



CIVIC GOVERNMENT

A PLAN for civic reform has occurred to me which is entirely original—so far as I know. I do not remember to have seen it mentioned by any one else; and, when you hear it, you will probably be quite willing to admit that few would be guilty of it. My plan is based upon a trait of human nature which a long observation of various forms of bad government has convinced me is at the bottom of most of them—the trait that no citizen likes to be robbed unless he himself does the robbing. Take a city treasury, for example. If a burglar were to break in and steal three cents, and the citizens had a chance to go to the polls and vote what should be done to that daring burglar, there would be “boiling oil” in it—sure. But if an alderman steals three millions, and then cleverly persuades the electors in his ward that they are getting more than their share of the “swag” back again in the form of local improvements which the other wards lack, these same citizens will go to the polls and re-elect him, time and again.

THAT is the way that successful civic “grafters” get along. They “divvy” with the citizens. In a city which I know, there was once an alderman whom everybody knew to be corrupt, who grew enormously rich in the city’s service, who was most unblushing in his operations, which were, indeed, too gigantic to hide; and yet this alderman was simply invincible at the polls. Why? Because he fattened his own ward. Every man who wanted one, had a street light before his door; and those who didn’t want them, had them removed. Any shiftless son of an elector could always get a job through this alderman, either from the city or from some firm who wanted to oblige “Mr. Alderman.” He was a good “divider.” He scattered money wherever he went. All who came in contact with him, passed along distinctly richer. He convinced enough of the citizens, to make him invincible, that they were partners in his exploits.

NOW my plan for civic reform—patent applied for—is to have our cities governed by outsiders, dependent for their jobs on outsiders—and by a class of outsiders who could not be “fixed” by giving them a share of the “boodle.” Then when a city was robbed, it would lose the money down to the last cent. There would be no notion among the citizens that they “stood in” with the “high-binder,” and got more out of his bag than they, individually, put in. A citizen does not have to get very much to feel that way. He knows that he will have to pay taxes in any case. That is so much sheer loss. The civic services must be kept up; and he does not look for any very appreciable lowering of the tax-rate. The “boys” at the City Hall will find means to keep that up all right. So when he gets a little personal advantage because he is a loyal friend of a particular civic dignitary, he looks upon that as clear profit; and is quite anxious to overlook any libellous stories about the manner in which his particular friend behaves himself when left with the keys of the civic safe.

BUT my plan would kill that whole system of bribing the people with their own money. It would be of no advantage to the “grafting” alderman to bribe the voters; for they would have no votes, so far as he was concerned. And you may be very sure that he would never give away any part of his “loot” for nothing. He is no philanthropist. The consequence would be that the citizen would be exceedingly wroth when it was demonstrated to him that a portion of his tax-money had been quietly purloined. When the alderman or the controller or the “Prefect” or whatever you called him, pocketed any part of the public revenues which he was paid (I would pay him adequately on a business basis) to administer, he would be in precisely the position of a defaulting trustee of any other sort. He would have no friends. He would be simply a criminal. If the evidence was not clear, but the outside appearances bad, he might escape criminal prosecution, but he would infallibly lose his office.

NOW I know that you are going to ask me a hard question: viz.: to wit—“Who is your outside authority?” Who is to choose these alder-

men or controllers or “managers”? Well, I have this comfort as I prepare to answer your question—I cannot possibly select any person or persons who can be as poor “choosers” as those who now attend to the job. Any change must be for the better. The tax-payers who are robbed, and then bribed, are the worst possible. If I suggested that the King of the Cannibal Islands should attend to the election of our “worthy city fathers,” I would be suggesting an improvement on the present system—as a rule. I am not dealing with cities who are satisfied with their selection, nor with small towns where there is precious little to steal. But the King of the Cannibal Islands could certainly beat the voters of the average big city.

BUT I will not trouble the King. One plan would be to allow the voters of one city to elect the aldermen for another. That is, we could exchange aldermen. This plan would be improved by insisting that the aldermen so elected must be citizens of a third city. That is, if the electors of Toronto had to choose five men living in Winnipeg to administer the affairs of Montreal, I haven’t a doubt of it that Montreal would get better government than it has now. Another plan would be to let the Dominion Government name a civic board as it names a harbour board. This might result in creating a vast and powerful party “machine”; but it would at least vest the appointment in a body responsible to people who could not be bribed with Montreal revenues. The weakness of this idea is that the Dominion Government would thus have the control of all the cities in its hands. There is where the “machine” would come in. But if it could be applied to one city only, it would be a howling success for that city; for the Dominion Government would have very much to lose and very little to gain by permitting that city to be “looted.” A reputation for capable and honest administration would be of more value to it before the country than the gratitude of a half-dozen enriched “aldermen.” However, this question of an outside authority requires more thinking over. We have not the material in this country to Germanize our civic governments. We had rather be worse

governed, and less governed. And we are right in that. But the government of our great cities still remains an unsolved problem.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

“Folly and Sin of Militarism”

A DDRESSING a meeting at the First Baptist Church, in Brandon, last week, Professor P. G. Mode, of the Brandon Baptist College, delivered a scathing attack on what he described as the “Folly and Sin of Militarism.” He described the Overseas Club and the Boy Scouts as movements organized under a cloak purely for the purpose of promoting militarism. He expressed himself as not at all in sympathy with an emergency contribution, neither did he believe in the development of a Canadian navy for this country.

