

The Standard



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SAINT JOHN, WEDNESDAY MORNING, SEPT. 14, 1910

THE REPORT ON THE MAIN STREET PAVING.

The findings in the report of the committee, appointed to hold an investigation under oath into the Main street paving contract, will be received with general satisfaction by the great majority of the citizens who placed no credence in the rumors and insinuations of graft and general mismanagement of the city's affairs which have been more than hinted at in certain quarters during the last two months.

At the time the agitation started the facts which led up to Mr. James Carleton's resignation as inspector, were briefly reviewed in The Standard, and the opinion then expressed by this journal, that the charges of graft and mismanagement did not seem to have any solid foundation has been justified. The committee in their report find that the city is receiving "good value for the money paid," and that "no person in the city government has received directly or indirectly, any money, gifts, reward or promise of reward from the contractor or his agents, neither has the evidence revealed any conspiracy to defraud the city through this contract."

At the outset of the investigation the idea was sought to be conveyed that the committee were incapable of performing their duty. The personnel of the committee, however, is sufficient to satisfy the public mind that an impartial judgment on the evidence has been given. Mayor Frink, the chairman, has the confidence of the citizens in a marked degree, and is in receipt of the highest honor they could bestow. Ald. Hayes, as a successful business man, is highly thought of by the community. Ald. Jones was an official under the late provincial government, and has retained his responsible position, which gives him a keen insight into matters affecting the city's interests. Ald. Holder has borne the brunt of many civic elections, and his continuing to represent the citizens shows that he retains their confidence. Ald. White, a new member of the council, is engaged in business pursuits and occupies a prominent place in insurance circles. To these men no suspicion of graft can attach. They had nothing to cover up or condone, and their findings, which have been adopted by the council, will be accepted as the result of a painstaking and thorough investigation.

Mr. Carleton resigned because he was not satisfied with the Hassam method of laying the concrete foundation—a method with which he was not familiar. On this point the committee find that the city engineer was blameworthy in not taking the inspector more into his confidence, but that there was no evidence that the engineer was coerced or influenced by any one to adopt this method. This situation appears to have arisen, as the committee point out at the close of their report, from a want of harmony between the inspector and the city engineer. It is about the only evidence in the report of any mismanagement on the part of a city official and, while insignificant in itself, this mistake of the engineer is to be regretted.

After Mr. Carleton resigned he made a statement through the columns of the press that on certain portions of the work the foundation was not of the required thickness, and the statement was made the basis on which the investigation was held. The committee find that Mr. Carleton's charge is proven, but that the excessive rolling, which caused the inferior work, was done under his own orders, given without the knowledge of the engineer and against the protest of the contractors. They also express the opinion that he should have applied for further instructions.

On the balance of the work the committee believe that the street is good and substantial. They base their opinion on the reports of the assistant engineer, and Mr. Dodwell, chief engineer for the Dominion government in the Maritime Provinces, who examined the work in detail, and found it "good and satisfactory." All of which goes to show that the engineer was justified in adopting the Hassam method which has been subject to a good deal of not entirely disinterested criticism.

In a too evident desire to find some basis for a charge of graft against members of the council, much was made of a statement by Mr. Carleton that the city was only receiving 50 per cent. of the value of the specifications on the concrete foundation. The committee point out that the cost of this foundation is one-fifth of the whole pavement, or approximately \$1,500, and that Mr. Carleton's statement, which he subsequently modified to an expression of opinion, has failed to be substantiated by calculations and estimates. These were made during the progress of the inquiry by Ald. Hayes.

The words of the report are worth quoting:—"The concrete foundation upon which the pavement is laid costs 28 1/2 cents per yard, and when your committee know that the ordinary wooden blocks used in and on the streets of the city cost 55 cents a yard, exclusive of the cost of labor, laying and fitting them, and also know that the cost of new macadam road is from \$1.10 to \$1.25 a yard laid, it is obvious that a radical error has been made in regard to this statement. Even admitting that the statement is true and could be substantiated, it would mean that the sum of \$900 is involved in this dispute which has been the subject of the animated controversy which has prevailed in this community and province for months past."

It will be a matter of very general satisfaction among the citizens of St. John, who, after all, elected the council, to find that they have not entrusted the affairs of the city to a set of grafters as a certain section of the press would have had them believe. It can hardly be claimed that the committee are whitewashing themselves. The facts and figures quoted in the report are capable of proof.

