

The Standard



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SAINT JOHN, WEDNESDAY MORNING, FEB. 1, 1911

SHOULD A MINISTER OF THE CROWN ACCEPT GIFTS?

The announcement a year ago that the Finance Minister of Canada had accepted a secret gift of \$120,000 from political friends, and that the presentation of the same was sealed and graced by the presence and approval of the Premier of Canada, constituted a bold challenge to British standards and enlightened public sentiment in Canada which passed with all too little notice. True it was not the first time in the history of the Dominion that testimonials of money or value have been made to public men, even to men in office. But none had been made under the circumstances that surrounded this latest example. In the case of Sir John A. Macdonald long ago, when he was shorn of power and prostrated with illness, a provision was made by his friends for the support of his family. To Sir Hector Langevin a silver service and testimonial of considerable value were given when he was a minister in office, to Mr. Costigan, also a minister, a house in Ottawa was donated, and Mr. Ross, of Ontario, after he had passed from active ministerial service, received a money testimonial from his friends. These instances practically exhaust the list of known gifts to Canadian statesmen, and the list is gratifyingly small.

In 1891 a right-about-face was made. The old path was abandoned and a new one was brushed out. The presentation in 1890 to Sir Hector Langevin brought the question into prominence, and provoked an animated and wide discussion in the country and in Parliament. It was none too soon that this took place. The sympathy and circumstances surrounding the making of the testimonial to Sir John disposed men's minds to a lenient and charitable view. But Sir Hector was in office, and in health, and his opponents were not disposed to be either lenient or charitable. They challenged both the principle and the particular act. On May 13th, 1891, Sir Richard Cartwright moved the following resolution:—"That the acceptance of gifts or testimonials of any kind on the part of ministers of the Crown or of any members of their families from contractors, Government officials, or other persons having pecuniary relations with the Government is entirely opposed to sound principles of administration, and is calculated to bring Parliamentary government into contempt; and that the example thus given tends to corrupt and demoralize the officials serving under ministers who have accepted or permitted the acceptance of gifts or testimonials as aforesaid."

Many reasons were urged by him in support of the resolution but this one extract from his speech on that occasion must suffice for quotation:—"Ministers should not take gifts. Surely if there is any one maxim in political ethics better established than another, if there is any one thing that ought to commend itself to every honest man of every party, it is that under no circumstances should a Minister of State permit himself to accept gifts, either directly or indirectly, while he continues in office. Least of all should he accept them from public servants or from men employed in carrying out contracts of any kind. If a man's political supporters do really desire to testify their admiration by making him a gift of money, let them wait till he is out of office, and then subscribe to their hearts' content." Considerations of great force were brought forward by Sir Richard. Gifts to a minister, he said, were far worse than those to a judge because judges act in full public light, with a vigilant bar, and the possibility of appeal, and review, whilst the minister acts alone or in camera with his colleagues. To say that he does not know, and to refuse to know the donors is to raise a presumption of guilt, for it is his duty to know to the last dollar and the last person. It is impossible to allow a minister to take gifts without demoralizing to a very high degree the whole service over which he presides. And much more to the same purpose.

Mr. Wilfrid Laurier was equally pronounced and far more partisan. He attacked Sir Hector with bitter ferocity. He hailed the resolution as an epoch making one, and congratulated Sir Richard on his effort to establish purity and righteousness. He scouted the idea that ignorance exculpated from blame and that Sir Hector did not know the donors, and said:—"If he did not know it was because he chose to remain ignorant of the names on the list, and if he chose to be ignorant of the names on the list it is not because his moral sense told him that he might there find names of persons giving contributions which should not be accepted at all?" Sir John Thompson, then Premier, agreed on behalf of the Government and the Liberal-Conservative party to the principle of the resolution, whilst pointing out the difference in the circumstances surrounding the gift to Sir John, and vigorously combatting the partisan attack made by Mr. Laurier upon Sir Hector. Though the resolution was moved as an amendment to the motion of Mr. Foster to go into supply he declined to treat it as a motion of want of confidence, and it was passed unanimously.

