

Name: Tweedie, Lemuel John (Hon.)

Riding: Northumberland, County of

Party: Liberal-Conservative Liberal

Date Elected: GE 13 Jun. 1874. GE 26 Apr. 1886. GE 20 Jan. 1890. BY-EL 20 Feb. 1890. GE 22 Oct. 1892. GE 16 Oct. 1895. GE 18 Feb. 1899. GE 28 Feb. 1903.

Positions Held: Appointed to the Executive Council as Surveyor General, 3 Feb. 1890 - 17 Jul. 1896. Appointed Provincial Secretary, 17 Jul. 1896 - 5 Mar. 1907. Premier of New Brunswick, 1 Sept. 1900 - 2 Mar. 1907. Sworn in as Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick, 5 Mar. 1907 - 6 Mar. 1912.

Cabinet Shuffle:

Retired: Retired from active politics following his full term as Lieutenant Governor, 6 Mar. 1912.

Defeated: GE 8 Jun. 1878.

Died: Died at age 67 on 17 Jul. 1917 at his residence in Chatham, NB. Buried in Riverside Cemetery, Chatham.

Notes: Born on 30 Nov. 1849 in Chatham, Northumberland County, NB. Tweedie studied law and was admitted to the New Brunswick Bar in 1871. Remaining in Chatham, he had a successful law practice and was later appointed a Queen's Counsel. His experience in the courtroom honed his outstanding public speaking ability and made a political career a natural progression. He was first elected to the Legislature at the age of twenty-five in 1874 over the issue of free non-sectarian schools, of which he was in favour. Defeated at the polls in 1878, Tweedie was re-elected in 1886.

While he possessed a warm and friendly personality, Tweedie was also a shrewd politician with an eye for opportunity. In 1890, he led the four Conservative MLAs from Northumberland across the floor of the House. The four defected to the Liberal government on the promise of lower stumpage fees. Premier Andrew G. Blair (q.v.) personally rewarded Tweedie for the legendary "'Northumberland Deal'" by appointing him Surveyor General. Although a most able politician, having a history of being a Conservative, Tweedie's partisan leanings were questioned. Thus, instead of becoming premier himself, he served in the succeeding administrations of James Mitchell (q.v.) and H.R. Emmerson (q.v.), as Provincial Secretary. Finally, in 1900, Tweedie himself became premier. Upon criticism from the Leader of the Opposition, J.D. Hazen (q.v.), Tweedie responded: "'There is no difference in general policy between the Liberal and Conservative parties; it is now a mere question of ins and outs. I have not changed my policy, I simply now am what I always was, a province man.'"

As premier, Tweedie reinforced his reputation as one of the ablest and most popular politicians in New Brunswick history with his landslide 1903 election victory. But over the next four years, the Liberal coalition built by Blair began cracking under the strain of two decades in office. During his administration, Tweedie created the Workmen's Compensation Board; admitted women to the practice of law, but opposed the extension of the franchise; supported the hydroelectric development of Grand Falls; and established a teachers' superannuation fund. Journalist and historian W.C. Milner described Tweedie's character in this way: "'Without ever professing to be learned or profound, he was a master of the art of raillery. Seen in his seat, he possessed a short, thickset frame, tipped by a large, dark-featured face, quite expressionless, but once on his feet and 'in action,' his features changed to the highest animation, and he would overwhelm an opponent with ridicule, sometimes caustic, often good-natured, to the general amusement.'"

In 1907, Tweedie resigned from the Premier's Office upon his appointment as Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick. The Conservatives formed a government in 1908 and began investigating Tweedie's dealings as Surveyor General. The investigation uncovered a "'suspense account,'" which some suspected of having been diverted for political purposes. Upon assuming office as Lieutenant Governor, Tweedie paid the debts out of his own pocket to avoid questions of his character surfacing in the public mind. The role of Tweedie and William Pugsley (q.v.) in the affairs of the heavily government subsidized and deeply troubled New Brunswick Coal & Railway Company, and Central Railway provoked another government investigation. The pair was condemned by

the Conservative press, but endured no further censure.

While being at the centre of power in provincial politics, Tweedie never disregarded local affairs and was active in Miramichi society. In 1882, he was among those to incorporate the World Publishing Company of Chatham; in 1894 he was a director of the Miramichi Steam Navigation Company; and from 1904 to 1911 he was president of the Miramichi Exhibition Association. He was also a member of the New Brunswick Fish and Game Association and the Miramichi Agricultural Association.

Tweedie also took an active interest in educational affairs. To this end, he donated academic prizes for students. He was a member of the governing boards of the University of New Brunswick, Mount Allison University and the Halifax School for the Blind. In 1904, UNB honoured him with a L.L.D.

After his term as Lieutenant Governor, Tweedie returned to private life and his law practice. Despite his failing health, at the time of his death in 1917, Tweedie was preparing to again seek political office.

For more information see also: ""Dictionary of Canadian Biography"" Vol. XIV (Ref 920.071 D554); ""Dictionary of Miramichi Biography"" (971.521 H222D NB Coll.); ""The Premiers of New Brunswick"" (971.5 D754 NB Coll.); ""Our Lieutenant Governors"" (971.5 M659 NB Coll.); ""A Brief History of the Liberal Party of New Brunswick"" (329.9715 H868 NB Coll.); ""The Newspaper Reference Book of Canada, 1903"" (Ref 920 N277 1903); and ""Biographical Review New Brunswick, 1900"" (920 J12 NB Coll.)

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