

The Standard



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SAINT JOHN, MONDAY MORNING, JAN. 23, 1911.

MORE LIGHT ON THE COMMISSION PLAN.

Having accepted without reservation the pronouncement of the Board of Trade that the plan of civic government which will meet the needs of St. John, the Times professes to be painfully surprised that the Globe and The Standard have not instantly joined in endorsing the new scheme and in hailing it as the panacea for civic ills. The Globe and Standard are pleading that the public be enlightened, "why not join in the task?" Speaking for The Standard we have some grounds for asking whether the Times is sincere in its desire that the public should be "enlightened." So far the Times has not contributed much itself in that direction; it has merely "boasted," which is not quite the same thing. To "enlighten," we gather from the dictionary, is "to shed light on;" "to give clear views to;" "to enable to see or comprehend the truth."

The Standard has already "shed light on" the absurdity of an elective controller, which was recommended by the council of the Board of Trade, and was promptly attacked by the Times for being actuated by no other desire than to kill the scheme. When it came to be more fully considered this objectionable feature was dropped. However, we will accept the Times at its word as the organ of those who favor the new system, and propose from time to time, to submit for consideration some features of the commission plan of civic government which seem to have escaped the attention of its advocates, but on which, in order to obtain a fair and impartial judgment we consider it is of vital importance the public should be enlightened.

The advantages of commission government may for the time be safely left to the care of the fathers of the movement who are its out and out supporters. If we may judge from the energy which they threw into their work and the efficient way in which they railroaded the proposal for a referendum through the Common Council, they are an able body of reformers, even if novices themselves in civic government. We say in all sincerity that, even if the commission plan should not commend itself to the electorate, the names of the Advertising Committee of the Board of Trade should be borne in mind as aggressive and patriotic citizens, some of whom might be elected to the Common Council to its distinct advantage.

Being assured that what we may call the affirmative side will be well looked after, The Standard proposes to present some features on the negative side and to point out a few of the weaknesses of the new form of government. We are not without hope that it may assist the advocates of civic reform to avoid some dangerous pitfalls, and aid them in their efforts to ameliorate present conditions. In adopting this course, it will be necessary to show some bias, but it appears to be the only method by which both sides of the case can be presented to the public. It will be time enough to weigh the issues when all the evidence is in. Until that time arrives we may all of us safely reserve a final judgment.

With regard to "the Globe and Standard pleading that the public be enlightened" the Times is hardly fair, we speak, of course, only for The Standard, when it says: "Both of those papers have access to the same sources of information from which the advocates of commission got the facts which convinced them that the plan produces excellent results wherever introduced." It must be remembered that the Advertising Committee was assiduously at work accumulating evidence for some months before embodying its recommendations in a report, and it has been naturally a matter of time to secure data to intelligently discuss the subject in detail from any standpoint.

This drawback has now been partially remedied, and it will be of interest first to consider some of the facts which are available with reference to the city of Galveston, where, according to the committee's report, the plan was first put in operation ten years ago. The reference to Galveston in the report was as follows:—"The 'commission' form of government as now understood and being put into practice is really misnamed, but when first put into operation and originated by the city of Galveston, about ten years ago, the commissioners were appointed by the State; after that they were elected by the citizens of Galveston, and it is of interest to note that with the exception of the mayor, who died in office, the same commissioners are holding office today, and that at the will of the electorate."

The Polk County Republican Club of Iowa, had presented to it in January 1907 the report of a committee appointed to look into the form of government in Galveston and other cities, and some extracts from the report presented by the chairman, Mr. W. N. Jordan, relating especially to Galveston, are worth consideration. At this time the commission form of government had been in force in Galveston for about six years.

"The Galveston plan, as I view it," says Mr. Jordan in his report, "is one of commission. It is a perpetual body. It is a potentially perfect political machine."

"There has been no change in the membership of the Galveston Commission since it was originated in 1900, except on the death of a member."

"The extensive powers of the commissioners have enabled them to control all political factions, and completely to crush the opposition. The commissioners' faction is in complete control, and its leaders dictate nomination of commissioners, members of the legislature, and congressmen."

"The farmers of Galveston County call the Galveston commissioners and grade-raising board 'a gang of thieves.'"

"The Galveston commissioners and city officials are not easily accessible to the citizens of the city, and give but a small portion of their time to the city's business."

All of them have other extensive business interests, and citizens seeking redress or assistance must run the gauntlet of the outside office, and closed door of the private business office.

