

THE EDMONTON BULLETIN

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 22, 1909.

MEDDLESOME PROPHETS.

Another Canadian variant rises to warn the Empire that it is on the road to the eternal bow-wow. With every proper regard for the stability of the Imperial fabric and a due sense of obligation to the man who gives timely warning of impending danger there to, it remains to be said that Canada of late has been producing a phenomenal proportion of the prophets of Baal. The appearance of these seers is strikingly and significantly similar.

Invariably a cable message brings word that some one has written to the London Standard declaring that Britain must impose taxes on her food supply or Canada will abandon the preference; and the conclusion is invariably attached to it that if the preference goes by the board our hopes of Imperial stability and permanence are visions of the night, doomed to a rapid awakening in the cold gray dawn of national disintegration.

On the face of it, this is attributing to the Canadian preferential tariff a potency never claimed by the government who made it, nor by the men who backed them up in launching and maintaining it—against the fiercest onslaughts of the men who now credit it with such all-important consequences. The preference has been a good thing for Britain as well as for Canada Liberals affirm, and affirmed when their opponents berated it as altogether too good a thing for Britain. That it has induced trade and trade acquaintance, cordiality and firmer friendship, they gladly admit. But that it is the sole and only bond of Empire they do not believe.

According to their information there was a British Empire before there was a Canadian preference, and an Empire founded by quite other means than the manipulation of tariffs, sustained by quite other sentiments than the desire for gain, and animated by quite other and higher motives than the desire to prevent any member of the family doing business with anybody outside the family circle. And they shrewdly suspect that however effective the preference may have been in the development of Imperial sentiment, that the bonds and the spirit which sustained and animated the Empire before there was a preference would be capable of continuing business in the same beneficent manner if the preference were no more.

It is worthy of note, too, that the prognostications about the abandonment of the preference come from suspicious sources. The government who extended the preference are still in power at Ottawa, with a tolerably secure working majority, and with fair prospects of having the maintenance or withdrawal of the preference in their hands for some time to come—decidedly longer time than the prophets give the preference to live unless Britain supply the specific of a food tax. Manifestly they are likely to have a say as to whether or not the preference lives or dies, and it has yet to be intimated that they have any notion or desire, immediate or remote, direct or indirect, to abandon, lessen or modify the preference.

On the contrary, there are some pretty healthy arguments for thinking that if the preference is dealt with at all in the future it will be in the direction of extending it both laterally and downward, rather than by narrowing its scope or reducing its proportions. The prophets therefore are in the position of presuming to guess what a government of diametrically opposite tariff views intends to do—and from the output they would seem to be a conspicuously poor lot of guessers.

This however may be only seemingly true; for there is a very general and a very excellently founded suspicion that the prophecies are the apparent, and not the real, views of the prophets. There are excellent reasons for thinking that the sudden anxiety of protectionist gentlemen lest the preference be abandoned, springs from a very clear and lively recognition that it is not at all likely to be abandoned. If their advocacy of the exchange of tariff favors originates in a sincere desire to promote Imperial sentiment and solidarity it must be admitted that the means suggested to them very late. For eighteen years these gentlemen had the making of Canada's tariff, and it has yet to be shown that the idea of lessening the tariff toward Britain for Imperial or other reasons, ever occurred to them. If it did occur to their minds it got no further—no doubt through wholesome regard for the lining of their purses. Let no one imagine that there were no Canadian preference today the protected interests and their allies would propose mutual conces-

sions as a means of promoting trade and strengthening sentiment between Britain and Canada, for alike their theory and their practice is that the less trade we have with Britain or any other country the better for us—being construed always in the lexicon as the beneficiaries, financial and political, of protectionist tariff.

