

### The Dominion Parliament

By A. C. Macphail, M.P.

The uproar in the House of Commons on April 17th would have done credit to a loyal town with the home team on the ice. The long, dreary Budget debate was finishing. And boys will be boys—though bald and weighty. The gang spirit was evident—only the opportunity was necessary to let loose party antagonism.

The Budget, the Amendment, and the Sub-amendment were before the House. The Sub-amendment was voted down. Mr. Kennedy, U.F.O. Peace River, spoke to the amendment, stressing the unfavorable condition of the agricultural industry. Then the amendment was voted down. Immediately afterwards Dr. Manion, Fort William, arose to address the House. Dr. Manion is a fiery, fluent and exceedingly rapid speaker, who more than any other man in the Conservative party tends to arouse party animosity. The Conservatives supported him with almost continuous applause. The Liberals interrupted with growls, yelping and yapping. I have seen two gangs of boys each with a favorite fighting dog watching their struggle for supremacy with much the same look on their faces. The same intent, straining look, Dr. Manion twitted the Cabinet Ministers with spending Easter in the United States, with low tariff talk and high tariff performance. He proceeded to make a general assault on the Liberal party for its lack of policy since it came to power.

A hot passage occurred when the battling Irishman accused the Prime Minister of bringing in Old Age Pensions one day and denouncing it as a "vicious principle" the next. The Prime Minister denied such action and challenged the Doctor to prove it. After fifteen minutes of uproar it turned out that the "vicious principle" was the giving of money by the Dominion Government to the Provinces to be administered by the Provinces as in the case of Old Age Pensions.

On the matter of the tariff Dr. Manion stated that our Government policy was made in Washington—not Ottawa. He was all for the Ottawa policy. This attitude was greeted by the Conservative party with long and loud cheering, amid which Dr. Manion resumed his seat.

And now Pouliot, the aggressive, unmanageable Frenchman, arose. The waves of supporting applause carried him as the orchestra carries the soloist with constant interruptions from the growing opposition. "Who is the greatest man of the Conservative party?" he asked. The Conservatives answered "Taschereau". The answer convulsed the House. But apparently it was not correct. The greatest man in the Conservative party, according to Mr. Pouliot, was Sir Robert Borden. He quoted Sir Robert, who has just re-

turned from the United States, at some length, to show that the leading American bankers and financiers had the greatest confidence in Canada. Mr. Pouliot now read long extracts to prove that dissension was rife within the Conservative party. He interrupted himself to make pithy remarks. He accused the Conservatives of making speeches which were nothing but "gross insult" to the country—but that was too much. Mr. Speaker demanded that he withdraw "gross insult", which he did, he said, "with pleasure". He then sat down. The division bells began to ring. The Conservatives sang "My Wild Irish Rose". No response from the Liberal side. Then Mr. Boys, Chief Whip of the Conservatives, led in singing "Alouette". All the French members joined him and peace was restored. The Budget carried by a majority of 24.

No such display of the partisan spirit has been witnessed for many months. A talkie-movie of the performance would be very enlightening to the citizens of Canada. The scene defies description. Had a burlesque of Parliament been well written and well played, it could not have excelled Thursday's performance.

In last week's Fisherton Advance there was a letter from Mr. Stan Thurston, in which he took issue with the way in which I described the intentions of the Sun Life Bill as originally presented to Parliament. Mr. Thurston says:

"I note in Miss Macphail's interesting letter from Ottawa last week a reference to the Sun Life Bill in which she appears to express the opinion that life insurance companies first pay dividends to their shareholders and leave for the policy holders only the residue of profits after this has been done."

"If Miss Macphail were informed on this matter she would realize that according to our excellent law regulating life insurance companies, all companies paying dividends must pay 90% of their profits to the policy-holders—regardless of what the capitalization might be."

It may have appeared to Mr. Thurston that that was what I thought, and it may be the way I described the effect of the bill justified Mr. Thurston's conclusion, but I certainly did not have any such understanding of the Insurance Act. It is quite true that the Act provides that shareholders of an insurance company may take up to 10% of the net profits. It happens in the case of the smaller companies that the entire 10% allowed by law does not appear to pay too large a dividend on the capital invested. But, while 10% of one million dollars might not seem too large a dividend on a certain capital investment, 10% of one hundred million might result in such large dividends on the original capital that a company would be ashamed to allow the financial statement to go out to the public. Incidentally that is the reason why the Sun Life Company reduced the amount available for dividends to 5% of its profits. They were

even then receiving 25% profits on their authorized capital and 123% on the actual cash paid into the business by the shareholders.

Mr. Thurston says further, that there was a provision in the Bill which provided for a 4% shareholder's dividend. This was true, but only half the truth. The other half was that the 4% provision referred to was conditioned upon another clause in the Bill, which provided that shares should be set at par value of \$10 instead of \$100. The joker in this was soon discovered. Four per cent on a share of \$10 is 40% on a share of \$100. When the par value clause of the Bill was withdrawn so also was the 4% provision withdrawn.

Now, let me explain a little more definitely, what I meant by "melon cutting". The market value of the Sun Life stock, when the Bill was before Parliament, was \$2,500,000 per share. The shareholders were to have the two million increase of capital provided for in the Bill at a par value of \$100. Let us suppose that the passing of the Bill would have reduced the market value of the stock to \$2,000,000, and that would not have been likely; even then the two million increase would have meant to the shareholders a stock value of \$40,000,000. That would have been a considerable melon.

