THE EDMONTON BULLETIN

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THE NATURAL GAS FRANCHISE

A company has applied to the city council for permission to lay mains and supply natural gas within the city. The first condition of any such concession should be that the company must supply gas. Otherwise the franchise would become merely a hindrance to any other company which might be prepared to supply natural gas, and would result most probably in giving the artificial company an undisturbed monopoly.

From the city's standpoint and the standpoint of the citizen, the purpose in granting a natural gas franchise would be to secure competition with the proposed artificial gas company. The ends sought by securing this competition would be to hasten the installation of the artificial plant and to exert a healthful influence on the company towarti efficient service and reasonable rates. Aside from these ends there could be no object in permitting a second company to tear up streets and lay mains parallel to those of the artificial concern. But if the natural gas franchise were given to a company which could not supply the gas there could be no competition and the purpose of granting the franchise would be lost.

Whether or not a natural gas franchise were exclusive in form and purpose, it would be so in practice and effect. Two companies tearing up streets and installing parallel mains are sufficient, but if one of these companies were unable to supply gas in sufficient quantity to make it a live competitor, either the other company must become the controller of the gas business or a third party must be permitted to install mains. This an exclusive natural gas franchise would prevent, and even if the franchise were not exclusive it is exceedingly doubtful if a third company could be found willing to install a system where two were already installed. Whether exclusive in word or not, the franchise would in all likelihood be so in effect and would result in throwing the control of the city's gas supply altogether into the hands of the artificial company. An exclusive natural gas franchise to a company unable to supply gas could have no other result, and it does not appear practicable to grant a franchise which would not be exclusive.

It is to the interests of the citizens that competition in gas supply be limited to as few companies as will provide competition. The only purpose in introducing competition at all is that one company may not be able to determine absolutely both the character of the service and the price of gas. Properly a gas supply should be operated as a monopoly, for the reason that each additional competitor in the field means an added burden to be borne by the consumers. Gas cannot be peddled from a wagon like groceries, neither can a merchant lay in a stock, sell it out and go out of business without suffering loss. The first step in starting business is the permanent investment of a large amount of money in sinking wells, or establishing plants, and in laying mains. On every dollar so invested the patrons of the company must pay interest and must also provide a depreciation fund sufficient to maintain and replace the plant. If therefore, such enterprises were operated solely on the basis of earning reasonable dividends on the investment, the interests of the consumer would be served, best by having only one gas plant. Each additional plant means an added investment on which the consumer must pay interest, dividends and depreciation.

When, however, it is not practicable to create a monopoly on the basis of supplying service at the cheapest practicable price, the alternative is to secure competition enough to regulate the prices without burdening the consumer with the charges on unnecessary plant and equipment. In such circumstances it is usually found that the patrons fare better by paying dividends on two competing plants than by paying the extortionate charges of one company enjoying and abusing the privileges of a monopoly. Edmonton is not in a position to undertake the supply of gas as a municipal monopoly. There remains, therefore only the course of securing enough competition to guarantee good service and reasonable prices without loading down the consumer with charges on unnecessary plant and equipment. This can be done only by granting a natural gas franchise to a company which has natural gas to supply.

This, of course, without prejudice to the company now applying for the franchise. The enterprise of that company is in every way commendable, the success they have met gives splendid promise of their future operations, but neither to them nor any other company should the natural gas franchise be given except on condition that they deliver the goods.

THE WINNIPEG SHOOTING.

The shooting of an alleged thief by a Winnipeg dectective from whom he was fleeing is a regrettable circumstance and worthy attention. The cause of his shooting was not the reason for which his arrest was sought. He was shot not for stealing nor because he was accused of stealing, but for fleeing when the officer called on him to stand. Legally, therefore, the officer may have been justified.

But back of this lies the fact that his arrest was sought on a charge of petty theft only and that he was legally innocent of this, having been neither proven guilty nor arraigned on the charge. Whether or not he was really guilty does not affect the fact that the first cause of his death was a charge of a comparatively trifling character. That the charge was petty increased his folly in risking his life to escape, but it also lessened the moral justification of the officer in shooting at him. If he was guilty his offence deserved no such punishment; if he was not guilty and simply obeyed a foolish impulse to flee from the officer his folly was not criminal. Better for society, for the law and for its officers that a hundred petty offenders should escape than that one man, guilty or innocent, should be shot down without a trial.

DEFENDING THE LAND GRAB.