"The Galveston commissioners favor the corporation. The only franchise given to a corporation by the commission is the franchise obtained by the Galveston Street Railway Company in May 1906. It was not referred to a vote of the people, and was given for a period of fifty years. The city received no compensation for this franchise, and collected no franchise taxes on it. The city receives no percentage of the gross or net receipts."

"The Galveston Municipal Government is not free from 'graft.' The prosecutor of city cases in the police court collects a fine of \$10 for every criminal, drunk, or vagrant convicted, and \$5 from every one who pleads guilty."

"The city attorney collects \$2,000 each year from the city as a fee for special counsel and the printing of abstracts, in addition to his salary of \$1,200.00. He has appointed his law partner as an assistant with a salary of \$900. They are allowed 5 per cent. of all delinquent taxes collected as an additional fee. A third assistant is paid a salary of \$600 per year."

So much for the commission plan in the city of Galveston where the idea is said to have originated. Many improvements have since been imported into the system by other cities, notably the initiative, referendum, and the right of recall, and it would not be fair to condemn the scheme on the record of the parent city. But it is just as well that the citizens of St. John should be enlightened, in the broader sense of receiving a clearer view, on all sides of this question. It may be urged that Galveston is an extreme case. Probably it is. But while other cities may so have changed the form of government by commission that its own father would hardly know it, it is at least open to question whether they have succeeded in eradicating its inherent taints. Galveston is evidently one of the places the Times over looked when it confidently asserted that "the plan produces excellent results wherever introduced." "A gang of thieves," as applied to the commissioners of Galveston by their own fellow citizens, does not sound hopeful.

THE PUBLIC MEETING ON THURSDAY.

The R. L. Borden Club announces a public meeting in the Nickel Assembly Rooms on Thursday, at which Hon. J. D. Hazen, and Hon. J. K. Flemming will be the speakers, and it is safe to prophesy that the supporters of the local administration will turn out in force for the occasion. The record of the Hazen Government has appealed to the people of this constituency and throughout the province as that of a government which has done things, and the opportunity to hear the Premier and the Provincial Secretary give an account of their stewardship will doubtless ensure a large and enthusiastic attendance.

As public speakers, Mr. Hazen and Mr. Flemming have few, if any, superiors in New Brunswick, and in this connection we welcome the endorsement of the Times. Referring to the now historic debate in the Opera House on February 21, 1908, in which Messrs. Robinson and McKeown were signally defeated, the Times said editorially:—

"Mr. Hazen was at his best, and the storm of applause that greeted him revealed the growing sympathy for his party in the debate. He was not disturbed by the questions of the crowd, but turned such interruptions to advantage with unflinching good nature. His clear statement concerning the debt and the Central and International Railways was repeatedly applauded, and his review of the evidence of a 'political deathbed repentance' on the part of the Premier was not less pointed than amusing. There was much food for thought in the masterly address of the coming Premier."

Commenting on the splendid speech delivered by Mr. Flemming on that occasion, the Times was equally enthusiastic:—

"The Times has before referred to the ability of Mr. Flemming as a clear and forceful speaker, and never has he appeared to greater advantage than last evening in presence of the two thousand people or more who crowded the Opera House and listened intently to his clear and convincing exposition of the financial position of the province."

Equally good speeches may be expected at the meeting on Thursday, with the additional advantage that the speakers can now point to a record of careful and honest administration of public affairs which in 1908 was the strongest plank in their platform.

Current Comment

(Winnipeg Tribune.)

The spectacle of Clifford Sifton, who, as Minister of the Interior, allowed one brother-in-law to make off, personally and under sundry aliases, with public belongings estimated at from fifteen to sixteen hundred square miles of the timber resources of the northwest for a figure so low as to provoke a horse laugh, now proposing, as chairman of the committee to conserve what is left of said resources, that the country should spend twenty-five million dollars to protect the said residue, is such a commentary upon public men and public affairs in general as conducted in Canada as would drive any people with a sense either of the humorous or ridiculous into hysterics.

(Regina Standard.)

"As you will notice," remarked the Reverend Dr. Goodman, pausing a moment and looking over the congregation, "the Apostle Paul here says that if a woman have long hair it is a glory to her, for her hair is given her for a covering. Merely observing that I agree with the Apostle Paul in the opinion that a woman's hair is a much more glorious covering than an enormous hat, particularly in church, I resume the reading of the morning lesson." There was a brief delay, but the hats came off. Dr. Goodman, by the way, is a Chicago preacher.

