

The Evening Times and Star

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DIRECT LEGISLATION

What is called direct legislation is now a very live question throughout the western provinces of Canada. Canadian Finance gives a very interesting account of the movement, as well as a statement of reasons for the introduction of the initiative and referendum. The article is written by Mr. Robert L. Scott, treasurer of the Manitoba Direct Legislation League, who claims that these reforms are essential to good government and would materially correct such evils as now exist. He also quotes the following sentences from Mr. F. J. Dixon, organizer for Manitoba of the Direct Legislation League:

"It is not only a can and will destroy the private monopoly of legislative power, and establish public ownership of the government. It will purify our public life. It will remove the power of the lobby. It will remove the motive for bribery and corruption. It will diminish partisanship, and elevate public questions above mere party consideration. It will have a profound educational effect upon the people, intellectually and morally. It is a great non-partisan reform that makes for the social and moral uplift of the whole people. It is the open gateway to all other reforms. It is practical. It is being successfully used in other countries, and what others can do we can do. It is necessary to good government. It is essential to true self government. It will disentangle issues and separate the men from the measures. The fundamental principles of religion and ethics, the law of love, the Golden Rule and the brotherhood of man necessitate the referendum. Love and brotherhood deny me the right and banish the wish to assume more power than my fellows, or deprive them of equal participation in the development resulting from decision and responsibility. We would not abolish the representative system of government, but we would implement it by means of direct legislation, in order that we may correct the political evils which now exist."

For the information of those who have not studied the question we may quote also Mr. Scott's definition of the initiative and referendum.

"The initiative is the right of a certain number of the duly qualified voters—eight per cent in nearly all of the states where it is in operation—to propose a law by means of petition. This proposed law and petition is sent to the legislature and may be enacted according to the ordinary course of procedure. If the members of the legislature do not see fit to do this it is obligatory upon them to submit it to the people to be voted upon not later than the next general election. If it is passed by a majority vote of the people it becomes law upon being signed by the governor of the state."

"The referendum is the right of a certain number of the duly qualified voters—five per cent in nearly all of the states where it is in operation—to demand of the legislature the submission to the people, for final approval or rejection, any law or laws which the legislature may pass. This makes the people the final arbiters of the laws to which they shall submit, and under which the country shall be governed and its public institutions maintained and regulated. This referendum also provides for the voluntary submission to the people by the legislature of proposed laws which may originate with the legislature but for which its members may be unwilling to assume responsibility."

Mr. Scott points out that the Swiss were the first people to apply direct legislation, nearly half a century ago, and that Switzerland has long been recognized as one of the best governed democracies in the world. Direct legislation, he further points out, is now part of the governmental machinery of seventeen American states, and is a live issue in half the remaining states in the north and west. The Grain Growers' Association of Canada has endorsed the principle, and there is a Direct Legislation League in Saskatchewan as well as in Manitoba. Both parties in Alberta and Saskatchewan have endorsed the principle, as has the Liberal party in Manitoba; while a committee will report on the question at the next convention of the Liberal party of British Columbia. The legislatures of both Alberta and Saskatchewan have enacted partial measures, but these are regarded as merely preliminary to the full adoption of the principle throughout the west.

Whether Charles Becker, the police lieutenant, was guilty of the crime for which he was condemned, or whether his conviction was the result of what is called a "frame-up," the whole affair is a serious reflection upon the courts of New York.

Less than two-thirds of the women of Illinois who have been given the ballot went to the polls on Tuesday. A reason has been placed in their hands, but evidently many of them have yet to realize its value and the need for its use. A different story will no doubt be told a few years hence. Inquiry would prob-

ably show that a great many men also neglected to go to the polls on Tuesday.

There will be plenty of time for Mr. Hazen and Mr. Fowler to come down and attend those suburban indignation meetings. Will they come?

The month of February is making a record for severe winter weather. The lumbermen of the province have not had such a favorable winter for their operations in many years.

The provincial legislature was opened today. No government ever had a finer opportunity to carry out a progressive policy than that led by Hon. Mr. Fleming. Whatever opposition it may have must develop within its own ranks.

The Borden government is hanging upon the words of Dictator Guttridge. In fear and trembling Mr. Borden and Mr. Hazen wait to learn what he will say to the acting minister of railways when he has leisure to accord that gentleman a brief interview.

There is a movement in the United States looking toward national prohibition. It should be accompanied by another movement to change the mental attitude of the people toward the drink habit so that they will observe prohibition when they get it.

There is to be a Georgian Bay Canal commission. The Borden government is so incompetent to deal with matters of importance that it continually resorts to commissions of one kind and another. That is one way of postponing action and evading responsibility.

That an aged woman under the influence of liquor should be found in a room without a fire, and in danger of being frozen to death, is a flash of enlightenment regarding social conditions which the citizens might fairly ponder over when they have some leisure.

By having several points in Charlotte county examined the Borden government is able to raise the hope of the people of several communities, without committing itself to do anything for any of them. The present activity is preliminary to election promises at a later date.

