

HON. MR. STRATTON MAKES HIS DEFENCE IN THE HOUSE

He Reaffirms his Innocence of the Charges made Against Him by Mr. Gamey

ROSS AND WHITNEY SPEAK

The Judges are Condemned by the Leader of the Opposition who Believes Gamey's Story

On Wednesday of last week began the debate on the finding of the Commission on the Gamey charges. It was begun by Premier Ross, speaking to a resolution that the finding be adopted by the House. Mr. Whitney followed and Mr. Stratton spoke next.

The premier's speech justified the judges' finding, and reaffirmed his belief in the innocence of the provincial secretary, as regards the Gamey charges.

Mr. Whitney denounced both the finding and the judges who made it, and declared that he believed that Gamey's charges were substantially true.

Mr. Stratton complained of the attitude of the Conservative, and the "treacherous independent" press, in judging him before he was tried. He with regard to the "Cant-you-forget" episode he said that he would resign if Hammond would say that he had asked him to forget or omit any evidence bearing on the Gamey case.

THE PREMIER

Toward the close of Premier Ross' speech he said he was glad that the case had reached its present stage, which he knew was not the final stage. There was a jury beyond the House, and to that jury he was ready to appeal without any misgivings. Their verdict, he was sure, would be that of the commissioners.

He did not wish to speak in any boastful spirit, but he was proud of the confidence the Liberal party had shown in their leader. Had it not been for that confidence they might have been a stampede, which would have proved disastrous to the government. But with commendable courage and devotion not a single supporter had shown any signs of wavering. It was not any blind party spirit which had caused them to do this; it was the confidence of men who knew the government's record, and who refused to believe evil of it till satisfactory proof was adduced.

As for the Opposition, said Mr. Ross, he would have esteemed its members still more, and placed them upon a higher plane, if they had maintained the same attitude as the government members. They should have waited for some proof before condemning the accused minister. If charges were to be believed on first hearing, then every man who entered public life and did so at the hazard of his reputation and of his moral and social standing. The press also had failed to treat the government with the consideration it deserved. The cabinet members were not brigands; they were men with as good standing as any in the community. They were not deceivers, Pharisees, or whitened sepulchres. Who would dare to say that after 30 years of service the government should be denounced as an assemblage of hypocrites and villains, unmasked at an opportune time and worthy only to be condemned to oblivion? That treatment was not deserved. The Opposition were as much custodians of the honor of the House as the government. If the government had gone down, every member of the House would have had a cloud over his name.

The proper course to pursue in the debate, and the one which would commend itself to the best men of both parties, would be for the House to at once accept the report in the terms proposed, and so close the present chapter in the case. The premier said he was asking this in order to escape criticism of the government, for they had nothing to fear from criticism. He and his colleagues had not borne the burden and heat of the political strife to sell out at last to a political malefactor, merely that they might keep themselves in office a few days longer.

EULOGY FOR STRATTON

Speaking of the provincial secretary, the premier said he had returned at every election with constantly increasing majorities. He had occupied a high standing in the financial world. Surely such a man must possess the elements of integrity and political morality. His demeanor through his trying ordeal had not been that of a swaggerer, but that of the man who knows that no charges against his honor could be proven. For that reason, when he had tendered his resignation, said the premier, he had been told by his leader and his colleagues that they would not believe the charges against him till they had been proven in the court of law.

"We appeal to the great jury of this country," said the premier, in conclusion, "in the hope that the report of the commissioners will be the crystallized judgment of the people of the whole country. We hope that this matter will be removed from the sphere of active politics, that this house will never have to weary itself as it has done, and preoccupy its time with similar investigations, but relieved from this, it will have time to apply itself to its

great functions of legislation looking for the prosperity of the country and for the elevation of public morality and the progress of education."

MR. WHITNEY

Mr. Whitney scornfully referred to the premier's statement that the prosecution had been allowed to appoint their own counsel. "It had been said that if you scratched a Russian you would find under the skin a Tartar, but if you scratched some of the hon. gentlemen opposite you would find a mixture of demagogue and tyrant such as Russia could not supply," was Mr. Whitney's comment.

