



## Mr. Lougheed's Encrypted Telegram

Abernathy and Lougheed Logging Company principal Nelson Seymour Lougheed advanced from municipal to provincial politics rapidly and between 1929 and 1933 was Conservative Member of Parliament for the Dewdney Riding as well as the Provincial Minister of Land and Public Works. His A & L logging company was very much involved with the production of timber for the First World War effort, and as a result he participated on a committee that was responsible for harvesting Sitka spruce on the Queen Charlotte Islands for the making of aeroplanes for both Canada's and Britain's air forces.

At war's end sensitive telegrams between Victoria and Ottawa were coded, and in his position as a provincial cabinet minister Lougheed

sometimes travelled back east with a criss-cross code book with interchangeable words that was to be kept under lock and key.

One decoded message, dated 6 July 1929, was referencing a road partnership between the provincial and federal governments for a road to be built between Golden and Revelstoke. When translated, the code read:

Reference Big Bend Road. Had conference with Cory and Harkin who are anxious (to) set time limit December 1932 or earlier. This too short and embarrassing politically in view of other projects on governing ridings for instance: North Thompson, Hope, Princeton, Prince George east would subject us to criticism. Suggest time limit not less than five years dependent on finances. Deputy wrote you July second.

Lougheed, as Minister of Land and Public Works, spent a great deal of his budget on the Dewdney Road from Vancouver to the eastern Fraser Valley—a move that would connect his riding and his business interests to Vancouver. It was during his time as MLA that he renamed Dewdney Road: it came to be called the Lougheed Highway. In 1929 Sir Winston Churchill, later Prime Minister of England, visited the Abernathy and Lougheed logging operation. Lougheed tried to persuade British financiers to invest in his company but the Depression dashed that opportunity.

With respect to the coded message that he received from W. A. McKenzie, Lougheed made a couple of big mistakes. Firstly, he translated the message on the original telegram, and secondly, he failed to destroy the paper trail. The telegram, along with other documents, were found in his effects upon his death, and his niece, anxious to preserve important historical documents, donated everything to the Maple Ridge Museum and Archives.

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