The Edmonton Journal is displeased to the point of fury that the Minister of the Interior should have criticized the policy of the late Conservative Government in squandering 32,000,000 acres of western land in land grants to railways. Moved by its fury at the Minister the Journal essays the somewhat comprehensive task of defending the land grant swindle, informs the west that it would never have amounted to a row of pins but for the C. P. R. and castigates those impudent Liberals who have dared question the ineffable wisdom of turning the West gagged and bound over to the tender mercies of railway monopoly.

That our Opposition friends should suffer spasms whenever allusion is made to the land grant swindle is entirely natural. They can neither deny it nor evade it. All that remains is to defend it and malign those who call attention to it. For years they have prayed that the public would forget it, but a robbery of those dimensions is not easily forgotten. The public will not forget. The spectre of the land grant policy hovered about the ruins of 1896, has perched on the party grave ever since and persists in bobbing up inconsiderately at the most inconvenient junctures. It is conspicuous enough, Heaven knows without any one calling attention to its presence. No wonder the Opposition grow wrathy when some Liberal points to the shade!

Its reappearance at this time was more than usually appropriate and more than usually inconvenient for our Opposition friends. Mr. Borden has been touring the West speaking in halls decorated with the mottoes designed to recall the glory of by-gone days. His speeches have been so freely interspersed with allusions to Sir Jorn Macdonald that a stranger would conclude the chieftain gone was still on deck. What more appropriate therefore than that the question which more than any other continues the memory of Sir John in the public mind should be interjected into the political arena at this moment? But also what more inconvenient for the Opposition, for it is as true as unfortunate that the enterprise which embalms Sir John's memory also perpetuates the memory of one of his greatest mistakes. What wonder therefore that the Minister who suggested this shining example of the traditions to which Mr. Borden appealed should be assailed in bitterness by the followers of Mr. Borden?

A defence of the land grant policy cannot be other than weak and the present apology appears to combine the weaknesses of previous efforts with the omission of their stronger points. No one today questions what the C. P. R. has done for Canada, but neither does any candid minded man deny that the C.P.R. has "done" Canada to a still greater extent, with the open consent and secret connivance of the party now in opposition. Liberals today are not concerned in defending those members of their own party who thirty years ago failed to appreciate the greatness of the West but they are justified in saying that had the Government of that day done its duty by the West there would have been no occasion for lack of information or appreciation on the part of any member of Parliament concerning this country. Neither are the Liberals of today called on to justify the failure of their predecessors to recognize the enormity of the wrong that was being inflicted on the West by turning over one-half its best land to railway corporations and by debarring the people of the West for twenty years from all possiblity of railway competition; but they are justified in pointing out that the first transcontinental railway was begun not by the Conservative Government but by the Government of Hon. Alexander Mackenzie; that the road begun by them was to be constructed, and several hundred miles of it were constructed, by the Dominion of Canada as a public undertaking; and that this road, constructed absolutely by the money of the people of Canada, was turned over to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company by the Government which brought it into power and to which it returned the compliment on several subsequent occasions. That Western Canada it was singularly slow advanced today if the C. P. R. had not been built at the exact time it was built is a matter of opinion and there are by no means badly-informed residents of this country who believe it would have been quite as far advanced today if the construction of that road had been delayed for ten years. Certainly if the C. P. R. made Western Canada it was sigularly slow in getting the process under way, for it had been in operation more than ten years before the real making of the West showed any signs of beginning, and then only when the era of railway monopoly was doomed and the advent of railway competition became a certainty under the energetic policy of the present Government.

There is more than hostility toward Mr. Oliver in this defence of the land grab policy and this eulogy of the C. P. R. There is also the testimony that the followers of the successor of Sir John stand still in living alliance with the corporation which Sir John permitted to loot the public domain. To the well-informed people of the West the testimony was unnecessary but it is proffered voluntarily and will be accepted as a word of defence in the hour of need for the ally on whom the opponents of the Government have relied and rely today for political success.

DEAR GOODS AND CHEAP LABOR

Oriental labor is the one commodity that the Canadian Manufacturers' Association want imported into Canada free of duty.

The annual meeting held in Montreal last week was characterized by a demand that foreign manufacturers of all kinds be debarred from this country and by another demand that Asiatic laborers be admitted without let or hindrance.

This from the organization that has presumed to teach loyalty to the Canadian farmer and urged him to vote for protection unless he wished to see Canadian factories closed, Canadian workingmen idle and Canadian women and children in misery and want.

These dual announcements write down the ideals and objects of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association in characters that cannot be obscured by professions of loyalty to Canadian interests, or appeals to the patriotism of Canadian citizens. An organization that demands first that the Canadian consumer be prevented buying foreign goods and second that the Canadian workingman be brought into competition with the cheapest labor in the world, will be excused from reading lectures on commercial patriotism to the consumers and workers of Canada.