These forebodings of the withdrawal of Canada's preference are founded and defended ever and always on the characteristic absurdity that a reduction of tariff benefits only the other fellow. Canada's preference, they argue, was of benefit to the British manufacturers, therefore, the British people should reciprocate. To every one beyond the wall of this illusion the plain fact is that the preference was designed not as a means of enriching the British manufacturer but as a measure for the relief of the Canadian consumer. That it did benefit the British maker is undoubtedly true—but it did so because it enabled the Canadian consumer to buy his goods in competition with the home-made products. Any benefit it may have been to the factories of Manchester or Birmingham was incidental to its main and primary purpose—enabling the Canadian consumer to get manufactured goods at live and led prices. Just because it did this the preference has come to stay; and just because the Canadian protectionist recognizes that it has come to stay he drops the useless campaign of its withdrawal to engage in an effort to stampede the British people into building tariff walls about themselves, hoping to recover in the readjustment some compensation for the business he has lost through the preference. To this end he shouts that the Empire is in danger. Without questioning his patriotism it may be suggested to him that one of the greatest contributions Canadians can make to the cause of Imperial solidarity is to recognize the ability of the British people to manage their own affairs.

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KNOCKING ITS FRIENDS.

The Edmonton Journal is making onslaughts these days on the outstanding features of its party's policy and practice past and present. On Friday it referred to the "rascally" sorryrander business, and on Monday denounced roundly the idea of having a provincial harvest. As both the Empire is in danger. Without questioning his patriotism it may be suggested to him that one of the greatest contributions Canadians can make to the cause of Imperial solidarity is to recognize the ability of the British people to manage their own affairs.

PUTTING FARMERS ON THE VACANT FARMS.

Homestead entries for the past year numbered almost twice as many as for 1907. In enormous degree this was due to the pre-emption clauses of the act. The homestead entries which come from the districts where the clauses apply—that is, from the districts where the entries in former years were fewest. The entries in the last four months of the year, after the act came into force, were almost double those made during the preceding year. The homestead returns are by no means the favorite season for taking up land. Immigration for the year was by no means abnormally large—it fell in fact many thousands short of preceding years, and under the same conditions the homestead entries must have been expected to be light. The homestead returns suggest that might have been the reason for Edmonton and the whole Saskatchewan valley if the measure as originally drafted had been allowed to carry through the House.

THE TESTIMONY OF ITS CRITICS.

The Opposition announced their opinions of the speech from the throne yesterday. On such occasions custom has made it proper to say that the speech is notable less for what it says than for what it omits. By usage to the debate on the speech in provincial legislatures has come to be regarded as a favorable occasion for saying what one thinks about the government, its members, characters, doings and proposals. To both these propensities the Opposition paid their respects yesterday. With most of the contents of the speech they were on amiable terms, but were duly grieved at the number of things in respect of which it conveyed to them no information. They wandered back over the four years of provincial life searching among the records of legislative and administrative deeds for the evidences of government folly or mistakes—searching and finding little.

HOW IT WORKS.

This is what the school inspectors of the Province of Manitoba think of the bi-lingual go-when-you-please system operated in that province, and which the emissaries of the Robt. Borden government were kind enough to undertake to establish in Alberta if the voters of Victoria would vote for the Conservative candidate in the recent Federal election.

T. M. Maguire.

"If parents did their duty and sent their children to school regularly most of our schools would show good results at the end of the year. Irregularity is the root evil of our schools. It is disgraceful and pitiful the number of boys and girls in the country from twelve to fourteen, who can barely read or write owing directly to irregularity or no attendance. There seems to be no remedy for this state of affairs. Compulsory attendance has been suggested, but for some reason this remedy cannot be applied. A. L. Young—"Their work (in the Ruthenian schools, Stuartburn) is done very carelessly, under unfavorable conditions, the most noticeable of which is the lack of normal training

and decidedly poor attendance. In districts having a school population of thirty pupils, not more than from three to six will be found in school."

