

The St. John Standard

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COMMISSION GOVERNMENT OUTGROWN.

Time and circumstances have clipped the wings of the arguments by which St. John in a spasm of uplift was induced to try the experiment of commission form of government. That nobody now defends commission form of government may be unfortunate, but the citizens may perhaps afford to be charitable and to assume that the men who have tried to operate the system have themselves been the victims of time and circumstances. There is still the consolation that the not over-acute politicians who met in an office of Prince William street and prepared the way for the commission movement did not succeed in their ulterior motive, and the political complexion of the city has not in the interim suffered greatly, though it may have become a trifle freckled.

The argument-in-chief of the promoters of this Yankee invention was that a business man could not be expected to devote any of his valuable time and attention to the affairs of his city without being well paid for his labors. This notion was not unnatural, for in the cities it came from the men who gave their time to civic affairs had long been in the habit of plundering their city, but it was not indigenous to St. John, for whatever else may have been said of the old aldermen they were not accused of being adepts in the gentle art of graft. But the notion that was the natural offspring of conditions in American cities which had tried the heretic remedy of commission form of government prevailed with the majority of the citizens of St. John, and it was seriously argued that a salary of \$3,000 would attract a succession of able business men into the service of the city. St. John in those days had modest notions of salaries, rents and taxes. But whatever force there was in that argument at the time has been overthrown by the development of conditions which even the wondrous commission form of government would work in the land did not contemplate. Today \$3,000 is not a salary calculated to have any great attraction for an enterprising business man.

So it is evidently proper to overhaul the situation in which we find ourselves. If we are satisfied with the commission form of government which it is based to its logical projection, and increase the salaries of the commissioners at least 100 per cent, or at any rate in accordance with the increase in the city assessment. If not satisfied with the commission experiment, we might consider whether it is not worth while to hark back to the old British idea, the idea that the greater the stake a man has in the community, the greater the obligation that rests upon him to give good service to the community. Though we saw fit to throw that idea overboard for a time there is nothing illogical about it, for if a man has big interests in a community the progress of the community contributes to his prosperity, and an enlightened selfishness should impel him to take an active interest in the affairs of his community. At the same time such men cannot be expected to devote all their time and attention to public affairs.

Unfortunately if we accept the British ideal, which is also a tradition, commission government becomes a stumbling block. For under it the men elected to City Hall are supposed to have no other occupation. There is a shrewd suspicion that all the commissioners who have appeared at City Hall have not wholly neglected their private affairs while serving the city. But the Commission Act expressly stipulates that the commissioners shall not serve two masters, and at the present time when there is such a hullabaloo on Canterbury street about the necessity of a hard and fast interpretation of a Commission Act, it would not do for any man to offer himself for election as a commissioner. If he had some notion of keeping a weather eye on his business while serving at City Hall. This aspect of the situation deserves consideration. If the city is to return to the British idea of government and secure for its service the kind of men it wants, something should be done about this stipulation respecting the abandonment of private business. Evidently the commission form of government will continue with us another year, and men elected as city commissioners should not be allowed or expected to violate the city charter, even though some of its provisions have become ridiculous. If the whole system cannot be changed it would be a simple matter to have an act put through the Legislature this session abrogating the section requiring city commissioners to devote all their time and attention to city affairs.

THE GREAT PROFITEERS.

There is a loud, loud wail all over Canada because Uncle Sam is squeezing the Canadian dollars. Uncle Sam

is the profiteer in exchange par excellence; he calls the tune and the nation dance and pay the piper.