(Farmers' Advocate.)

We are gradually losing our old-time fear of fresh air. With it is passing the familiar superstition about the peculiarly deadly properties of "night" air. Up-to-date physicians now laugh at the idea of night air being harmful. Fresh air, pure water—what priceless blessings of nature are these! And how afraid of them so many of us have been!

(Ottawa Journal.)

A German scientist has just made the discovery that colors have a definite effect in arousing or appeasing appetite, and that red, of all colors, is the one which most suggests hunger. Which discovery removes the Biblical suggestion "Look not upon the wine when it is red" from an Oriental metaphor to a scientific pronouncement.

(London Times.)

One of the recognized effects of total abstinence appears to be the tendency to the use of unrestrained and unsuitable language. It is probable that this circumstance alone has on more than one occasion been actually injurious to the cause of temperance.

(Bangor News.)

People who grumble at the high price of furs are perturbed also at the chance of getting cat or rabbit when they pay for something good. Some fur dealers conduct a mere skin game.

The Standard's Old Reporter

THE COMMISSION.

"Do you remember what St. Paul said about the Corinthians?" observed Uncle Hiram yesterday.

"No," says I. "And furthermore I've listened to one sermon today."

"Well, these people of Corinth were always running after some new thing," said Hiram, regardless. "And that reminds me of St. John and the Boosters' Club. They're mighty interested in new propositions and new promoters of enterprises that don't materialize, but 'tis little attention they give to the old familiar problems that will have to be solved before you can make a better and bigger St. John."

"There's the commission scheme. A good deal can be said in its favor, but I don't like the way it has been put forward. We're told that the old representative system of government is as obsolete as a stage coach, and that it's time to get a new system. But it strikes me that the trolley car promoters are a bit hasty. They haven't laid down any tracks for the trolley car run on—that is, they haven't mapped out any civic programme. Nor have they built a power house or strung trolley wires, and they haven't provided any of the things that the electricity of the best citizens in the operation of the commission. We're just told to pile into the trolley car and let her go. No doubt it will run down hill, and maybe run down the taxes, but when it comes to a steep hill, what is going to carry it over, and how will it keep in the middle of the road?"

"The Times shouts that the commission is best. That great journal cannot be accused of narrowness. At different times it has supported different and mutually opposed policies. But declamation is not argument. Says I to one of the Boosters of this scheme, 'What makes you think it is the best?'"

"That is no argument," says I. "In England 75 cities have better government under the old council system than any of your 75 American cities, and so have 750 cities in Germany, with a system not unlike the Canadian Board of Control."

The Booster, who said he had given much study to the problem of city government till he was blind, looked black, as if that idea had never occurred to him before.

"My old friend the Doge of the winter port has a good deal of plain common sense. He told the county council the other day that country Rubes know more in a minute than the city folk could learn in a week, because they don't have so many distractions to prevent them learning what is going on in the world. And as Ald. McGoldrick observed, the members of the board of trade if they ain't satisfied with what the city council has done, ought to enter the council and try their hand at running things."

"Now it is quite evident that they don't propose to put board of trade men in charge. They wish to establish a form of government under which it is not very likely that any member of the board of trade will be connected with the civic administration—not as many as there are now."

"In fact under the commission there is more change of the workmen being elected. Most members of the board of trade would hardly think of dropping their business for a few years, but the workmen wouldn't mind dropping his trade and \$500 or \$600 a year for \$2,000 a year. You notice the trade union is taking an active interest in this proposition. No doubt they think it will give them a chance to elect labor representatives. Possibly the workmen would do as well as the business men have done so far. In Glasgow, Scotland, the best governed city in the world, organized labor has been a powerful influence in the city council for a dozen years or more."

"But when the board of trade people realize that the labor unions are bound to make the proposition to adopt the commission scheme, a means of abolishing the property qualification, and putting labor representatives in control of civic affairs, will its members be as enthusiastic about the commission as they are now?"

WHITE'S COVE.

White's Cove, Jan. 19.—Roberts Orchard of Boston is visiting friends at Mill Cove.

While Alex McKinley was unbuttoning his coat at John D. Gunter's blacksmith shop the other day, they got away from him and Mr. McKinley got mixed up in the run-away, and was somewhat bruised.

