

THE ASSEMBLY AND "CHURCH UNION"

Editor of Union Advocate,
Dear Sir,

As the Presbyterian Assembly's recent action affects not only the thing misnamed "Union" but the wider question of Religious Liberty in Canada, will you kindly permit a word, first to all the Churches and then to Presbyterians.

First—to all the churches. A majority of that Assembly resolved on asking Parliament as follows: to create by Civil Law a new Church; to coerce into that new Church by Civil Law the unwilling Presbyterians; to confiscate and transfer to that new Church by Civil Law all Trust Funds given to the Presbyterian Church for her work; and by Civil Law to blot out forever the present Presbyterian Church, so that none of those thus driven out of her could ever again return to her as a Church home. That action of Assembly does not decide anything. "Church Union" is not settled. The Assembly has no power to settle it and is asking Parliament to settle it by Civil Law.

That action of the Assembly is a menace to religious liberty, and lovers of liberty, in all churches, should resist to the uttermost, in Parliament and elsewhere, this attempted revival of official ecclesiastical despotism. If Parliament should pass this "Church Union Bill" no Church would be safe. Any one might wake up some morning and find himself by Act of Parliament a member of a new Church that he does not approve, and the Church of his choice gone forever. No institution of any kind—School, Hospital or Asylum, depending upon Trust Funds, would be safe, for these Funds might be confiscated at any time by similar Act of Parliament and handed over to some new control never intended by the donors. It would destroy the sacredness of the Trust, one of the safeguards of British and Christian civilization.

And now a word to Presbyterians. That action of the Assembly is illegal, immoral, unchristian. This is said advisedly and with deep regret that it should be so sadly true. 1. It is illegal, contrary to the Assembly's own constitution and laws. The Assembly, as a Church Court is appointed solely and only to carry on the work of the Presbyterian Church for the Kingdom of God, and is pledged to "maintain and defend same" and "to follow no divisive course from the present order established therein." The Assembly has no shadow of right to attempt to transfer, alienate, close up, blot out the Presbyterian Church as an organization. In making that attempt the Assembly breaks its own laws and is faithless to the trust committed to its care.

2. That action of the Assembly is immoral. It disregards all agreements as to the only conditions upon which "Union" would be attempted. At the outset of 1905 there was unanimous agreement that Union "Must carry the consent of the entire membership." Again in 1912, when the first vote of the people gave more than fifty thousand against it, there was unanimous agreement that the Movement be halted for "practically unanimous action."

Yet again in 1917, after a second vote of the people had given more than seventy three thousand against it, and—"to avoid disunion among the membership of our own Church" the Movement was halted a second time, there was a third unanimous agreement that any "action appropriate to a future period" should be left to "new light" by "Divine Guidance through the growing experiences of the people and the lessons of the war."

And now a majority of the Assembly, disregarding all these agree-

ments and ignoring the people both as to their increased opposition at the second vote and their experiences and the lessons of the war, attempts, on a vote of one third of the membership taken eight years ago, to disband by Civil Law the church entrusted to its care. Any secular organization that would so treat its engagements would be forever discredited. The Montreal Standard speaking of a recent Labour strike says: "The work of the world is carried on largely by the faith of men in each other that they will keep their word. If they will not then the world might as well shut up shop, for chaos ensues."

But—is not the Presbyterian Church pledged to the other Churches? Certainly not. No one has any right to pledge that Church to give up her identity. If any feel that they have pledged themselves they are free to go but the Presbyterian church will remain, in unity and brotherhood with the world wide Christian Church, a loyal regiment in the world wide Christian Army under Christ, its King. 3. This action of the Assembly is unchristian. Christ's law for the Christian life is: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you do ye even so to them." The Coercionists would not like to be driven by Civil Law, into a Church where they did not believe it their duty to go, but that is what they are trying to do to others.

All who wish a new church are free to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church. But not satisfied with liberty for themselves they deny it to others. It is unchristian.

There are two pitifully sad features of this misnamed "Union" movement. One is that it has completely blinded some good men to fairness, honour, justice and truth. The other is its constant effort to cover its moral nakedness by spiritual phraseology. Its latest official statement, since the Assembly, consists almost wholly of assertions that it is guided by the Spirit of God, and it is now planning Conferences to persuade the people of the "great spiritual good" which its illegal, immoral, unchristian action will bring.

And what of the future? Since there is appeal to Civil Law to enforce religious coercion there can only be appeal to that same Civil Law for protection from that coercion. And in Canada's Civil courts and Parliaments truth and righteousness still abide.

Meantime Christ's cause greatly suffers in many ways, and those who are pressing this wrong-doing are responsible for the ills that follow their action.

Montreal, August 6th, 1923.
E. SCOTT

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50c. a box, 6 for \$2.50, trial size 25c. At dealers or from Fruit-a-lives Limited, Ottawa, Ont.