The clause in the specifications permitting alternative methods of making concrete had been loudly condemned as having been inserted in the interests of the Hassam Company. The committee point out that it was a wise provision, allowing a contractor of limited means to compete with large concerns endowed with capital. The report proceeds:—"It is sworn in evidence that 90 per cent. of the concrete made and used in the world is through the agency of concrete mixing machines, which was admitted in evidence to be the best method, and yet under the detailed specification as it stands, it would have been impossible for the engineer to have permitted the use of machine mixed concrete."

The committee significantly touch upon one of the main reasons which gave rise to this agitation in the closing lines of this section when they state that had the engineer permitted the use of the machine instead of permitting the Hassam method "your committee feel confident that there would have been no fault found, if he had deviated from the printed detailed specification."

There have been, and doubtless will be again, occasions on which the common council may justly be the subject of criticism. The recent agitation, which it is noteworthy died in inaction when the publicity given to it ceased, was not one of these. It was, we believe, promoted by certain interests to discredit the work of the successful tenderers, the Hassam Paving Company, and out of this grew indefinite charges of graft against the aldermen and city officials. The inquiry has been thorough and above board, and the evidence, which was published in the press and on which The Standard refrained from commenting at the time, justifies the findings of the committee.

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP.

Birmingham is indebted to the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain for the high position it holds among English municipalities. It was during his terms of office as mayor that the great Warwickshire city started out to own and operate its public services and utilities, which it has done with conspicuous success. Among them none has made more remarkable progress than the electric supply department, which formed the subject of a series of articles on the government of the midland capital, that are being published by The Birmingham Daily Post.

A favorite objection to public ownership, says The Toronto World, is that it lacks the enterprise of private management, but this is certainly not borne out by the record of British cities. Birmingham took over its electric service in 1900, the capital expenditure then amounting to \$2,400,000. In ten years it has increased to \$7,000,000 or nearly treble. But the surplus profits have also continuously advanced, although the average price received per unit of electricity supplied has fallen from a fraction of eight cents to two and a half cents.

The rates have been reduced several times, this being rendered possible by reductions in the working cost per unit, these having fallen from four and a half cents to slightly over one cent. Last year, the surplus profit was over \$100,000, half of which was contributed in rate relief. The reserve fund stands at \$360,000, and \$80,000 has been put to a renewal fund account. Municipal ownership and operation of public services has the great advantage of enabling the citizens to get their proper share of the benefits accruing from the success of the undertakings.

PROTECTING THE FORESTS FROM RAILWAYS.

During the past season the forest destruction on this continent resulting from fires set by locomotives has run into millions of dollars. Too often the right-of-way, piled thick with inflammable rubbish, furnishes a tinder-box for these conflagrations. The owner of destroyed property along the line has found it almost impossible under the present laws to get damages from the railway company, so difficult is it to fix the responsibility, and so expensive is the process of litigation.

In order to lessen the number of fires due to this cause, the committee on forests of the Commission of Conservation has proposed to make the railways peculiarly responsible. It has recommended that there be added to the Railway Act a clause making them liable to a fine of \$1,000, recoverable by summary prosecution before a stipendiary magistrate or two justices of the peace, for every fire started by sparks from their locomotives. It makes no difference whether the fire begins outside the right-of-way or spreads therefrom to adjoining land. The railways are exempt from this fine if they can show that they have the best modern appliances on their locomotives to prevent the emission of sparks, that their employees have not shown negligence in conducting to the starting of the fire, and that they have maintained an efficient and properly equipped staff of fire-rangers.

This is a matter of great public importance and public opinion should rally in support of the suggestion of the Conservation committee. There is no sense in saving a hundred thousand dollars worth of timber in a year by conservation methods, and permitting the destruction during the same period of time, of ten million dollars worth by the carelessness of railways.

The findings of the committee which investigated the Main street paving contract, go to show that the Telegraph's protracted search for "the nigger in the wood pile," and its efforts to discover "the colored gentleman in the under brush," of which we have heard so much of late, were so much paper and ink wasted. "The Ethiopian" wasn't there.

CURRENT COMMENT

(The Toronto Telegram.)

A party that went right ahead, irrespective of the race and creed of any province, could not be much worse off than the party which has tried to do nothing but pander to the race and creed of one province. And R. L. Borden, in the crisis of a general election, will carry as many Quebec seats in the strength of Quebec's fear that he might be strong enough in the other provinces to win without its help, as he will ever carry in the strength of Quebec's knowledge that he has so weakened himself in the other provinces that he cannot win without Quebec's help.

(Victoria Colonist.)

