

Soldier Settlement Act

realize that some of them at least regard it as meritorious to be able to say that regardless of consequences they will return their candidature with a majority.

I have read English history and the history of this country with some care and it takes a long, long time sometimes to bring about a change. One of the papers in Winnipeg the other day pointed out that the machine in Saskatchewan had been operating since the days of Mr. Walter Scott, since Mr. Haultain was destroyed by its operations. It may be a long time before that machine is destroyed, before the efficiency of liquor commissions, highway commissions and telephone systems, paid for by all the people, cease to be made to work for only one political section of the people, and that the party in power. But the time always comes when the change is effected. It happened in Ontario. One of the distinguished leaders of the organization of the Liberal party in that province journeyed to Alberta in 1905—it is not necessary to name him—and in recent years found employment with the Minister of Agriculture for a season at the public expense. Afterwards he was dismissed from the public life of that province by a very aroused electorate, and if all the circumstances in relation to his participation in elections were known to the House, I do not think there would be much pride on the part of members sitting to the right of the Speaker. When my hon. friend the Solicitor General (Mr. Cannon) spoke so highly of the operations of the machine in West Middlesex yesterday, it occurred to me, having the knowledge that I have of the distinguished organizer of the Liberal party in the province of Ontario when he was in the province of Alberta, that perhaps the hon. gentleman had reference to his ability as a machine manager. I wondered if that was what he meant. Well, if it was, there is not much reason for hon. gentlemen to smile and smirk and regard such behaviour as clever. I know of course that there are men who have the idea it is clever to thwart the will of the electorate. Do my hon. friends opposite realize what happened in Alberta on the 29th October last as disclosed in a court of law? I am sure that there are gentlemen in this House who resent it, although others smile and smirk over it and regard it as something to be proud of. Sometimes even the ministers of the crown smile and smirk and consider that sort of thing clever, but I trust that no one in this House does so. I trust that this House is past that stage.

Mr. DUNNING: No insinuations.

[Mr. Bennett.]

Mr. BENNETT: If the hon. gentleman thinks the remarks applicable to his case, very well. If the cap fits, let him put it on. But the mere expression of a fact which can be seen is not an insinuation. The other night I suggested that the revaluation of soldier settlers land should be taken out of the hands of a tribunal appointed solely by the minister in order to avoid any possibility of temptation to do the things that have been done in the past. Those who have seen the operations of the Scrip commission in days gone by, when they wandered over western Canada on the eve of an election, taking advantage of the machinery of law for the purpose of depriving the public domain of much land, getting halfbreeds to sign quit claims, enabling by this means certain men whose names are known to all to become enriched; those who have seen the abuses that have taken place in connection with the administration of the homestead law and the encroachments that were made upon public rights in the matter of irrigation; those who have seen the public purse being plundered for the purpose of promoting the private fortunes of individuals—those who have witnessed all these things have indeed some cause for the suspicion that lurks in their hearts. Nor is this a vague, underfined, unreasonable feeling. It is the conviction that moved people in eastern Canada in the days that are gone to rise in their might and put a stop to the abuses which they could tolerate no longer. It is the feeling that characterized the people of the province of Ontario at the time when the Minnie M. was obliged to seek a haven of refuge in the waters of an American port. It is the feeling that provoked the people when Mr. Preston "hugged the machine" and sent the famous telegram about which we all know, and the same feeling precisely that contributed to the defeat of the administration as a result of revelations that were made in this parliament not so many years ago. It is for these reasons that we believe we can best serve the ends of democracy by lifting to a higher level the administration of a law such as this and removing the minister from the temptation to abuse the powers conferred upon him. It is the old, old tale:

How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
makes ill deeds done.

The government must surely realize that there is no ulterior motive in this effort to surround the administration of the act with proper safeguards, but rather an earnest desire born of experience and suffering, of privation, yes, and deprivation of rights by reason of the manipulation of ballots and ballot boxes,