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MR. McLAUGHLIN ANSWERS

Col. Hughes' letter of last week reviewed

HIS CASE FAR FROM PROVEN—LEADING CONSERVATIVE PAPERS CLEAR MR. McLAUGHLIN—THE POINTS OF COL. HUGHES' LETTER DENIED IN ORDER

To the Editor of the Watchman-Warder.
DEAR SIR,—I notice that almost the whole of the front page of your valuable paper was taken up in a recent issue with what might be called Colonel Hughes' "Post Mortem Statement." There has, I think, being nothing like this effusion since the War of the Rebellion, and the two articles bear striking resemblance, but perhaps Mr. Hughes is excusable, as since the Kylie matter there has been no other incident which could give him occasion for an attempt to cover a defeat by such an article.

I did not think it necessary to report this matter myself, as I was well satisfied to leave the facts of the investigation to the reports given by the various newspapers of the country, Reform and Conservative alike, all of which unanimously agreed in entirely exonerating me from the charges made. These papers include the Mail and Empire, the World and the Montreal Star, in fact the leading Conservative newspapers in the country. Mr. Hughes has not been able to get them to report the matter in a light favourable to him, and has had to take up the pen himself on his own behalf, and writes to you a letter which is full of false and misleading matter from beginning to end.

He commences by saying that the investigation was not closed until the 29th of July. This is false to begin with. The investigation proper was fully completed and ended on the 13th of July, when I was in Ottawa. Mr. Hughes was then asked if he had any further evidence to put in, or if he wanted to be sworn, and he answered that he had not, and that he did not want to be sworn. It seems that afterwards, on the 29th of July, in my absence and without any notice whatever to me, direct or indirect, he procured leave to be sworn, and made some further statements in the matter. Mr. Hughes would win all his battles if he fought them in his opponent's absence. He is a courageous man under such circumstances, and the fact of the matter is that he took advantage of my absence to make statements which he would not make and dare not make in my presence before the committee. I may say that I requested that the investigation would be delayed until after the volunteers' camp in order to make sure that Mr. Hughes would be present, and this was done.

He states by the headlines to his letter: "Mr. McLaughlin shown to be guilty—Has left himself open to serious penalties—Mr. Hughes proves his case." Now, we will take up his case:—

His first charge was, according to Hansard of June 7th, that "Mr. R. J. McLaughlin of Lindsay extracted from the farmers around Cameron lake twenty per cent. of the sums paid them for damages to their lands through flooding, such sums being out of the treasury of the Dominion of Canada, and being over and above ALL FEES FOR LEGAL WORK." Has this charge been proven? The intimation was that we were paid our full fees for legal work by the government and that we collected twenty per cent. from the farmers without any value. The facts as shown at the investigation were that we were acting in our capacity as solicitors for eighteen or twenty parties, and succeeded in procuring a settlement after a great deal of work and correspondence and attending several times at Ottawa. The claims at the time they were settled, were five or six years old, and Mr. Hughes as representative of the constituency for nearly all that time had been unable to obtain a settlement of them to the extent of one cent. The evidence also showed that we were paid by our clients the sum of \$365, which was less than twenty per cent., and was not over and above all fees for legal work, but ALTOGETHER, and instead of that sum being over and above all fees for legal work, was not much more than half what our fees would have been properly payable at; that after seventeen of the claims had been paid, and the amount of the eighteenth one was fixed we had been appointed agents for the Minister of Justice, and had been allowed for drawing one release and searching the title the sum of \$15, not \$24.95. The other \$9.95 was paid to the registrar and sheriff of the county of Victoria for their fees in the matter. This was something which was not proven by Mr. Hughes on the 29th of July, as stated by him, but which was stated in my letter to the Solicitor-General, and in fact stated in my letter to the Watchman-Warder, and there has never been any dispute whatever about that from the beginning.

Mr. Hughes endeavors to confuse our obtaining a settlement of these old disputed claims with the ordinary case of Government expropriating land for canal purposes and where there was dispute at all and no occasion for the other party retaining a solicitor. If one thousand notes are promptly paid without any dispute, that is no reason why a solicitor's bill should not be paid in making a collection in a case where a note is disputed or refused to be paid. These Cameron lake matters were disputed claims and had lain unpaid from 1891. Mr. Hughes endeavors to make out that there was no damage until 1894-95. By so doing he shows his ignorance of the matter and his desire to

misrepresent. The dam at Fenelon Falls was raised in 1891, and the damage continued from time forward. In 1892 in order to reduce the flooding a second slide or weir was made at Fenelon Falls, but this was not sufficient and the damage continued. The engineer had made a mistake, and had reported that the water was not raised on the lake. According to the files in the department Mr. Hughes had written one letter on behalf of one claim. According to Mr. Isaac's statement, and everybody who knows Mr. Isaac will receive his statement, Mr. Hughes had refused to take his claim up because he had not supported him.