This marked the opinion of the House of Commons, of both parties therein, and of the country in 1891. Whatever the past, it was decided that for the future there was to be no gift-taking by ministers of the Crown. So we all thought. The country gladly concurred in that judgment, and hailed it with delight as a wholesome and safe principle for future guidance. And yet what do we find? Nineteen years afterwards, under the sanction of Sir Wilfrid and Sir Richard, and presumably of the party leaders as a whole, a gift of \$120,000, not one of

whose donors names is given to the public, is engineered, auctioned by authority, subscribed, and finally presented to a minister of the Crown in a full blaze of lights, and with the full chorus of party approval. The old agrant wrong has strangely enough become right—the principle fought for so splendidly, and acclaimed so heartily in 1891 was reversed, and henceforth the doctrine of secret gift-taking by ministers in office, revived from the evil practice of the 17th century, is to be ennobled in our new twentieth century Canadian political system.

Was this a desirable departure? Should it pass without challenge by all the new and renewed forces that are now making for better methods and purer politics? Surely not, and for the best of reasons. From the earliest times and in the best developed civilizations a councillor open to gifts has been viewed with suspicion, tolerated with unwillingness, and dispensed with as soon as possible. Those countries and those times in which gift-taking councillors have flourished, have been notorious for corrupt government, gross injustice, and decadent public morals. Everywhere and always the contention of the best has been that gifts to office holders tend to blind the eye and deaden the conscience, to destroy self-respect, and breed injustice and corruption. It is not too much to say that the whole world contending for good government has been fought along the line of separating and cleansing judicial and executive functions from the corrupting influences of gift-making and gift taking. The great battle which is still on in municipalities and legislatures is but a crusade against gift-taking officers, and aldermen, and legislators, and, happily but few instances, gift-taking judges. What a patronage—that curse of Canadian politics—what an intricate and widely disseminated system of gift-taking and gift-making? And party patronage is the last great stronghold of public corruption and extravagance in this or any country.

Let us stop a moment to consider the effect which his blazing apotheosis of gift making in the case of the Finance Minister will have on public morals, and which is justified by the plea that Mr. Fielding is poor and honest. If today it were announced that the collector of the port of Montreal or Toronto, had been presented with a large money gift by business men of these cities—all secretly subscribed—public opinion would speedily turn and rend both the collector and the government that allowed it. Why not a collector as well as a Finance Minister? Shall a collector not be allowed to have friends, and are collectors all millionaires, or dishonest? Or if it came out that a chief justice in Canada had been made the recipient of a \$100,000, secretly subscribed by men who had had, or who some day might have very important suits before him for decision, what would public opinion say? But why not a judge if the Finance Minister? Are not some judges poor and honest? What high officer could stand for a moment with self-respect, dignity, and effectiveness if he took gifts? To mention it is to give the answer.

But a minister is only a high official, and is one of the many servants of the country—whose service is under contract—whose trust is involved in that service, who has but one master—the state—and should have but one paymaster. "No man can serve two masters." The State may often be a hard master and sometimes a niggardly paymaster, but all the same the true servant looks for pecuniary reward to none other. If there is any difference in the application of the rigorous rule that denies gift-taking to officials, it is graduated by the scope of, and discrimination in, the service. This consideration particularly distinguishes the position held by a minister of the Crown, and differentiate him from the petty and even the higher official. What is forbidden to both might be forgiven in the case of the routine official, whose duties are prescribed and narrow, and without much discretion in action, but must be rigidly insisted upon in the case of one who has large discretion, has power to vary and remit, who often both fixes and exacts the conditions, and whose latitude of patronage or power is wide.