Fred Reardon has gone to the woods with his team to work for James Robinson at the Narrows. Duncan McFadyen is also going for the Belleisle to work in the woods.

Thos. Simpson, of St. John, passed through this place on Friday, on his way to Chipman.

The temperance people here are very much pleased that R. P. Davis of Gagetown has been re-elected Scott Act Inspector for Queens county.

BELLEISLE CREEK.

Belleisle Creek, Jan. 19.—The funeral of Harvey Huggard on Sunday last was attended by a very large concourse of people. He was buried under the auspices of the Orange Order of which he was a member.

Thos. Farmer arrived home on Saturday evening after a lengthy visit in Houlton, Maine.

Edna Gillis, who has been quite ill is somewhat improved.

Walter Kierstead, of Collins, was in Belleisle on Monday last.

Allen Northrop was the guest of his sister, Mrs. Arnold, on Sunday last.

The school at Belleisle Creek is still without a teacher.

Howard Long is engaged in lumber operations with J. Styles.

Walter Gordon and wife, were in the village last evening.

G. Shanklin went to St. John today.

Shipments of lumber over the Central R. R. are quite heavy at present.

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quickly stops coughs, cures colds, hoarseness, throat and lungs. 25 cents.

PREMIER AND PROVINCIAL SECRETARY TO SPEAK

Messrs. Hazen and Flemming to Address Moncton Conservative Club Tonight and Albert Convention Tomorrow

(Moncton Times.)

The electors of Moncton, as also those of Albert County, are to have the rare pleasure next week of hearing the Premier of the province and the Provincial Secretary. On Monday evening Premier Hazen and Hon. J. K. Flemming will deliver addresses at the Conservative Club, in their hall in the Higgins block. The club has been desirous for some time of having Mr. Hazen give an address, but only now has he found it possible to do so. Both he and Hon. Mr. Flemming will speak on provincial affairs and a rich treat is in store for all who care to hear public questions discussed in a fair and able manner.

Hon. Mr. Flemming is unquestionably the most forceful, the most logical, the ablest platform speaker on financial matters in the Province of New Brunswick, and he will be heard here with much pleasure. The meeting is a public one and all who desire to see good government prevail in our province are cordially invited to attend Monday night's meeting.

On Tuesday the annual meeting of the Albert County Conservative Association will be held at Albert, and in the evening a public meeting under the auspices of the Association will be held in Oulton's Hall. The speakers on that occasion will be Premier Hazen and Hon. Mr. Flemming. It is seldom that two such prominent public men can find it possible to visit distant parts of the province at one time, and Albert is especially favored in public affairs by turning out en masse next Tuesday night.

MOTHER AND CHILDREN DIE IN TORONTO FIRE

With Three Small Children and Scotch Servant Burned to Death.

Toronto, Jan. 21.—Five persons met their death and another was taken to the Western Hospital badly burned as the result of a fire which destroyed the residence of Percy Brooks, manager of the Fairbanks Scale Company of Toronto, early this morning.

While the cause of the fire is a matter of uncertainty, it is believed to have been due to a defective furnace. The fire was first seen by a neighbor, Mr. McTavish, who lives across the road and to the south. He was returning after a party and noticed the blaze and turned in an alarm.

The victims were Mrs. Percy Brooks three children—Percy, aged five; George, aged three, and Woodie, aged two—and a Scotch servant, who had been with the family since Jan. 1.

Another servant, a nurse girl, Maggie McAllen, was taken to the hospital badly burned about the head and arms. No one seems to know how she managed to escape from the burning building. The first body was found in the bath room by firemen, while the fire was still at its height. Soon after they had got it out the stairs collapsed. The second body, believed to be that of the eldest boy, fell with the stairs, and was discovered just inside the front door.

On the north side of the attic were found the bodies of the mother and the remaining child. The woman was burned so as to be unrecognizable, her identity being established by the wedding ring and a diamond ring found on her fingers.

LATE SHIPPING.

New York, N. Y., Jan. 22.—Arrived—St. John N.B. Jan. 21.—Str. Windsor, Boston.

Liverpool, Jan. 21.—Campania, Liverpool.

New York, N. Y., Jan. 21.—Sailed—Str. American, Antwerp.

Portsmouth, N. H., Jan. 22.—Sailed—Str. Silver Leaf, St. John N.B.

Baunderstown, R. I., Jan. 22.—Sailed—Str. Wamola, from Halifax for New York.

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