He repeatedly taunted the premier because he had not gone into the witness box. Even when the judges had asked for an explanation of how the Gamey letter had reached the premier's hands, the premier, instead of appearing himself, had sent a woman, reminding one of a certain tribe who put their women out in front of the firing line.

The premier had spoken of Hammond's evidence. The point was not that the evidence did not differ from Stratton's, but that the provincial secretary had attempted to get Hammond to commit a crime.

CRITICIZES JUDGES

Mr. Whitney maintained that even judges could properly be criticized, and if judges, why not mere commissioners, hired by this legislature to work for it at so much a day? The judiciary was falling into disrepute. They had no right to complain if they were criticized for their actions when they stepped off the bench and denounced themselves of the halo which surrounded them as members of the judiciary. The judiciary of Ontario had long been looked upon as examples for the whole world. Now one could go upon the street and learn from the passerby that the reputation of the judiciary was not what it was two years ago. This was a trifle in the eyes of the Government, which was largely to blame for the circumstance.

"We have seen Sir John Boyd," said Mr. Whitney, "on whose words the fate of the Government depends, with three sons in the employ of that Government, and himself drawing fees from it, in addition to his salary, for the past seven or eight years. It is indecent. I am sorry to say it, but it is indecent."

BELIEVES GAMEY

"I believe," he went on, "that the statements made by the member for Manitoulin in this House are mainly true. The paying of money by the provincial secretary is an arguable point, and a jury might disagree on it, but the commissioners themselves believed that the member for Manitoulin received money, and, as I take it, for the purpose he said, and that does not leave much more to be proved."

If it were not such a serious matter it would be laughable to see the attitude taken by the judges towards Frank Sullivan. When Sullivan's evidence discredited Gamey's, Sullivan was lauded, but where it was Stratton's evidence that was discredited the judges practically said in plain English that Sullivan was a liar.

MR. STRATTON

Mr. Whitney had scarcely sat down until Mr. Stratton was on his feet. He recalled the glee with which the Opposition members had received Mr. Gamey's statement on March 11 last. Their faces were written over with unholy joy. They went into convulsions of delight because they believed that the charges were practically going to destroy the Government. They thought this story marked the dawn of a brighter day. No matter how fair the name of this province might suffer, no matter how a minister of the crown might suffer, they rejoiced because they believed that the charges were to mark their entry to the seats across the floor of the house. They folded their arms around the member for Manitoulin, and figuratively speaking, lay down to sleep with him and had pleasant dreams of the future of the province in the hands of hon. gentlemen opposite. But when the flood of the investigation poured in, the charges collapsed like a bubble.

He also referred to the attitude taken by the Opposition press, and not only by the Opposition press, but by the "treacherous, so-called independent press of this city." The latter had out-Heroded Herod.

"Principles of British fair play in this Legislature were outraged," said Mr. Stratton. "I was condemned without the opportunity of being tried. I was condemned by many leaders of hon. gentlemen opposite. Without the opportunity given me to prove myself innocent of the charge. In one sense they were not to blame because it was the only chance they were ever going to have to make political capital out of the charge of the member for Manitoulin. (Hear, hear.) And after the first outburst of enthusiasm was over, then assertion took the place of proof, and the assertions were perhaps made more strongly than they had been previously, with a view to snatching from the people of the province a verdict that could not be got from any judicial investigation before any judge in the British Empire to-day."

GAMEY'S CHARGES

Mr. Stratton dealt specifically with Mr. Gamey's statement. He said: "I could not fail to recognize the serious character of the statement that was presented to the House, but with the knowledge I possessed, I knew it could not be proved by any credible witness. I was satisfied that no one of credible character could be brought forward to substantiate the statement made by the member upon his responsibility as a member of