The standing defence which the apologists for high protection offer for taxing the people of the country for the benefit of the manufacturers is that the manufacturers out of their increased earnings would pay higher wages to the men who worked in their factories and thus provide a better home market for the produce of the Canadian farms.

The only purpose the Canadian Manufacturers can have in desiring the free importation of Asiatic laborers is to bring that labor into competition with the Canadian workingman to the end that the Canadian workingman may be forced to work for less wages. It should not be difficult for the Canadian Workingman to see where he would get off if the party which represents the views of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association succeeded to power in Canada.

The Canadian Manufacturers' Association is an organization which attends strictly to the business of its members. When subjects of general or public import receive attention in its conventions the standpoint from which they are discussed is the standpoint of the manufacturer and the conclusion reached is the conclusion that appears most likely to advance the interests of the manufacturer, against all others. When therefore the Canadian Manufacturers' Association resolve that Asiatic labor should be introduced freely into Canada they mean simply that the manufacturer sees an opportunity to profit by the introduction of that labor. And he could profit by the introduction of that labor only by engaging that labor to displace workers who demand higher pay.

If the Manufacturers' Association were a debating club whose purpose were limited to the cultivation of the oratorical and mental powers of its members it would be entirely in order in coming to this or any other conclusion to which the trend of academic debate might lead. The Association is nothing of the kind. Its members are inspired not by any desire to move men along a line of supposed progress, but by the laudable but more common desire to move money along the avenue that leads to their own private domains. Carnegie and not Demosthenes is their patron saint, and from the resolution of last week they are quite prepared to adopt the methods of Mr. Carnegie to accomplish his results.

Those who have dared to question the wisdom of high protection doctrine and ventured to express a preference for a low tariff or for free trade have been ridiculed and belittled by the high protectionists as the advocates of low wages. Low tariff, we have been told, and told at each succeeding election campaign, means low prices and low prices mean low wages. With equal unction are we periodically assured that if the manufacturers were given the chance to make larger profits, they from the plenitude of their wealth and the goodness of their hearts would pay higher wages to their employees, these would thus be enabled to pay the farmer more for his produce, and so by the simple process of taxing ourselves high enough we should make ourselves all rich and happy.

The Manufacturers' Association rise now to confute the favorite doctrine of their political allies. They demand not only high tariff but cheap labor—the highest kind of tariff and the cheapest kind of labor. They want not only a tariff that will exclude all foreign made goods but a policy that will admit all foreign makers of goods, and all foreigners who might become the makers of goods. To the consumers of goods they would deny the possibility of importation; but to themselves as the "consumers" of labor they demand the freest kind of free trade.

This demand of the manufacturers is no innovation—it is merely a confession of what is on the other side of the high protection banner. High protection as we have it preached in Canada means the commercial slavery of the consumer to the proprietor of the factory; on the word of the manufacturers themselves the other motto in the banner is the slavery of the workingman to the proprietor of the factory. The ideal then is a condition of affairs in which the manufacturer would be monarch of all he surveyed and the remainder of the populace would live on such wages and in such fashion as his bounty might decree or his indulgence permit.

Why or how should it be otherwise if the high protection principle is sound? If the manufacturer is to dominate all the people in the country why not a particular section of the people who are employed in his factory? If he may display his sovereignty by taxing all classes in one way why not by taxing one class in another way? If he may decide how many articles the people of the country shall buy and what they shall pay for them, why not as well the conditions under which those articles shall be produced, what class of labor shall be employed in producing them and what wages shall be paid for their production? If the manufacturer should be made the absolute monarch of our commercial realm on what ground could his power be limited in one direction?

That the manufacturer does not intend to be limited in any direction he has made clear in the dual resolutions calling for the exclusion of all foreign manufactures and the wholesale admission of the cheapest known labor. These are the terms on which he would be King. If the consumer and the workingman fancy the terms they should proceed to his coronation.

THE PEOPLE'S PARTY.

A convention of Alberta Liberals will be held in Calgary on Wednesday next which promises to be one of the most important political gatherings ever held in the Province. Ten delegates are expected to be present from each provincial electoral district and all Liberals who desire to attend will be welcomed and entitled to every privilege save that of voting on a division. The attendance is likely to be large therefore and thoroughly representative of all interests and sections of Alberta. The convention should be both well attended and well worth attending.

The purpose of the convention is to arrange a basis for holding nominating conventions in the various Federal constituencies. Under the act passed at last session of Parliament Alberta becomes entitled to seven members of Parliament in place of four, as at present. This necessitated a re-arrangement of constituencies and one purpose of the present convention is to appoint a convenor in each new Federal district whose business it will be to call a convention of Liberals in his constituency to select a candidate for election.