E. H. Walker—"In this inspectional division there are 21 schools, the bulk of whose population speak the Ruthenian language. A careful study of the returns received reveals the fact that not fifty per cent. of the children of school age are enrolled on the registers of these schools. Of those who are attending school, 112 we except Eshbart and Sifton, not over five per cent. are able to carry on a conversation in the English language. To one who is anxious to see the work of civilization and assimilation kept pace with immigration, this is not a very satisfactory state of affairs. Since the teachers are nearly all bright, promising young men who are able to speak both English and Ruthenian fluently, one must conclude that the only remedy for these schools is compulsory education."

W. J. Parr—"The attendance in our rural schools shows no improvement over former years. During the latter part of August, the whole of September, and the beginning of October, it was noticeable that 23 rural schools visited during October, the total enrollment for that month was 207, giving an average of 9.1. The total number present on the days of my visit was 215, an average of 9.5 in each school. There seems to be a growing feeling in the direction of compulsory attendance, and no class of people would welcome it more warmly than the teachers, who are frequently blamed for poor work which is wholly the result of irregular attendance."

C. K. Newcomb—"The fall attendance in the rural schools shows a gratifying increase this year. But there are still many districts where the average attendance represents only a small fraction of the number of resident children of school age. The regular attendance is certainly the greatest foe to educational efficiency, and while an act of those who would legislate the ready remedy for all social ills, yet I cannot help thinking that it is as possible to devise a law which would afford needed protection to the children of the ignorant, the idle, the careless and the vicious."

A. C. Campbell—"The irregular attendance, and in not a few cases the total lack of attendance, is the most serious problem before us. With all our boasted progress we have not succeeded in compelling the child to attend school. Owing to the existence of the evil, the results of his labor are not apparent. Time was when there were reasons more valid for such a state of affairs. The remedies suggested are well known, and may be applied if there is to be any improvement."

D. J. Wright—"Whether it is this irregularity of attendance or the depressing influence of having too little to do, I cannot say, but certainly it is a noticeable thing that many teachers are doing average work, and often there are so few today" is given an excuse for poor work. Even in the more advanced measure of compulsion would be a great benefit."

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business of criticism was not and could not be divided and specialized. The Alberta Opposition should be thoroughly and personally familiar with the whole trend and scope of public affairs during the past term. They are, therefore, or should be, in a singularly advantageous position to criticize the Government's policy and record with precision and effectiveness.

That they addressed themselves to the task with every good intent yesterday must be admitted. That they made so poor a case is not to be charged against them, but against the Government. The spirit was willing, but a willing spirit without something to work on or to work with is in bad straits, and Messrs. Robertson and Hiebert manifestly found little to work on or to work with. The leader, indeed, though he travelled the back-track to the field of Federal legislation and mourned, as usual, that we received cash instead of land for provincial support, had particularly poor success and confined himself practically to what he was not able to find in the bill of fare for the present session. His follower, with perhaps more persistence, found one point on which to criticize each of the ministers of the crown, in some cases even two; but the points were such as might have been located by any tolerably well informed individual outside the House and in no case offered ground on which even a brisk skirmish might be fought.

I, after four years of administration in which it has fallen to the lot of the Government to lay the foundations of provincial policy, and to create and put into operation the entire plant of government machinery, the Opposition so advantageously situated to find nothing on which to take issue more important than the secretiveness of the Government regarding their future intentions and the fact that the demand for coyote bounties got away with more than the sum provided by the legislature, Alberta may surely congratulate herself on having a Government which has provided by the legislature, Alberta in life. The members for High River and Rosebud found no outstanding feature of policy and even no important item of administration on which they felt able and willing to challenge the Government before the bar of public opinion—that on a resume of affairs on the eve of a general election. By their manifest willingness to criticize, and their equally apparent failure to find anything of vital importance to the vigilance and judgment of the House, the Opposition administration have devoted themselves to the management of public affairs.