So in Canada there is much railing against Uncle Sam, and a lot of brave statements and inspired leaders, financial and otherwise, are telling us to purchase in Canada everything we need; though most of us don't need to be told not to buy high-priced automobiles from the United States. But there is a great deal of complacency in this country with respect to Canada's profiteering in exchange. Canada is squeezing the British pound, the French franc, the Italian lire, etc., with considerable energy. Our anger with Uncle Sam is a bit incongruous, while we blithely gouge the Mother Country—perhaps to show our gratitude to her for the huge disbursements in this country during the war, which helped to fill our galaxy of profiteers with so many new millionaires. Save for Mr. Macaulay, of the Sun Life, hardly a voice of importance has been raised in Canada to deplore the fact that this country is profiteering in exchange at the expense of the over-burdened Mother Country or devastated France. Canada may be chained to the chariot wheels of American finance, and be unable to help herself. And so long as business is business it is no doubt proper enough to take advantage of our favored position in regard to European exchange. But business is business is the road Rome followed to destruction. And the business is business policy brought Germany tumbling down from her proud estate.

Great Britain, France, Italy, bought things absolutely essential to their existence during the war from the United States, and also from Canada. They bought on credit on longer terms than is customary, it is true, but the price fixed was a profitable one to the sellers. Now the money trust has possession of the bills, and it is evidently not above sharp practice. The American money trust now wants about £15 for every £10 worth of goods Great Britain bought in the States during the war, and 20 odd francs for every 10 francs' worth of goods France bought in the States. The American manufacturer, farmer, worker will receive little of the difference. Secretary Daniels stated the other day that the tragedy of the situation was that while the United States had failed Europe, the people of Europe believed that the people of the United States were ready and willing to do their duty to the distressed world. In one sense the American people are not to blame because the American money trust is taking its pound of flesh. They have little international understanding. American manufacturers and merchants have paid little attention to exchange, because before the war fluctuations were infrequent and small. And for the American manufacturer a \$3.50 rate on the sovereign is a great disadvantage; it means loss of markets, cancellation of orders or their reduction to a minimum. The American money trust may benefit by this exploitation of Europe, but not the American people.

However, Uncle Sam is not the only sinner. Canada exploits Britain, Britain exploits France and Italy, and they in turn exploit Germany. If the burden could be shouldered on Germany, there would be poetic justice in the situation. But this domination of finance over industry and commerce, and the vicious profiteering to which it has given rise, is having a disastrous effect on the international trade of all countries. If the money trusts were permitted to utterly destroy the international confidence upon which world trade rests, they will bring down the whole fabric of credit and public confidence in which all business moves and has its being; and the existing civilization will give place to Bolshevism. Money has ceased to be the measure of values; it has become the master of values. The new imperialism of money must be fought. The best interests of all the nations demand a speedy stabilization of exchange, and the political power must be evoked to effect this. The London Express suggests as a remedy that the Finance Ministers of the debtor nations should get together and issue an intimation to the American money trust in the following sense: "Having bought from Uncle Sam supplies necessary to enable us to save the world for freedom and democracy at a price very satisfactory to Uncle Sam's producers, we do not propose to be now held up by a money trust and compelled to pay greatly increased prices for the same things. We are for the moment exhausted with fighting the world's battles, Uncle Sam's included; but we are prepared to work and pay the debts incurred in making the world safe for democracy. We will pay a fair, fixed price for the goods we have bought, but we will not pay tribute to the money trust." Such an ultimatum might bring the money trust to its senses, especially as the producers face the loss of European markets. But if the same ultimatum is issued to Canada, what then?

The fact that all the denominations which have taken part in the Forward Movement have passed their Dominion objectives may lead those cynics who have been saying that the Christian churches were a failure to revise their judgment. The churches have at any rate discovered that team work and advertising pays. Once upon a time it was an accepted maxim that competition was the life of trade, and a lot of other things, including the churches, which were often more concerned to emphasize their differences than to dwell upon their points of agreement, which were many. But times change, and now co-operation seems to be the order of the day.

A little while ago The Times was in ecstasy over the discovery that Mr. Barnhill, a director of the C. N. R., had put St. John on the map. Now The Times is in a weird state of excitement because it apparently believes that Mr. Barnhill and the other directors of the C. N. R. have forgotten that St. John is on the map, or have no notion that they need better terminal facilities here. What a wobbly world it must be from the vantage point of Canterbury street! And these boys of prohibition, too, or at any rate of the kind enforced by the economical Foster Government.

