

They are practically a trust for the municipalities of the Province. Quite apart from the subsidy of 1884, this Province, putting aside this \$3,400,000 of trust funds, had not a surplus.

The Surplus a Fiction.

The old claim that the Government had a \$5,000,000 surplus of the hoarded savings of the Mowat Government was a fiction. As to the railway annuities, the commission declared them to be liabilities; that took two millions out of the alleged surplus. Were those trust funds available to pay the Province's debts? The commissioners practically admitted they were not, and did not for a moment argue that they were. They took \$3,400,000 more out of the surplus. Then, as to the \$142,000 subsidy given in 1884, Mr. Matheson said the statement of Mr. Fielding showed that the Government had no right to capitalize that amount and place it as an item available to pay the ordinary debt. The Province's debts were admitted to be \$5,117,000. The only assets available to pay this were debentures, \$286,000, and cash in bank, \$836,000, or a total of \$1,122,000. Deducting this from the debt, he found that as a result of the financing of the hon. gentlemen opposite, instead of a dollar of surplus, there was a debt of over \$4,000,000 over and above every dollar on hand. The Financial Commission had recommended that the exact areas of timber limits of unsettled lands suitable for reforestation should be ascertained. That was the kind of information which the Opposition had been demanding for years past. No such sale of timber limits as that which took place last year should be repeated without the consent of the Legislature. It was time that the interprovincial arbitration, after having dragged on for so long, should be brought to a termination. Railway grants should be limited hereafter. They really ought

not to be given as grants, but made in the form of loans.

Grants for Roads.

Any payment for the improvement of country roads should be made through the County Councils, and not otherwise. He would suggest extending the powers of County Councils, so as to enable them to borrow money for the purpose beyond the present limit, say 1 per cent. of the assessment. He had heard it suggested that the expenditure for roads should be made through the Good Roads Association. He would oppose such a thing with all his power, because it would be the beginning of the abolition of responsible government.

Mr. Pattullo—That association is scarcely in existence now. I am the President, but the association has not had a meeting for some years.

Mr. Matheson said he did not refer to Mr. Pattullo personally, but it had been suggested that the expenditure should be made through a Good Roads Association, to be appointed for that purpose.

Mr. Ross—The scheme has not been thought of by us. It must exist only in the hon. gentleman's imagination.

Mr. Matheson reiterated that some Government officials were credited with having conceived the scheme.

Attacked the Sheriff.

Turning to the election irregularities, Mr. Matheson charged that the Government were liable for the conduct of the men who had been guilty of penal offences, men who had done work in their interest as deputy returning officers. In the North Waterloo election a Minister of the Crown was involved for having, willingly or unwillingly, become the tool of the machine, and allowed himself to be used in that capacity. Sheriff Brown was liable for the scandals which occurred in West Elgin, and the Government should have sent him about his business.

Mr. Ross—The Judges have not reported Sheriff Brown.

Mr. Matheson said the Sheriff was ordered to pay the costs at the election trial.

Mr. Ross—The case came before the Judges, and Sheriff Brown was not reported for any irregularity; that's the point. Is a public officer to be traduced, vilified and scandalized in this House, when the case in which he is concerned has been before the courts and under investigation by two competent Judges on the ipse dixit of an hon. gentleman 300 or 400 miles away? Is that the treatment public officers are to receive at the hands of hon. gentlemen opposite? I want fair play for public officers. (Ministerial applause.)

Mr. Matheson—He defends, and let the whole country know it, the Premier defends this officer. My charge is that a crime was committed; that this Sheriff so far forgot himself as to allow men from outside—from Sault Ste. Marie, St. Catharines and Detroit, blacklegs—to act as returning officers in his riding.

Mr. Ross—What do the Judges say about it?

Mr. Whitney—Cannot you prosecute a man for murder unless the Judges say so?

Mr. Matheson said that Dugald Brown was one of the respondents at the election trial, and was ordered to pay part of the costs. The act only provided for reporting offences such as bribing or receiving bribes, but the Judges declared in effect that the Sheriff should be punished for allowing strangers to act as returning officers, and he was accordingly ordered to pay part of the costs. Yet the Premier stood up in his seat and defended a man guilty of such conduct. The proper commission to have appointed was a Judge of Assize and a jury of his countrymen to try this man. The fact of the matter was that the Government dared not prosecute the wrongdoers, and they knew they dared not. The Opposition had been invited to assist in making changes in the law. What was

the good of changing the guns in the battery? The changes should be made in the men behind the guns. A change of Government was urgently needed, and many men in the Liberal party would like to see such a change. A day of reckoning would come whenever the Government appealed to the people.

Hon. Mr. Stratton moved the adjournment of the debate, and the House adjourned at 4.45.