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We stand to gain, too, through the increase in the volume of grain which will in the near future find its way to the world's markets via the Pacific coast. With the construction of low grade roads through the mountains and the completion of the Panama canal, railway men, merchants and farmers are convinced that a large proportion of the western crop will find its course for the Old Land by way of the Pacific. A prominent railway builder and operator ventures the opinion that the line of division will be as far east as Regina, the crop from west of that line going to the Pacific ports. It is claimed that sixty per cent. of the receipts for freight traffic are spent in the communities through which the railways pass. If these views are correct Alberta will be millions in pocket through the peopling of the vacant lands in Central and Southern Saskatchewan.

HORATIUS WITH A STRING.

On only one matter of prospective legislation did the Opposition deem it wise to make, or to seem to make, a pronouncement of alternative policy during the debate on the speech from the throne. Referring to the railway policy of the Government the Opposition leader in somewhat grandiloquent language informed the House that if the Government proposed to guarantee the bonds for railway companies he intended to emulate the performance of Leonidas at the pass of Thermopylae.

But lest anyone should imagine that, like the sturdy Greek, he contemplated this warlike attitude for the defence of his country or its interests, he hastened to assure them of the contrary. The purpose was not to defend Greece but to "resist the advance of the Persians," or to drop the classical allusion not to conserve or protect the interests of Alberta, but to attract the National Transcontinental and the question of the principles of representative government."

THE UNKINDEST KNOCK OF ALL.

The Mail and Empire condemns the appointment of the commission to construct the National Transcontinental and the question of the principles of representative government."

Does this mean that the Mail is getting ready to dump Mr. Borden and his commission-for-everything propagandist? At any rate it is unfeeling and unloyal to deprive the honorable gentleman of the stock proposal by which he has been able to suggest a different course to the Government on most important questions since he attained the dignity. The gentleman may have been afflicted with unusually poor luck in making himself understood, but however that be the impression that his accession to power would be followed by the turning over of pretty much all the business, duty and responsibility of government to men chosen regardless of the people and placed beyond their reach. In this he has at least won credit for unshaking allegiance to the tradition that the people have no business to rule themselves anyway. But this poor credit the Mail would rob him of, and says flatly that commissions for the spending of public money are contrary to the principles of representative government. Whether it is intended by antagonism for Mr. Borden or by the common desire to find cause of offence against the Government it administers a blow to Mr. Borden's chief title to leadership.

THE ALBERTA GOVERNMENT.

Calgary Daily News—In a number of the other provinces there appear from time to time articles dilating upon the progressive legislation that has been made by the local government. Up to the present very little has been said in the good legislation that has been placed upon the statute book by the government of Alberta, and yet there is no legislation of a more advanced nature or more in the interests of the people that has been adopted in any of the sister provinces.

INVADING THE NORTH.

Vermilion Signal—Five years ago comparatively few men were in Canada, had ever heard of Athabasca Landing. Those who had heard of it knew of it only as a mile post on the road to civilization at Edmonton from the great fur territories of Mackenzie, Peace River and Athabasca. Today the Landing has a newspaper and board of trade.

THE OFFICIAL OPENING.

The people of Canada have the reputation of being a people of a wide range of mind, and when of state demand display to add dignity of some event to render the occasion more important. It is a very unassuming character. Who tends in state to the opening of the official open proceedings. This afternoon His Excellency, accompanied by the Hon. Justice, arrived in the morning at the Parliament buildings, attended the opening of the session, and from the distance of New Point, came the bloom of smiling in honor of the event.

IN 108 YEARS OLD TODAY.

Quincy Hill, January 20—Tomorrow Leonard Rooder, former shoemaker of this city, will reach his 108th birthday. He was born in Germany. When 90 he lost his eyesight, cutting brush but he still gets about the house without aid.

ally of the greatest railway system in this country, an ally which has systematically and continuously traded public interests for political support for a generation, has changed not only its spots but its character and stands now as the enemy of private ownership of railways in any form and under any condition—the humble but clear-headed elector will respectfully decline to accept even from the lips of the honorable gentleman who for the time occupies the position of titular leader of that party in the local legislature.