The above should be sufficient to justify my use of the "melon cutting" phrase. I will refrain from going into further details in respect to the manner in which the Company paid for its present stock by voting bonuses to themselves from the non-participating fund and applying that to the payment of stock. It is gratifying to note that the Company itself was saved from itself, and its policy holders saved from an unnecessary burden of capital by the timely and persistent action of a few farmer representatives. Ottawa, April 13, 1929.

### HOW OUR BIRDS BUILD THEIR NESTS

Ornithologist Tells How Wild Birds Construct Their Homes—Frail and Lasting.

"If you do not believe it is quite a task to build a bird's nest, try it," says E. H. Forbush, former Massachusetts state ornithologist, and an authority on wild life, in an article prepared for the Associated Press.

"If you can build the simplest kind of nest of twigs or sticks in the crook of a tree," he says, "and if you succeed, notice how long it remains there before the winds blow it away."

"Herons and doves build mere platforms of sticks, so frail that often you can look through the interlacing twigs from below and see the eggs; yet these frail domiciles will withstand the storms of two or three winters. The reason for this is that the birds do not pick up rotten sticks from the ground, but break sound ones off the trees, and then so interlock them that they hold together."

"The most primitive nest that can be built is a mere hollow in the sand. Common terns, or mackerel gulls, as they are called by the fishermen, when nesting on sand bars where there is little or no vegetation often make such a nest. They breed sometimes in colonies of hundreds, and when the nesting fever comes on, each prospective mother bird chooses her spot and turning round and round makes her little webbed feet fly, throwing out jets of sand in all directions, and so in a few minutes most of them have formed the little hollow that is to receive their eggs."

"But some, not satisfied with such primitive accommodations, gather grass or seaweed, and working with bill, breast and feet, soon have constructed a very warm and comfortable nest."

"Most wild ducks build a warm, thick nest of grass, lined with down from their breasts, and usually well concealed under bush or tree or in rank grass or other vegetation. When the eggs have been laid, the mother bird plucks more down from her breast, and felts it together in the form of a little blanket, attached to one side of the nest. Then when she leaves the eggs, unless suddenly startled she spreads this carefully over them, thus concealing them and keeping them warm."

"Some birds shape their nests with mud which, drying, keeps out the cold wind. The robin's nest is composed

largely of mud, lined with grass. In lining it the mother bird works the grass into place with her feet as she sits in the nest, and turning around she works behind her feet while smoothing up the opposite side with her breast.

"The eaves swallow flutters down over some muddy spot, picks up a dab of mud in her bill, works it over with the saliva of her mouth and plasters it under the eaves of a barn or under some shelf on a cliff and, clinging there, holds it with her breast until it dries, then brings other mouthfuls until she has made a little curved shelf on which she can stand."

"Then her mate brings more mud or both birds bring it until the nest assumes the shape of half a cup. Some of these nests are roofed over and shaped like a retort, with a bottle-neck entrance; they then are lined with grass and feathers."



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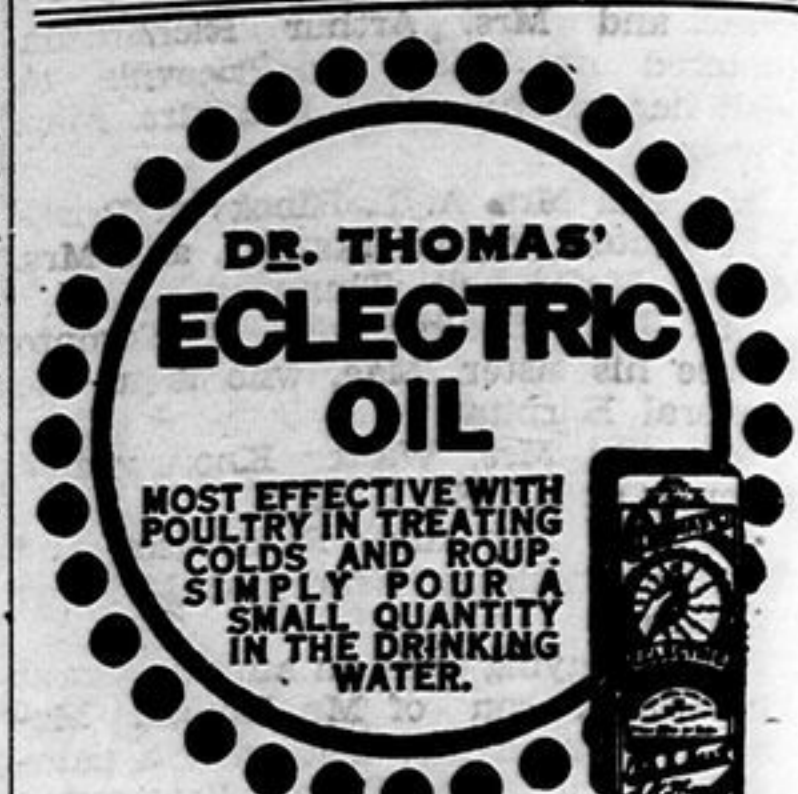


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