this House. At the same time I was satisfied that the statement, serious and important as it was, was being sent out to the press, and would appear the following day. I took the only means that was possible for me to take at that time, and before the echoes of slander had left this chamber, I said to the premier, most emphatically that there was no truth in the statement of the member for Manitoulin, so far as the material points of his charge were concerned. That was the first step that I took to clear my character of the foul aspersions made upon me at that time. That was all I could do. No man ever received a more cordial or loyal evidence of support than I received from the premier and my colleagues in the Government, and from members of the House, a confidence and support which was encouraging to me and which I felt satisfied would be borne out by the investigation that was about to take place. I felt, Mr. Speaker, that I had done nothing but what was constitutional and legitimate as a member of the Government, and I was not even injudicious in my actions or sayings with the member for Manitoulin. And I am violating no confidence of the late Lieutenant Governor when I say—and it was my duty to tender him an explanation—that he was perfectly satisfied with the explanation that was made with the investigation that was made with the resignation that accompanied my resignation as provincial secretary of this province. His instant complacency with my desire to have a full investigation of the charges was a cause of gratitude to me. I felt the necessity of the investigation. I had been charged with actions that imperiled my honor as a citizen of the province and as the member for the constituency which I represent. And I felt, Mr. Speaker, that it was absolutely necessary and essential to have a full, free investigation. I have been sixteen years in public life and I am quite satisfied that so far as I am concerned here in this province but can say that I have conducted myself honorably and honestly and decently wherever I have gone, and in the innermost heart of the member for Manitoulin he knows that he was treated by me in my department as decently and as pleasantly as it was possible for a man occupying my position to do, in view of the conversation that was voluntarily offered.

"I say, Mr. Speaker, that I felt the necessity of having these charges investigated. As a newspaperman, I felt the sensitiveness of public opinion when these charges would have been read by the people of this province, and I welcomed the opportunity, when the statement was made in the house, of giving an interview to the press. I say that my plain unvarnished tale has stood the test and that my honor has been vindicated by the commission, which was presented to this House—(applause)—and the story of the member from Manitoulin has been exploded and doubly discredited."

DETECTIVES FOLLOWED HIM

During the three weeks that the House met, said Mr. Stratton, and during the month following, he was dogged by sleuth hounds of the prosecution. He could not leave the door of the Parliament Buildings without one or two men following after him, some on wheels and some on street cars, and with a vindictiveness which he thought the people of the Province would resent when they had an opportunity.

Mr. Stratton dealt with several points in the evidence, one being the attempt of the prosecution to trace the money. The speaker said: "They may trace till the crack of doom, and never will they be able to trace to my hand any money given to the member for Manitoulin."

"CAN'T YOU FORGET?"

Then, as to the one crumb of comfort of the Opposition had, the statement of Mr. Hammond, the Globe reporter. Mr. Stratton said that Mr. Hammond's statement of evidence to Mr. Johnston had contained extended references to a Carnegie interview and to letters which he had written to the Globe over the signature of Taxpayer on the Toronto and Niagara Company's power question. He said he had made no attempt to see Mr. Hammond. Meeting him one day in the corridor, he had asked him if he could not forget some of the stuff. That harmless remark had been distorted as other statements had been distorted. And that was the one crumb of comfort the Opposition had.

"I'll resign my seat to-morrow," said Mr. Stratton, "if Mr. Hammond will say that I asked him to withhold one iota of his evidence that had a bearing on the Gamey case."

"Not withhold, forget," said Mr. Whitney.

"Or forget," said Mr. Stratton. "Or I will resign to-morrow if Mr. Hammond withheld a single scrap of his evidence by reason of anything I said to him."

STOOD HIS GROUND

Mr. Stratton concluded with the following words: "The finding of the Royal Commissioners I accept without any feeling of triumph or personal boast, and in the same spirit as I hope they will be accepted by my friends in this House and in the country.

"I was content to have the charges preferred against me investigated and tried by any tribunal chosen by the Legislature. I desired the fullest inquiry and sought the fullest investigation. The consequences were of greater importance to me than to any other member of the Government. It is true that the political life of the Government was endangered, but my whole business and personal career depended on the result. Yet throughout the long and trying investigation that was made, I neither feared or faltered. Conscious that my relations with the member who made the accusations would bear the most careful scrutiny, and feeling secure in the ultimate triumph of truth, I bore with patience the abuse

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- \$12.50 Tailored Suits \$7.50
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connection with this matter, that falsehood works its own revenge, and deceit brings its own just punishment."

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