The Telegraph says we want nationalization as they have it in Halifax. In its last issue the Weekly Bulletin, published by the Canadian Department of Commerce, gives a list of sailings from the principal ports of Canada, east and west, covering a certain period. This shows twenty-two sailings from St. John, as compared with four or five from Halifax. If that is the kind of nationalization we want, it may be doubted whether the longshoremen will be enthusiastic for it, or anybody else in St. John.

The Government was accused by some Liberals of being too liberal to the Grand Trunk shareholders, but apparently said shareholders have other views on the matter, though their expression of the same is probably a bit extravagant. If the Government had let matters slide, the Grand Trunk would have gone into bankruptcy; the shareholders would have had greater cause of complaint, and some sections of the country would have been without a railway service.

St. John harbor has been in politics so long that if it was removed from the general influence of the hot air currents with which it has generally been surrounded it might take all our traffic. St. Croix might take all our traffic. And anyway it would be sad if the port was nationalized and some supporters of Uncle Sam were appointed administrators.

The Globe says that real estate in St. John must bear a larger share of taxation in the future. What does the Globe think of the categorical imperative of Kant? Can it be that in this case it considers that must is synonymous with ought to?

WHAT THEY SAY

The World's Way. (New York Outlook.) The well-known—though little understood—human race is an amusing animal. The price of food goes up

Benny's Note Book

BY LEE PAPE

Me and Puds Skinks was wawking along Broad St. last Sunday Jost wawking along, and all of a sudden Puds sed, G, goah, there she is, and look who she's wawking with, Jimminy crickits, wats you know about that. Meaning the pritty new girl that lives next door to Mary Watkins wawking ritic in front of us and who was she wawking with but Pudes sissy outin Persey. O boy, now we can get interdoosed to her, I sed. And we started to wawk fast to catch up to them, Puds saying, G wizz, wats you know about that poor simp? and me saying, Holey smooaks, the lare dool. Both meering Persey and we cawt up to them and started to wawk aloa, side of Persey as if we dident see enybody wawking with him, alreddy. Puts saying, Hello, Persey, ware you going, enyware ashell? No, sed Persey. Hello, Persey, you dident know we was in back of you, did you? I sed.

No, sed Persey. Soundin as if he dident care weather we was or not, and we kepp on wawking alongside of him waiting for him to interdoose us to the pritty new girl, wch he dident, and after a wile I gave him a small poke in the ribs with my elbo to remind him.

Hay, wats you doing, out that out, sed Persey. And he kepp on wawking without interdoopin us and pritty soon Puds reatched around me and pushed him in the same ribs with his fist.

Hay, wats you think this is, a benefit?—wats you think yours doing? sed Persey. Being much fresher than he would of dasted to be if the pritty new girl hadent of him with him, her jest keepling on wawking on the other side of him with a proud expression as if she thawt she was the only one on Broad St., and after a wile I sed Aw come on, Puds wats the use wawking with this poor simp of a dool, peple mite see us and think we are with him.

Sure, wad do we want to wawk with this poor dool of a simp for, sed Puds. Both still meering Persey, and we quick wawked faster and got ahead of them and kepp ahead of them.

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A BIT OF FUN

Mr. Sapbeddo—"Do you think men have descended from monkeys?" Miss Cautique—"Not very far."

Some Town.

"You advertise this as the best hotel in town," said the man who had stayed overnight. "It certainly is," replied the clerk. "Well, that may be a good boost for the hotel, but it's a terrible knock for the town."

Precautionary Tactics.

It was the week before little Willie's birthday, and he was on his knees at his bedside petitioning Providence for presents in a very loud voice.

"Please send me," he shouted, "a bicycle, a tool-chest, a—"
"What are you praying so loud for?" his younger brother interrupted. "God ain't deaf."
"I know he ain't," said Willie, looking toward the next room, "but grand-

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