I do not claim any particular credit in the matter further than simply doing my duty for my clients, who employed us without regard whatever to politics, and as solicitors, and am satisfied that if these parties had placed their claims in the hands of any capable solicitor in the year 1891 their claims would have been settled and paid within six months. I am satisfied also that the delay in the matter arose through the fact of Mr. Hughes endeavoring to make political capital out of it. There is no other explanation. Mr. Hughes must either admit that he was not attending to these matters during the period after 1891 or that he was incapable. Perhaps the explanation is, as he cannot see a thing except in the light of political pull, that the government mistrusted the justice of the claim on account of the way in which it was handled. As a matter of fact either government would be willing and ready to pay just claims if presented in the ordinary way, but they hesitate to pay claims presented by political wire-pullers, for the very natural reason that a conscientious minister is prone to doubt the justice of a claim when presented in that manner. The lands which were expropriated around Kirkfield were paid for and settled immediately upon expropriation. Can Mr. Hughes explain why the people around Cameron lake were not settled with in 1891 or 1892?

Mr. Hughes second charge was, using his own words as reported in Hansard of June 14th, "He went to the farmers and said: 'Why don't you get the tory government to settle these claims around here. That is just what was done. He tried to make political capital out of it, and sought to get votes in the ensuing election by telling these men they should have their claims.' Has he proved the truth of that statement? The statement was made out of whole cloth, and was absolutely untrue. In his letter he excuses himself for that statement by saying that in 1896 "a good, decent liberal, Mr. Pearn, had jokingly told him that I was vigorously canvassing for votes and was using the drowned land argument. He knew at the time, if Mr. Pearn doubted the statement, which I very much doubt, that he was only joking yet he makes this as his ground for making this charge against me, and says that this proves it. No further comment is necessary.

His third charge, as shown in Hansard of June 14th was that I endeavored to BROWBEAT and BULLDOZE the valuator, and he has tried to make out that I endeavored to use a position as holding the patronage of the riding to influence Mr. Pope to give more than was right. In reference to this, he quoted Mr. Pope in his letter, and I extract from that letter as follows, what he says was the evidence of Mr. Pope:

"He tried to assist his clients all he could, and thought that they should get more, but I had made up my mind as to what was a fair valuation." "Mr. McLaughlin told me this was not money enough" and "You will have to come up on these prices. He argued and argued, and when he found that I had decided he gave way in a gentlemanly way. These were not a cross word used. It was all amicable." Mr. Hughes said in the House that I tried to bulldoze and browbeat Mr. Pope, and this is the kind of evidence he brings to prove it. It was our duty as solicitors when acting for a client to do everything we can by fair means, and we would have been false to our duty had we not done so. Can anyone read Mr. Pope's own evidence and say that we did any more. These are the charges he made and the evidence he produced to support them, evidence which is entirely in favor of the position which our firm took rather than otherwise.

Mr. Hughes then in his letter goes on to make further charges. He pretends that these farmers understood that we were acting in a political capacity and not as solicitors. This is absolutely untrue. No farmer told him so. It was distinctly understood at the time the matter was taken up that we were to act for them Reform and Conservative alike, solely as solicitors and without any political reference, and letters were written to the parson, and letters were written to the meeting who were not present at the meeting to that effect. If any of the farmers were dissatisfied with the way in which they were treated I have never heard anything about it, and am satisfied that Mr. Hughes is not receiving his information from any person concerned in the matter. He takes the liberty of using the name of Mrs. N. McIntyre, I am satisfied without her authority. She is a very worthy lady, is the mother of Mr. Sam. Suddaby, a right hand supporter of Mr. Hughes in that section of the country. Any information he receives he has got in an indirect way from him, and I am sure not from any dissatisfaction on the part of my clients as dissatisfied on the part of my clients as if any of my clients are not satisfied with the way in which they have been charged I would be only too glad to have them tax their bill by the proper officer.

So far as his statement about Mrs. McIntyre being true is concerned, I have a

letter written by her on the 19th 1896, asking me to take up her claim, and the letter closes as follows:

"If you succeed in getting the claim satisfactorily settled I will of course be willing to allow you what would be fair remuneration for any trouble you may be at. Yours truly,
N. McIntyre."

What foundation or excuse can there be then, for the false statement that these people understood that we were doing this matter for political purposes, rather than as solicitors. If Mrs. McIntyre were a poor lady in need of charity we would have no objection in doing a small amount of solicitor work for her for nothing, but instead of that she is a lady of means, and is quite ready and willing to pay for anything that she has to do, and I am sure will not thank Mr. Hughes for using her name in the way in which he has done. He goes on to state that Mrs. McIntyre does not know what she sent the fee of \$5 to me for. I think the above letter speaks for itself, and that all the nonsense about these people thinking I was doing this work for nothing in a political capacity has originated in Mr. Hughes' mind, and not from the facts of the case.