The Union Bank of Halifax is to be consolidated with the Royal Bank of Canada on November 1st. The directors of the Union Bank have sent out a circular saying that a group of English capitalists has offered \$240 a share for all the stock in the Royal that they will receive under the terms of the consolidation. This proves two things. One is that the standing of the Royal is high, and the other that English investors are being more and more attracted to Canada.

(Manitoba Free Press.)

It is interesting to read in a South African exchange about the enthusiastic reception tendered Premier Botha in his campaign tour by the people of Ladysmith. What a difference ten years can sometimes make!

TELEPHONE SERVICE IN FOUR BUILDINGS

N. B. Telephone Co. Has Booth and Branch Exchange at Exhibition—Public Station a Boon to Patrons.

There has always been a great amount of interest taken by users of the telephone in the inside workings of the central exchange. One wonders at the rapidity with which the operator connects him with the number asked for. Crowds of interested spectators are consequently constantly in the vicinity of the New Brunswick Telephone Company's booth in the main building at the exhibition, near the dining hall. Here a switchboard of two positions, one for the local service in the building, the other for L. D. connection, in principle, the same as the large one used at the central exchange, may be seen, with two operators at work connecting the various phones in the building with the main exchange.

The booth is surrounded by a railing spiked with insulators and the walls are hung with different varieties of phones and also apparatus used in outside and underground construction. Two public pay stations have been placed here for the convenience of patrons of the fair and are being largely used, also ten stationed through the grounds.

Altogether the booth is most attractive in appearance and useful in effect and the company are to be congratulated on their consideration and enterprise in installing it.

Telephone users are urged to regard the following instructions when making calls and thus help the service:

There are three parties to a telephone call, the person making the call, the telephone company, and the person called. It is not sufficient that one or two of the above parties do their work properly. The co-operation of all three is necessary.

Telephone users may help the telephone service by consulting the telephone directory before making calls thus obviating the many errors due to calling numbers from memory.

By speaking directly into the transmitter in a clear, distinct voice.

By separating the figures of the telephone number when making a call. For example, Main, one—two—three—four.

By correcting the operator if she repeats the number incorrectly.

By holding the telephone receiver to the ear until the called party answers or some report is given from central office.

By being ready to talk when the called party answers. As a matter of courtesy the person making the telephone call should not oblige the party to wait his convenience.

By answering telephone calls promptly. If there is unusual delay in answering the operator may report, "Don't answer to the party calling."

By always giving the name of the exchange before the number, for example, Main 41, or West 41.

In telephone operating the human element must be considered. The public is human. Telephone operators are human. The hastily spoken word and its infection conveys whatever impression each gets of the other. Under such conditions courtesy both on the part of the operating force and the public is like oil to machinery—necessary to prevent friction.

The enterprise of the telephone company in establishing the exchange in the Exhibition buildings has been the subject of favorable comment. They have further accommodated the visitors by giving a free long distance service to all points in the province between the hours of 12 noon and 2 p. m., which has been taken advantage of and greatly appreciated by all.

Shiloh's Cure

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OBITUARY.

Donald McLean.

Captain Arthur McLean, of the tug Waring, received word last evening of the death at Carter's Point of his father Donald McLean, who for many years was a well known resident of this city. The deceased was in the 68th year of his age, and had been in poor health since last December. During the summer he had made his home at Carter's Point, on the river, in the hope that the country air would be beneficial to him. This hope was not realized, however, and it was soon apparent that his illness would have a fatal termination.

The deceased was very well known in this city, he having been engaged in the meat business on City Road for a number of years. Latterly he had been in the employ of P. S. Purdy. He is survived by his widow, three sons and two sisters. His sons are Messrs. Roy, with the firm of E. L. Jarvis; Harry, who is in San Francisco; and Captain Arthur McLean, of the tug Waring. The sisters are Mrs. Eliza Spence and Mrs. Leonard Dunphy of North End. He also leaves two half brothers, one at Grand Lake and the other in Michigan. The body will be brought to this city for burial.

WINNIPEG WHEAT.

St. John, N. B., Sept. 13.—The Ogilvie Flour Mills Co., Ltd., supply the following quotations of the Winnipeg wheat market:—
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Cashier—They carried off £2000 belonging to the shareholders—
Chairman—Ha! Ha! What clever scoundrels these burglars are!
Cashier—And your gold mounted um brilla.
Chairman—Oh, the villains! Send rounds to Scotland Yard at once.—M. A. F.

Wrist Watches

We have received a new lot of WATCH BRACELETS in gold (Spring Link and Mesh) from \$30.00 to \$80.00. Also gold watch and leather strap \$18.00 to \$30.00. Silver and Gun Metal with leather straps, \$8.50 up.

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