By this means the Liberal voters in the various constituencies are assured the fullest opportunity of selecting their own candidates and it will be difficult for aspirants not generally acceptable to those voters to get themselves in the field under the pretence of being Liberal nominees. The delegates to the present convention have been selected at meetings of the Liberals of the various constituencies. These delegates in turn will choose convenors who alone will be entitled to call nominating conventions. Any convention for the selection of a candidate not called by such convenors will not have the authority of the Liberals of the riding; while conventions called by the convenors will have the authority of the voters of the constituency and the nominees of such conventions will be the Liberal candidates.

This is as it should be. Liberalism is of the people and for the people. It originated as a movement among the people and of the people for the overthrow of abuses from which the people suffered. The genius of Liberalism is the spirit of democracy. The Liberal party has triumphed in the past because it has been the political agency of the people against the classes and has represented the interests of the people against the interests of all others. So it stands today. It depends for success upon the faithfulness with which it reflects the judgment of the people, and aside from the betterment of public conditions has and can have no business in life. The Liberal party is the people's party. The people created it and have sustained it; to the people it acknowledges sovereignty and upon them it relies for power to make war on their enemies.

LET US HAVE A MARKET.

Several prominent business men, including two city aldermen, expressed themselves yesterday in favor of converting the market site into a market place. There can be little doubt that the ratepayers generally are of like mind and the city council would be consulting the public interests by taking up this work at an early date and pushing it to completion.

While for the present an open market would be an improvement the erection of a buildinig is necessary to make it useful in cold weather. That the entire buildinig could be completed this fall is doubtful but a very considerable portion could be completed—enough to enable the citizens to receive very material benefit. If the building is planned as it should be planned—to permit extension whenever necessary, the erection of half or quarter the proposed structure this fall would in no way increase the entire cost while it would confer a decided benefit on the citizens during the produce purchasing season.

At present the market sit represents an investment of capital from which the citizens are not receiving the service for which they made the investment. This is a parallel case to a private firm purchasing a factory site but not erecting the factory. In either event the investment may be a good one but the ground is not being used for the purpose for which it was bought. In neglecting to provide the necessary buildings and establish a market the city in the past has been simply ignoring the fact that the ratepayers have in part paid for something they have not received. The best amend that can be made is to neglect the matter no longer.

The council need have no fears that the ratepayers would refuse to provide the means for completing the expenditure necessary. The need of the market is felt at present as probably never before. If the ratepayers were willing to provide the site when the need was far less apparent, they certainly would not now refuse to sanction the erection of the building and the necessary improvements. The more so that markets are usually self-sustaining enterprises and that there is every reason to believe the fees from the Edmonton market would defray all the running expenses and the charges on the investment. By all means establish the market and convert the vacant site into its proper and intended use.

ON THE SIDE.

Dr. Beattie Nesbitt may aspire to become the Bourassa of Ontario.

Hon. Robert Rogers thinks the banks should be more free with their money. The Union Trust Co. was more after his liking.

The city council proposes to make the market site a market place. They will earn the approval of the citizens in doing so and the sooner the good work is done the heartier the approval.

With one-twelfth the population Canada sells Britain one-ninth as much goods as the United States. And yet there are those who argue that we should model our tariff after that of the United States in order to increase our trade with Britain.

A man named Root announces that he will support the Conservative cause because he wants reciprocity and opposes the C. P. R.. He is poorly rooted in the cardinal doctrines of the party of his choice.

The Toronton News asks very pointedly, "Is Dr. Beattie Nesbitt a civil "servant?"

The Manitoba Government is threatening to take actio nagainst the alleged lumber combine. Still following Alberta.

Now we are to have theatres on the ocean liners. "Travelling companies" alone will be allowed to perform.

President Roosevelt believes that "when war has broken out it is too late to do anything"—except fight.

If the smiling persuasiveness of Hon. Rudolphe Lemieux cannot persuade the similing Jap that it is his patriotic duty to stay at home, no one else need waste time on the job.

"With a roar like that of a cannon "a big meteor fell in the mountains "back of Elizabethville" and scared the people of this Pennsylvania town nearly out of their wits. Perhaps it was only Teddy hitting the war trail.

Lumber production in the Kootenay has fallen off. So has lumber consumption on the prairies. The demand determines the supply all right but what the public would like proven is that it also determines the price of the supply.

CONVENIENT.

(Cranbrook, B.C., Herald.)

It is said that Mr. Borden's platform is like a sectional bookcase inasmuch as it can be rearranged to suit varying conditions.

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LEASE EXPIRING

IMMENSE BARGAINS

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