He devotes a large portion of a column to showing at what bank the cheques were paid. Personally I do not recollect at what bank all the cheques were paid. The closing up of these matters was chiefly in the hands of my partner Mr. McDiarmid and my clerk Mr. Peel. They tell me that some of the cheques were cashed by business men at Fenelon Falls, some at the bank at Fenelon Falls, that some of them were cashed by us, and some were returned by the parties to us to make payments for them. But what does all this amount to anyway. He is trying by all this twaddle to cover up his complete defeat, or does he intend to say that we have kept this money and not paid it over to the parties entitled. If he means this he had better say so plainly.

The whole sum and substance of it is a vindictive personal attack upon us which has been investigated by a committee of the House of Parliament and shown to be absolutely foundationless. Mr. Hughes has often before made false, malicious and personal charges against responsible citizens, and they have several times been investigated by sworn juries and he has been shown to be guilty of falsehood. The reason of these charges has been that the person against whom they were made has been an opponent of Mr. Hughes in some way.

Then in his letter Mr. Hughes states, to use his own word, "I showed I had no desire to expose Mr. McLaughlin to the judgment of the courts for the offence open to severe punishment of taking a commission, my object merely being to prevent the farmers from loss. No lawyer dare make a bargain for a commission without being liable to severe punishment." In this Mr. Hughes shows not only his vindictiveness, but his ignorance. In the first place there was not an agreement to take a commission, the understanding that we should have our proper fees, but at the request of a number of the clients I guaranteed that the charges would not exceed twenty per cent. Now there is no objection whatever to a lawyer taking up business of this kind on commission if he chooses to do so. Costs incurred in suits, in court are not payable by commission if the parties object to it. No lawyer can thus take more than his reasonable fees, but he may reduce them to the amount of a commission if he chooses to do so. If the commission is more than his reasonable fees the client may object to pay it. Nearly all commercial collections are made on commission, so is the management of estates, the investment of money, the buying and selling of lands. The costs of administration suits in the High Court are always by commission.

Mr. Hughes says that I have left myself open to serious penalties. I have no use for wind. If Mr. Hughes has any charges at all of this kind let him go ahead with them. He merely continues insinuating and slandering. We have had enough of that.

This was a purely personal matter in which we merely acted for our clients in the ordinary way and were paid by them. It was their business and ours, and no one else, and there is no excuse whatever for Mr. Hughes meddling. I do not know now what charge he makes against us. Does he mean to say that we are to do solicitor work for our clients for nothing, and thereby be guilty of corrupt practices, which he knows right well I would have been had I taken this work up on the understanding that I would work for these people for nothing?

I have no desire to have any correspondence with Mr. Hughes at all in a matter of this kind, and would have been perfectly satisfied to have left the matter to the reporters of the papers, reform and conservative alike. As far as he is personally concerned, I only desire to have nothing to do with him. Yours truly,
R. J. McLAUGHLIN.

POLITICAL QUIPS.

Ohio politics—but why think of anything so warm this kind of weather?—Indianapolis Journal.
The needle in the haystack is more easily located than is the politician who is not opposed to trusts.—Detroit Journal.
It is hard to believe that all the lies that find their way into the nomenclature speeches in a political convention can be forgiven.—Washington Post.

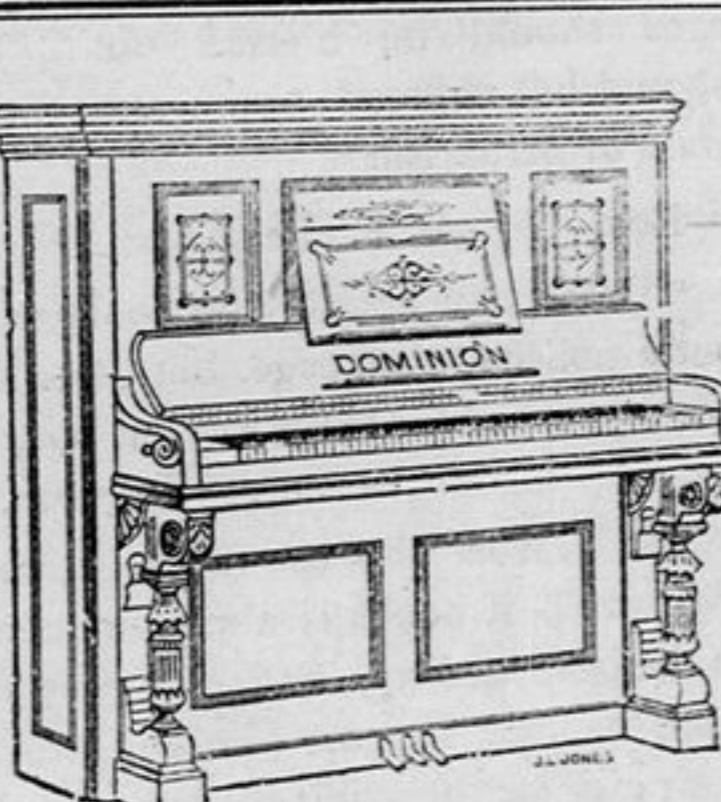
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