Among ministers of the Crown the last one to whom gift-taking should be permitted is the Minister of Finance, who in our economy is the great disposer and dispenser. He it is who is the creator and supervisor of the franchises and privileges of the banks, and who is by day and night in close dealings therewith. Their powers, their note issues, the government deposits therein, the loan and brokerage contracts and agreements in connection with our immense borrowings and repayments are all within the word of his mouth and the signature of his pen. In these the variation of 1/2 of one per cent. may mean long fortunes for some individuals or corporations, and long burdens for the taxpayers. On the Finance Minister's decision rests in the main the complicated schedules of rates and charges in customs and excise, which in gain or exaction every individual in Canada is affected, and in the fixing of which individual or corporation wealth is intimately concerned.

He it is to whom in the last analysis every seeker after helpful expenditures, or gain making expenditures from the public money has to come cap in hand or on bonded knee, and make such, in person or by proxy, from the \$200,000,000 G. T. P. Corporation to the Merwins, and Pearsons, and Lodges, the dredgers, and the sellers of sawdust wharves. In the complex machinery of the Treasury Board, which reviews and often upsets the rulings of the Auditor General and judges between his decisions and the claims of the contractor, the Finance Minister is the king lynch-pin. As to what railway subsidies and steamship subventions shall be granted, as to what bonds of railway corporations shall be guaranteed, he is the man chiefly to be consulted, and his word goes. No minister, not even the Premier, has so wide powers and is so influential in decision. If by any laxity of sentiment any minister of the Crown could be permitted to take gifts on the ground of minor interests being affected, that minister should not assuredly be the Finance Minister. Mr. Fielding was badly advised when he suffered his friends to blind him to that sterling sense of trust and duty which forbids the statesman to soil his fingers with gifts. He would be well advised today, and do a splendid service to his reputation, his self-respect, and his country, were he to send back every dollar of the gift to its original donors.

Current Comment

(Kingston Standard.)

It is said that the Ontario Medical Council may be abolished, the universities being quite capable of conducting examinations and granting degrees. It might not be a bad move to end the powers of the Law Society also in regard to law examinations; in fact the Law Society of Upper Canada could very well go out of existence without loss to the province.

(Winnipeg Free Press.)

The story from Ottawa of the loss by the Government of \$100,000 through the failure of the Quebec Bridge Co. to take the necessary steps to collect that amount from a United States Guarantee Company, after the collapse of the structure, suggests that somebody should be incarcerated either in a lunatic asylum or the penitentiary. The latter preferably.

GREATEST CURE FOR RHEUMATISM IS "FRUIT-A-TIVES"

"I Honestly Believe It," Says Mr. Mills.

Knowlton, P. Q., Oct. 12th, 1909.
For many years I suffered from severe Rheumatism and the attacks were very distressing and prevented me from doing my ordinary work. I tried many remedies and physicians' treatments, but nothing seemed to do me much good, and I was becoming very anxious for fear I would become a permanent cripple from Rheumatism.

I tried "Fruit-a-tives" and this medicine has entirely cured me, and I honestly believe that "Fruit-a-tives" is the greatest Rheumatism Cure in the world.
E. E. MILLS, Asst. P. M., Knowlton, Que.
"Fruit-a-tives" not only strengthens and heals the kidneys—but also regulates the bowels, improves the action of the skin—and thus keeps the blood pure and rich and free from uric acid which causes Rheumatism. "Fruit-a-tives"—the great fruit medicine—is sold by all dealers at 50c. a box, 6 for \$2.50; trial size, 25c; or sent on receipt of price by Fruit-a-tives, Limited, Ottawa.

DEMAND START ON GEORGIAN BAY CANAL

One Hundred Boards of Trade and Municipalities Endorse Project—Mayor Frink Sends Reply to Message.

Ottawa, Ont., Jan. 31.—Memorials and resolutions from over one hundred and fifty boards of trade and municipalities in Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan, urging on the government an early start on the Georgian Bay ship canal project, will be considered at a meeting of the Canadian Federation of boards of trade to be held here tomorrow afternoon.