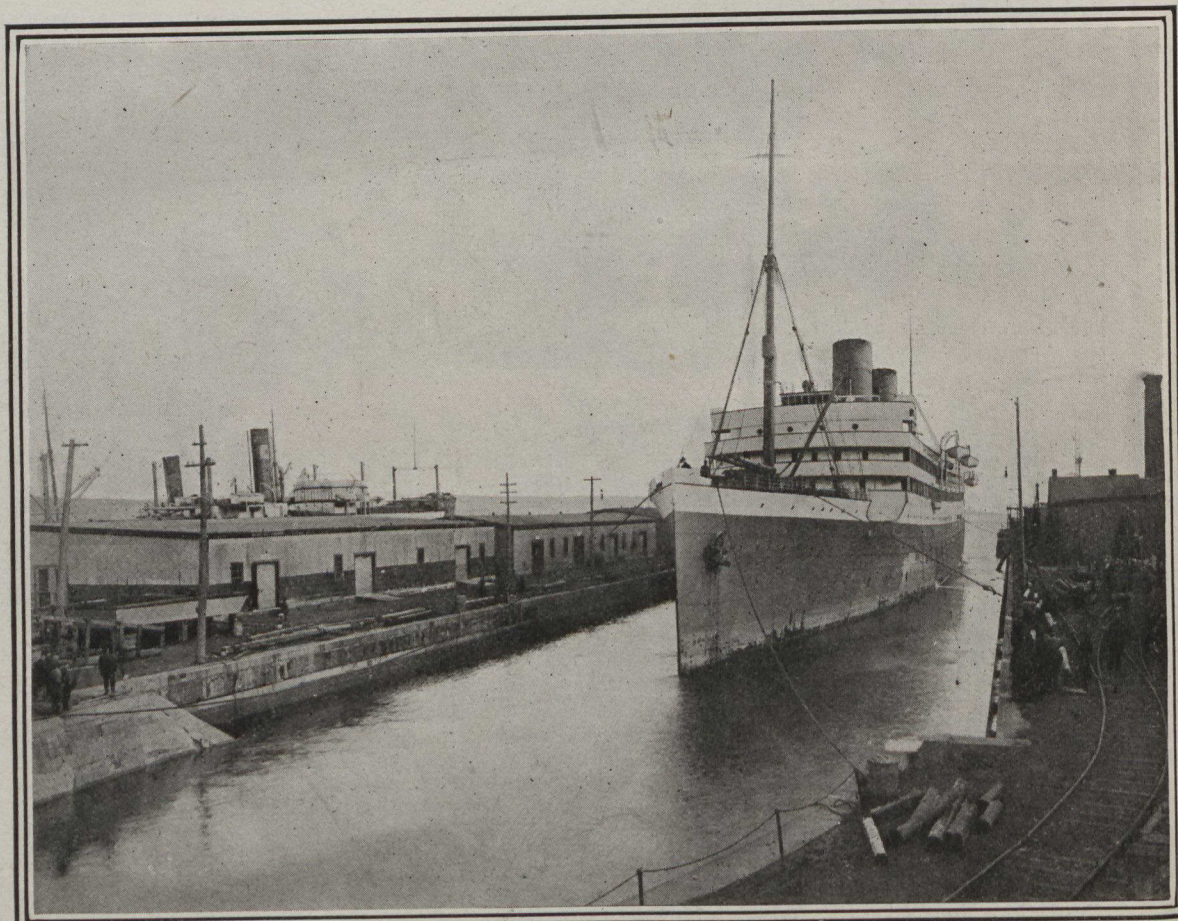
“Despotism and militarism have always gone hand in hand,” said Professor Mode at the outset of a vigorous speech. “We are now beginning to feel,” he said, “that no man has the right to go to another individual and ask him to lay down his life for any cause.”

“We crush down by keeping up ships that are not carrying commerce,” he said, “but the time has now come when men are not going to stand that sort of thing. The Socialist is rising and great organized bodies of workmen are determined that they will let the nation fall rather than go to war against their fellows.”

“It is not the men who play checkers with the great body of the people who go to war, but the very class of men whom the nation can least afford to lose. We cannot get the necessary education for the people while the great wealth of the nation is set aside to keep up militarism. Why should we have a great army standing on the border line between this country and our neighbour in the south? The spirit of peace is spreading over the land, but there are two great organizations whom we have to guard against. There are people who are making wealth out of this thing. There’s the Krupp concern, which declares a 12 per cent. dividend simply out of the manufacture of guns. Lord Northcliffe, who is the foe of Great Britain and of civilization, has three great newspapers doing their utmost to propagate the war spirit.”

“The conquest of the future is not to be won by militarism,” concluded the professor, “but by education and the cultivation of the social spirit. The words, ‘they that use the sword shall perish by the sword,’ embody the attitude the Christian church should take. I for my own part will do all I can to stop the forces that make for the destruction of my fellow man and the land that I delight to call my own.”

The Royal George in Dock at Halifax



The value of large graving docks in all large Canadian ocean ports is here exemplified. The Royal George ran aground near the Isle of Orleans. She was pulled off, taken to Quebec for unloading, and then had to go all the way to Halifax to find a dock where her hull could be repaired. Had she gone to Montreal to use the new floating dock, she would have been “iced” in for the winter, with a great loss of revenue.