as it is here.

"Why cannot the public works be conducted by some form of commission on which all parties, Conservative, Liberal and Socialists would be represented and which, therefore, would be set outside of political influence. Some such system would curtail the scope of the patronage system and stop the worst abuses of it, as well as give us a better value for the money expended on our public works. A reorganized system of policing the country and watching over our game and our timber would further curtail its scope, and later other means might be devised to do away with it entirely. We have heard many reasons given by the government supporters for the results of the recent by-elections, but they all seem to have missed the main one—that the people of the country are fighting against the party machine, and its abuse of the patronage system, and are determined to do away with its evils. This is the true reason as anyone can ascertain if he does not wilfully blind himself to the facts. However, there is no assurance that if the Liberals come into power, they would not soon have a

party machine of their own that would be just as bad. We already see the political parasite who has fastened himself to the Conservative party during the last 10 or 12 years, looking for a chance to climb the fence if the Liberal party comes into power, and fasten himself to it.

### **Former Liberal Tactics**

"Also, what assurance have we that the Liberal party would not immediately throw out all the present civil service employees to make room for their friends? I was in this country in 1896 when they went into power at Ottawa, and I never saw a hungrier lot in my life than the Liberals showed themselves to be at that time. They grabbed all the federal government jobs from the smallest to the fattest for their friends, irrespective of whether their appointees were better qualified or not to fill them. To the credit of the Conservative party it can be said that they have not followed this bad example. I am, of course, a Conservative, although I am in this House as an Independent, and as an Independent it is unnecessary for me to say that I do not think the leader of the Liberal party would countenance such actions. The Liberal party is ably represented in this House by the two hon. members lately elected for Vancouver and Victoria, respectively, and they have every opportunity during this session of assuring us that their party would set a higher standard of morality in such matters than their party did after the federal election of 1896.

"If we again look back over the last twelve years that the government has been in power, there is another view to be taken of their actions that the public are loth to consider as it concerns themselves and their responsibility for the government extravagance.

### **Public in Glass Houses.**

"Do they ever consider their own extravagances, wasteful ways, etc.,



during the good times. Money was plentiful and it was an era of speculation. Everyone was chasing the dollar or recklessly spending his easily acquired wealth. He was too intent on his own selfish ends to pay much attention to what the government was doing so long as he himself prospered. So did the people deserve good government? Was not any old thing good enough for them? The government only followed the spirit of the people. And I would like to know how long any government would remain in power at any time, either in good times or in bad times, if it did not follow the spirit of the people. Now things have changed; bad times are following the good, and the people are looking for a scapegoat. What more handy one than the government? But they should remember their own short-comings before condemning too harshly those of the government.

### **Good Government Expected.**

“However, circumstances have brought about another change that is more pleasant to contemplate, though it is caused by that universal calamity, ‘the Great European War.’ On account of the war, many have been called upon to make sacrifices of one kind or another, and to put their more selfish interests in the back ground. And we have the magnificent example of our soldiers who have enlisted of their own free will, and shown themselves so ready and willing to sacrifice their lives in the service of their country. This has brought about a change in the spirit of the people that nothing else could have accomplished. Their virtue and better qualities are coming to the fore, and selfishness and kindred bad qualities are happily disappearing. Now, therefore, they deserve and rightly expect good government—government by those who are not seeking to advance their own selfish ambitions, but who have first and foremost the interests of the country at heart. Government, not by politicians, but by statesmen.

### **Banff-Windermere Road.**

“I now will draw attention to a matter that is an urgent need of the district that I have the honor to represent, and of the adjoining districts, as well as indirectly of the whole province. I refer to the Banff-Windermere Road, and the necessity of its early completion. At the present time the work done on this highway stands as a monument of waste and extravagance. It is an exceedingly bad advertisement of the public works administration of the province, and judging from the estimated loss last year alone to the Kootenay district directly, and indirectly to the whole province owing to its incompleteness, it would pay the government to make every effort to finish this work. From estimates made by those in touch with the tourist trade at Banff, and others in a position to know, it appears that last season anywhere from 10,000 at the lowest estimate, to 30,000 tourists would have used this highway, and I am safe in saying that each person would have left in the country anywhere from ten to several hundred dollars, depending on the time of his or her stay in tributary parts of B. C. And at this rate you can see that we were the losers last year to the extent of at least \$500,000. and I understand that this coming season there will be just as heavy a tourist traffic over the C. P. R. as last year. Are we to let this valuable tourist traffic over past us again as it has done in the



past, just for the sake of a small effort on the part of the government to build the incomplete part of the Banff-Windermere Road?

"The heaviest part of the work has been done, and the rest would not entail any very heavy expenditure on the part of the government, if done under a more economical system. But there are other means, probably, of getting it done than at the provincial government's expense, and I would suggest—and I know the people of Columbia are agreeable to the proposal—that the provincial government negotiate with the Federal government at Ottawa with a view to having the latter take over this road and complete it. The Federal government can do so at slight expense by employing the interned labor. They employed interned labor last year in the park at Banff most successfully, and polished off their end of this road as far as the B. C. boundary, but there they had to stop.

### **A Business Proposition.**

"Some of the members of this House may think that this Banff-Windermere Road is a wild scheme similar to the Strathcona Park. It is nothing of the sort. It is a legitimate enterprise spoilt at the present juncture by extravagance and waste in the carrying of it out. The C. P. R. have some \$75,000 invested in it. And you do not find that astute corporation investing in anything it does not consider a sound business proposition.

"The hon., the Premier, has declared that this is to be a business government. Here is a business proposition. Let us see how they will handle it? And if they handle it successfully, I am confident the people of Columbia and the other districts directly benefited, will show their gratitude and appreciation."