The announcement that the government is including in its estimates the sum of \$3,000,000 for a commencement of the work, will also be discussed. Among the towns that have forwarded resolutions are—Edmonton, Calgary, St. Boniface, Brandon, Port William, Port Arthur, Parry Sound, Sault Ste. Marie, Warton, Meaford, North Bay and Sudbury. A further deputation will likely wait on the government after the meeting.

In connection with the project His Worship the Mayor yesterday received a telegram from A. J. Forward, Ottawa, as follows:—

Ottawa, Jan. 31.
The Mayor, St. John:
Canadian Federation Board of Trade and Municipalities memorializing the government Wednesday, favoring immediate commencement of Georgian Bay Canal. Would appreciate expression from you by wire.

ARTHUR J. FORWARD, Secretary.

To this His Worship replied as follows:—
St. John, N. B., Jan. 31.

Arthur J. Forward, Esq., Secretary, Canadian Federation Board of Trade and Municipalities memorializing the government Wednesday, favoring immediate commencement of Georgian Bay Canal. Would appreciate expression from you by wire.

JAMES H. FRINK, Mayor.

\$75,000,000 FOR HARRIMAN LINES

New York, Jan. 31.—The executive committee of the Union Pacific and Southern Pacific lines today voted to continue the plan of tracking of the lines from the Missouri River to San Francisco. They also voted to double track the Oregon short line from the junction with the Union Pacific main line at Granger, Wyoming, to Huntington, Oregon; also the line along Columbia River in Oregon to Portland, a total of 1,873 miles.

CANADIAN NEWS NOTES.

By direct private wires to J. C. Mackintosh & Co.

Montreal, Jan. 31.—A sensational 11 point spurt in Laurentide to 211 was a feature today. When the stock began to subside everybody had the idea that the directors had decided upon the rumored plan to double the capital and pay 6 per cent. but upon investigation it was found that nothing had been done in this direction and that the buying had evidently come from some people who were pretty anxious to acquire stock. Laurentide has recently gone up about 50 points and surprisingly few investors have been tempted to sell their shares.

HOTELS.

Victoria.
James Buchanan, Truro; R. McKenzie, McAdam; J. T. Timmers, Montreal; J. Brichall, McAdam; J. Craig Woodstock; James Steele, Port Elgin; George J. Green, McAdam; T. H. Phillips, Halifax; A. McLean, Point de Cheny; Mrs. A. Clarke, Toronto; C. J. Macphie, Halifax; Fred R. Davis, Montreal; S. S. Wetmore, Rothesay; J. A. Stafford, H. Boyne, Lepreau; J. K. Fleming and wife, Hartland; W. A. Melanson, Shediac.
Dufferin.
A. E. Marquette, Halifax; E. L. Day.

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WHOLESALE LIQUORS.

W. L. WILLIAMS, Successor to J. A. Finn, Wholesale and Retail Wine and Spirit Merchant 110 and 112 Prince William St. Established 1876. Write for family price list.

Notice

All accounts due The New Star for advertising or subscription, must be paid once as the books are being closed

Moncton: E. R. Jones, Toronto; A. M. Hathaway, Boston; E. L. J. Stephens, Liverpool; H. Wallace, Sussex; Miss Marion Brown, Sussex; W. C. Elliott, Sussex; Miss Nellie Coggon, Sussex; C. E. McNeil, Miss Margaret Emman, J. D. Frier, Sussex; R. G. DeCue, Hamilton.

Royal.
F. C. Smythe, Halifax; L. P. Farris, A. McBeth, White's Cove; W. L. MacDonald, Boston; G. W. Ganong, St. Stephen; S. W. Smith, S. Landry, Montreal; H. W. Frink, Rothesay; G. G. Wier, Robt. Hersch, Montreal; Wm. Alston, Philadelphia; J. A. Morrison and wife, Fredericton; David Foster, D. K. Folsom, Va.; L. H. Bliss, Mary's Ferry; W. J. Kely, N. Y.; E. J. Sealy, E. P. Baker, Halifax; J. E. Giles, Fredericton.

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Funeral from St

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FERGUSON—In

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Funeral from

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Mary Helen, 1

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