The British government naturally wants all the information concerning the death of Benton in Mexico. The United States government wants some information concerning the death of an American citizen. General Villa may as well give the information first as last.

Premier Asquith plainly told the Ontario legislature on Tuesday that the government was neither begging for a truce nor thinking of holding the white flag in the matter of Home Rule. Mr. Bonar Law thereupon predicted civil war. The United leader would apparently smash the British constitution if that would help him to gain office.

The steamship Kahuna was twenty-eight days and a half upon the voyage from Cardiff to St. John. We can well believe that the weather was the worst in the experience of the captain. It is easier to imagine than describe the experience of those on board a steamship battling day after day and week after week with wintry gales and mountainous seas which momentarily threaten to engulf her.

When Mr. Borden was in opposition he told the people of the west that as soon as he got the opportunity he would transfer the natural resources of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta to provincial control. After more than two years in office, when challenged to keep his pledge his only defense is to read some extracts from Liberal speeches delivered some years ago. A great many is Mr. Borden.

The Hon. Sydney Fisher has always been recognized as a man of high character, who would not use his position in public life for mercenary purposes. A man of simple means, he has served Canada for Canada's good and not to enrich himself. It was therefore a cause of universal surprise when Col. the Hon. Sam Hughes charged that Mr. Fisher had received a rake-off when the site for the military training camp at Farnham was purchased by the Laurier government.

Mr. Fisher's reply has been prompt and decisive. He tells Col. Hughes that if he will make outside of parliament the statement which he made under privilege of parliament an action for criminal libel will be taken the next day. It is now up to Col. Hughes.

OTAWA, Feb. 26.—The House of Commons committee on old age pensions, has received from D. H. Ross, trade commissioner for Canada in Australia a report upon the operation of a system whereby the state bonuses maternity to the extent of \$25 for each child born.

Mr. Ross thinks the subject should be of interest to Canada, and it will be considered by the committee. Since the Australian act went into force fourteen months ago, 149,229 mothers have drawn a \$25 bonus.

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BIRTHDAYS OF NOTABILITIES

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26
Arthur Stringer, a well known Canadian poet and novelist, who is observing his birthday today, is one of the few people who have reached the death notices. The incident occurred two years ago when he was summing at his farm on the shore of Lake Erie. A report was published in the papers stating that he had been burned to death following the explosion of an oil stove. It was untrue and he hastened to deny it and relieve the anxiety of his friends. Mr. Stringer has been most successful in the literary field. He made his start as an author when attending the University of Toronto and subsequently acted as a reporter on newspapers in London, Montreal and New York.

LIGHTER VEIN

Making a Distinction
Judge—Marcella—Did I understand you to say Mr. Shimmerpate is one of our best known joke writers?
Waverly—Not exactly. I said he is the writer of some of our best known jokes.

Another Bluff
The ground the hog trends the path of fame and wags his fierce prophetic head, And takes the credit or the blame. For things he never did or said.

Ominous Color Scheme
Washington Star—"What color are Percival's eyes?" asked Maude.
"I'm sure," replied Maymie, "whether they are black or blue, but Father says he'll see to it that they are both."

Morning After the Night Before
Judge—Smith—Well, I guess I am a post impressionist.
Jones—How do you figure that out?
Smith—My impression of last night's party is a headache.

ZION CHURCH ACTIVITIES

"Missionary Sunday" was observed in Zion Methodist Church with a sermon and music appropriate in the morning and exercises in the Sunday school in the afternoon. The following programme was given in the school, the pastor presiding in the absence of the superintendent.

Singing by school, prayer and scriptures by pastor.

Chorus by Mrs. Colpitt's class.

Exercises on Missions by four boys: Ralph and Carl Olive, Edmund Campbell and Kenneth Daley.

Address: "How the Missionary Money Grew," R. M. Lottimer.

Solo, Miss Gladys Carr.

Exercises by four girls, Doris Johnston, Marjorie Purdy, Thelma McBeath and Kathleen Daley.

Solo: "Send the Light," Freddie Simpson.

Address and Missionary Recitation—The Departing Missionary, W. Lawson Chorus by Mrs. Colpitt's class.

Several choruses by the school were given under the leadership of Mrs. Peniston at the organ.

The exercises were very interesting, well rendered and greatly enjoyed by the school.

The missionary zeal of Zion Church is further evidenced by the activities of a mission band recently organized with the following officers: Mrs. Peniston, president; Miss F. Gillen, 1st vice-president; Nellie Jones, 2nd vice-president; Freddie Simpson, recording secretary; Miss F. Gillen, corresponding secretary; Marjorie Purdy, treasurer; Ralph Olive, superintendent; Mildred Wood.

In Memory of Whitelaw Reid.
London, Feb. 26.—Mrs. John Ward has accepted a site at Lillingdon, London, on which to erect an institute as a memorial to her father, Whitelaw Reid.

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