SOME WAR DATES

It may be of interest to remember that War began between Great Britain and Germany on August 4, 1914, at 6 p.m. and that the peace treaty between these two countries was signed June 28, 1919 at Versailles and was ratified by Great Britain on January 10, 1920. War began between Great Britain and Austria on August 12, 1914 at midnight, with the peace treaty signed at St. Germain, Sept. 10 1919 and ratified by Great Britain July 16-1920.

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BOOM ROAD NOTES

Miss Reba Allison spent last week in Strathadam the guest of Mrs. Mark Sinclair.

Miss Muriel Sherard of Newcastle spent last week with her cousin, Miss Mary Sherard.

Miss Jennie Sutherland returned to her home in Curventon on Monday, having spent the past two weeks with Miss Martha McKenzie.

Mr. Sidney Cain who has been visiting relatives here, returned to Boston on Friday.

Miss Iva Mullen of Bridgetown is visiting relatives here.

Miss Rosie Allison is spending a few weeks with her aunt, Mrs. Russell Whitney of Whitneyville.

Miss Thelma McTavish of Cross Creek is visiting her grand-mother, Mrs. Alex. Sherard.



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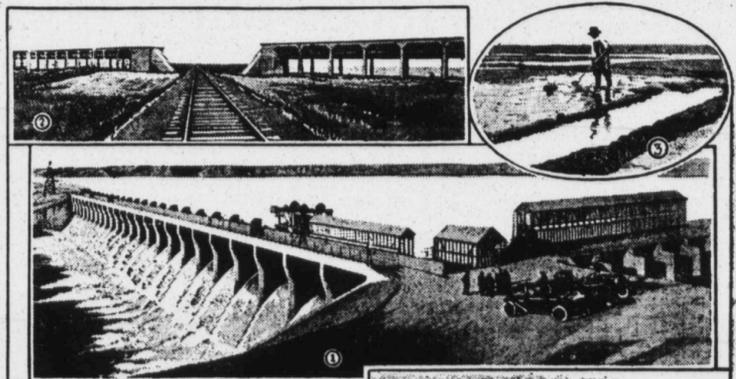
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Irrigation in Southern Alberta



(1) Bassano Dam, built in the earlier days by the Canadian Pacific Railway for irrigation purposes. (2) An irrigation flume. (3) This farmer does not depend on rains for his moisture. (4) Public Gardens, Lethbridge, Alta.

I HAD been told to expect a transformation; that a new order of things was being born in Southern Alberta; that a new system of farming was taking the place of the old. I was told that the days of "scratching in" and of "soil mining" were gone days. Nevertheless, I was not prepared for what I saw.

Fifteen years before, I had travelled through this country and had seen only a few scattered farmsteads set out on the "bald-headed" prairie, four square to all the winds that blew. There were no trees, only a stretching expanse of prairie that merged into white-topped mountains on the west and meeting the sky on the east in an unbroken horizon. A few homesteaders were struggling in. Old cattlemen, trying to save their great range, were spreading stories that farming could never be a success in Southern Alberta.

But the homesteaders came. Then later the big farmers arrived with their tractors and ushered in the era of the thousand acre wheat ranch. A series of "wet years" made Southern Alberta famous. Nowhere had such crops ever previously been heard of. The Noble Foundation, one of the largest farming corporations in the world, brought in a crop of wheat from one thousand acres that threshed 54,000 bushels! The country was thick with elevators. In 1915 and 1916, Southern Alberta reached the peak of prosperity. A series of unproductive years followed when rainfall was scant. Some farms were abandoned; but, mostly, men held on, buoyed up by the wonder harvests of other years.

The problem was purely one of moisture, and the Government of the Dominion and the Province set about to study it. The soil was of the greatest fertility, the climate was right. Something to supplement the natural rainfall was wanted. The Canadian Pacific

Railway and other corporations had already developed tracts of land by irrigation. It was no experiment, and so a constructive policy of irrigation was commenced, backed by both Governments.

It is in the train of irrigation that the new order of things is coming in Southern Alberta. Today as you drive over the prairie, through the irrigated tracts of Strathmore and Brooks, south through the Bow River Project and on into Taber and Lethbridge, the flatness is broken on all sides by farmsteads that nestle among trees—young trees growing taller and taller every year. Hedges are growing where once was barbed wire. Shrubbery is luxuriant. In the background are fields of Alfalfa, Indian Corn and Wheat. Dairy cows are seen on green pastures. The farms are small, but they are real farms, and the homes are smiling homes of contented people. There is no "scratching in" or "soil mining." These are permanent homes on the threshold of a future bright with promise.

In the City of Lethbridge, around which most of the new irrigation development is proceeding, are found tree-lined streets, beautiful homes set in beds enclosed lawns, and one of the finest little parks that Canada can boast. The city has been thoughtfully planned and symbolizes in its setting the spirit of a people pledged to permanency.

For those who knew Southern Alberta in its infancy, there is a pleasant surprise waiting. Wherever irrigation has touched, it is truly a country transformed.

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