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IS PERSONAL JOURNALISM DEAD?

THE first issue of the Toronto Evening Telegram paid. I have this fact, remarkable in the annals of newspaper birthdays, from the founder and present publisher of the paper. I have no information as to each of the thousands of issues that have gone forth from the presses during the 40 years in which the "Telegram" has been published, but it is safe to say that few, if any of them, have failed to return their quota of dollars to the strong box. The "Tely," the "real pink'un," has been a huge financial success and, more than that, it is the most influential organ of public opinion "in Toronto." The secrets of the "Telegram's" success are not secrets to the readers. The "Telegram" is a nearly-great newspaper, but this fact is often beclouded by the obtrusive, chronically dogmatic personality that lies in the editorial heart of the paper and overflow in its news pages.

In an attempt to analyze the success of the "Telegram," it is imperative never to lose sight of the "in Toronto." The "Telegram" boasts that of its 60,000 readers, all but a paltry five thousand live in Toronto. It has made a safe constituency for itself within the 21,000 acres that comprise that city. There is no need to trim sails to catch the winds from the outlying towns of the province; no fear of wearying readers in Brantford or Bobcaygeon, with the squabbles of the City Hall, the scandals of the Fire Department, or the uproarious doings of a ratepayers' association in Earls Court. No anxiety to reconcile the interests of town and country; the high cost of living may be put on greedy farmers without receiving a single "stop my paper" order. The "Telegram" concentrates its energy upon Toronto, and no village weekly more faithfully records the goings-on of its bailiwick than does the "Telegram" of the half million people who call Toronto home.

Of course, the pages of the "Telegram" are not confined to the news of Toronto; they contain all the news from the outside world that is fit for Toronto to read. As a matter of fact, few Canadian papers possess as good a news cable service, or keep their readers better informed of the movements within Uncle Sam's wide domains. But Toronto news is the first, the main, consideration, in fact, the "Telegram's" speciality.

There is a by-no-means unimportant business side to this concentrated circulation. The shop-keeper gets all but sixteen ounces to the pound when he buys advertising space in the "Telegram." There is no waste, as the advertising manager shrewdly points out to the buyer. Ninety-five copies out of a hundred reach possible customers, if you are looking for custom in Toronto. Five to a family, the usual calculation, and it is only a stray straggler who will not see your want if you express it through the "Telegram."

Why do so many people in Toronto read the "Telegram"?

As it happens, the city of Toronto is Conservative, and the "Telegram" is Conservative; between elections critically Conservative, but never Liberal. If Sir Robert or Mr. Hearst require castigation in the opinion of the "Telegram," they are promptly castigated; but the reader is invariably informed in an editorial postscript that if Borden and Hearst are bad, Laurier and Newton Wesley Rowell are worse. The "Telegram" is not an independent. While it is not always Conservative, it is never Liberal.

Toronto is ultra-Protestant, politically Protestant, and the "Telegram" editorials have the general approval of the Orange hierarchy. Church domina-

*Not while John Ross Robertson,
 Founder and Proprietor of the
 Toronto Evening Telegram
 — Lives*

By WILLIAM H. MOORE

JOHN ROSS ROBERTSON,



Who, by means of a newspaper founded by himself has become a municipal autocrat, and by virtue of his public benevolences should be honoured with a title.

Accredited Photo by courtesy the International Press.

tion is ever imminent; public school rights are constantly subject to invasion; the Pope has a watchful and greedy eye for an extension of power within Canada; at least, the "Telegram" thinks so, or says so, and is always on the job to save the day—a constant defender of the faith.

Public sentiment in Toronto is anti-corporation, and the "Telegram" makes a business of throwing balls at corporation heads. It throws them viciously, sometimes wildly, but usually with the practised hand of an adept at the game. The reporters have caught the spirit of the thing, and are not content to let the editor throw all the balls. Not many months ago the editor's attention was called to the fact that a member of the "Telegram" staff, in taking

down the statements of a street railway official before the Railway Board, had injuriously misquoted him in three out of four statements, according to the official stenographic report. A letter of complaint to the editor was a wasted effort and, if I remember correctly, did not even bring a reply. Probably such letters are of every-day occurrence!

The cause is everything; and an enemy to that which the "Telegram" believes to be right, even an unbeliever, is to be pursued and destroyed, he and his household, what odds, the means! If persistent misreporting will do the deed, well, the end will justify the means. It is not according to Marquis of Queensbury rules, but men who try to break heads with clubs have little use for rule books. When the "Telegram" ceases to turn disagreeable news upside down, prints interviews as given, and refrains from colouring reports of public meetings, then it will be more than a nearly-great newspaper, but will it still be successful? I presume that the "Telegram" will admit "the king can do no wrong," but then there is no chance of the king running foul of the "Telegram" plans, for they who do, can do no right.

Toronto has, over and over again, asserted its voice in favour of public ownership, and the "Telegram" is the first apostle of public ownership. The "other five papers" may print double-columned editorials for the cause, W. F. Maclean, M.P., may devote pages of the "World" to recording his own House of Commons speeches on the subject, yet the "Telegram" remains securely entrenched in the affections of the public ownership disciples.

Is it a series of coincidences that the "Telegram" and Toronto see so nearly eye to eye on different public questions? Or does the "Telegram" influence Toronto, or Toronto influence the "Telegram"?

Sir Adam Beck might conceivably desert the Hydro-Electric, but the "Telegram" will never desert Sir Adam Beck as long as he continues to run the Hydro-Electric to suit the "Telegram." And here we have a feature of the "Telegram" that is characteristic. It gives support to public men, it elects men to high positions, but on condition—and there is always the condition—that they travel along paths marked out by the "Telegram" and drink at the fount of its wisdom. The "Telegram" doesn't accept other people's heroes; it makes its own, and sometimes makes them out of pretty flimsy material. But what's the difference, so long as they pass for the real thing with the public "in Toronto."

The "Telegram" understands the public. Even its bitterest opponent must take off his hat to "Telegram" strategy in manipulating the crowd. All questions are reduced to matters of personality; the Toronto Street Railway becomes in its columns, simply R. J. Fleming; a loan or a bond guarantee to the Canadian Northern is charity to Bill and Dan; bilingualism is an effort of one Wilfrid Laurier to capture Quebec; the delinquencies of the War Department are so many stupidities on the part of Sam Hughes; official agriculture is "Jimmy" Duff; and so on with the various activities that cross the "Telegram's" path. There is no disguising the fact that the public like it. The man on the street has no time to read long dissertations on public questions, but he does read and understand at least the "Telegram's" viewpoint of these questions when translated into pungent personal "Telegram" editorial paragraphs.

And catchwords! The "Telegram" is a past-master

Editor's Note:—This is the third in the series—"The Personality of Our Newspapers." The first and second dealt with the Montreal Star and the Toronto Globe.