AN ANNIVERSARY, AND A CONTRAST.

Winnipeg Free Press—Today is the first anniversary of the inauguration of Government ownership and operation of telephones in Manitoba. The year has run its course, without seeing the realization of the explicit pledges that were made by the government to more than cut the Bell rates in two. On this day begins the second year of the government ownership and operation of telephones in Manitoba.

The vision of telephones for the farmers at \$12 a year, which were dangled before the public by the Ministers previous to the general elections, has not only failed to materialize, but has been replaced by a more expensive system. On the contrary, there have been increases. Such has been the experience of Manitoba, Alberta has had a very different experience of government ownership and operation of telephones; and the contrast between the experiences of the two provinces is all the more striking because Mr. Roblin and his colleagues have repeatedly asserted that the purchase of the Bell telephone company's system in this Province they made a bargain that was more to the advantage of the public than the bargain made by the government of Alberta for the purchase of the same Company's system in that Province.

And yet in Alberta the rates charged for telephones under Government ownership and operation are markedly less than the rates that were charged by the Bell Company. On Wednesday the announcement was made at Edmonton of an Order-in-Council having been passed putting into effect the readjusted schedule of rentals and tolls in the Alberta telephone system. The reduction will average 25 per cent. The new schedule does not affect the 25 per cent. reduction in the former rates for every instance in some cases there is no change whatever, but the average reduction is 25 per cent. Mr. Coakley, Minister of Public Works, under whose direction the system is operated, said on Wednesday: "For the past four months we have been considering the question of readjusting the rates. This readjustment, which went into effect January 1, means a reduction of rates on all telephones in the Province. This reduction will be maintained on business telephones. But there will be a reduction on all exchange telephones in private residences."

AN UNCALLED-FOR SQUEAL.

Calgary Daily News—The agitation of the coal operators against the Alberta Compensation for Workmen Act it but another proof of the inevitable feeling of uneasiness which is disturbed even to the slightest degree. The argument of the coal operators is that the Act is a measure which is calculated to divert capital to an act designed to the slightest degree. The argument of the coal operators is that the Act is a measure which is calculated to divert capital to an act designed to the slightest degree.

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access to markets. With the unqualified endorsement of the people of the province on the proposed railway policy there is every reason to believe that the next year or year and a half will see development in the province that will put all previous progress a long way in the background.

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BRILLIANT SCENES AT PARLIAMENT OPENING.

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Calgary Daily News—In a number of the other provinces there appear from time to time articles dilating upon the progressive legislation that has been made by the local government. Up to the present very little has been said in the good legislation that has been placed upon the statute book by the government of Alberta, and yet there is no legislation of a more advanced nature or more in the interests of the people that has been adopted in any of the sister provinces.

INVADING THE NORTH.

Vermilion Signal—Five years ago comparatively few men were in Canada, had ever heard of Athabasca Landing. Those who had heard of it knew of it only as a mile post on the road to civilization at Edmonton from the great fur territories of Mackenzie, Peace River and Athabasca. Today the Landing has a newspaper and board of trade.

THE OFFICIAL OPENING.

The people of Canada have the reputation of being a people of a wide range of mind, and when of state demand display to add dignity of some event to render the occasion more important. It is a very unassuming character. Who tends in state to the opening of the official open proceedings. This afternoon His Excellency, accompanied by the Hon. Justice, arrived in the morning at the Parliament buildings, attended the opening of the session, and from the distance of New Point, came the bloom of smiling in honor of the event.

IN 108 YEARS OLD TODAY.

Quincy Hill, January 20—Tomorrow Leonard Rooder, former shoemaker of this city, will reach his 108th birthday. He was born in Germany. When 90 he lost his eyesight, cutting brush but he still gets about the house without aid.

THE UNKINDEST KNOCK OF ALL.

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