

The St. John Standard

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ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, APRIL 8, 1922.

WHERE IS THE ETHIOPIAN?

The Telegraph in its report of the McEllan meeting on Thursday night, devoted parts of three columns to a résumé of Mr. Phillips' thirty minutes' speech, and parts of three columns to a perverted synopsis of Mr. McEllan's two hours' speech.

Mr. Phillips did not contradict his previous report that hydro power could be distributed substantially cheaper by the Power Company than by a new civic distribution system.

Mr. McEllan's solution is for the City to build a new distribution system in competition with the Power Company, and appropriate and operate the street railway, and scrap the gas plant.

The result of City operation of the street railway would be the placing of two men on the cars instead of one, increasing the amount paid street railway labor from that under business management to the City's usual rate, with a corresponding increase in the number of employees. The increase in the cost of operation could not be less than two hundred thousand dollars a year. Further there would doubtless be a demand in many sections for street railway extensions, and the more lines operated the greater the loss. In addition experience shows that government or city operation of utilities is inefficient and costly. By scrapping the gas plant the City would lose the taxes paid by the Company on its income from gas, amounting to between four and five thousand dollars a year, and some of the citizens would lose a very great convenience. Scrapping the gas plant would be a serious matter for the sixteen or seventeen hundred people in St. John using gas for cooking. An electric range costs between one hundred and two hundred dollars. Even assuming that electricity could be supplied as cheaply as gas, and there is no chance of the price reacting that figure, it would mean an expense for electric ranges or cooking equipment of from one hundred thousand dollars to two hundred thousand dollars by private citizens not to mention the very considerable cost of special wiring. These losses would have to be added to the taxes. There is no other way out of the difficulty, and it would mean that by adopting Mr. McEllan's suggestion and operating the street railway, without any change in fare, the taxes would be increased about twenty per cent. When we say twenty per cent increase in taxes we are assuming that the City is successful in the delightful little measure of confiscation that it is now promoting before the Legislature, and by reason of installing a civic distribution system for the sale of electric light and power, it makes it impossible for the Company to compete, whilst paying heavy charges and taxes and carrying on losing enterprises (the street railway and gas), and so confiscates the Company's property. If the City is honest and pays the Company the replacement value of the street railway property alone, it would cost it well over two millions, and the interest due on that sum would add at least another one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars to the amount necessary to be raised in taxes. So the taxpayer would have about twenty-five per cent added to his bill.

What advantages for this twenty-five per cent increase in taxes? Making allowances for engineers' underestimates and contingencies, and the difficulties of construction, whilst there is an electric power system already in operation, the probable cost of the new civic distribution system would be not less than a million dollars. But taking Mr. Phillips' estimate of cost and his own figures the average cost to the consumer of electric current would be \$5. At the present time the average cost to the Power Company's customers, including the street railway is 6.1. We include the street railway because if the City operates the street railway and the charge for power is increased the railway deficit would correspondingly be increased. This figure of 6.1 is given by Mr. Kennis and is the cost at a time when coal was twenty-five per cent higher than it is now. Accordingly the best result of the City going into the electric power and light business would be to increase the cost to all of the consumers approximately half a cent a kilowatt hour and at the same time confiscate the property of the security holders of the Company.

This estimate is based on the assumption that the Musquash has the power claimed by its friends, and notwithstanding that every independent engineer who has reported on the Musquash has condemned the project. No independent engineer has been named who will not state that the Musquash has more than ten per cent of the power the Telegraph claims. If this is true the City would have absolutely shown away its money to the same extent and with a similar result as Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

If the situation were not so serious it would be laughable. It will be noted that in their search for the Ethiopian mentioned by the Standard in its editorial a few days ago, the Telegraph and the Times have never answered the questions asked by this journal as to who owns the Musquash lands and as to what interest, if any, the proprietors of those papers have in this proposition. If the Telegraph and the Times would be good enough to state who are the owners of the Musquash lands, the citizens could form their own conclusions as to whether or not there is some reason behind the attitude of those valued papers other than an anxiety to injure the Power Company. Our contemporaries might at the same time say how much has been asked by the owners from the Government for the Musquash lands and as to whether or not the Government has spent from two to three millions of the taxpayers' money on somebody else's property, and who owns the property. Does modesty prevent the Telegraph and the Times from answering?

The indemnity of the RESTIGOUCHE MEMBERS. A Frederick report says that the Contingencies Committee of the Legislature has had under consideration the granting of the indemnity for last session to the two members for Restigouche, Messrs. Stewart and Diotte, who presented themselves for admission to the Chamber but were refused. The Contingencies Committee has no more business to discuss that matter than it has to debate the Budget. In no sense is such a payment a contingency. This particular committee has of late years been somewhat prone to interfere in matters over which it has no earthly concern, and it is about time the practice was stopped. Many matters, such as that particularly referred to, which this committee has essayed to deal with, are of purely Governmental concern, and involve the expenditure of money that strictly speaking requires the Lieutenant Governor's assent. In this case of the members for Restigouche, the payment to them of this indemnity for 1921 is merely an act of simple justice. Mr. William Currie who could have attended the House but wouldn't, was paid his indemnity; Messrs. Stewart and Diotte, who wanted to attend, but were not allowed, were refused it. Perhaps the unfairness of this condition of things will prompt Mr. Froeter to recommend payment at this late date.

WHO'S BEEN TEMPTING AGNES? What temptation's been tempting Miss Agnes MacPhail? Stand up there you, Mr. King, and you too, Mr. McEighan; and the C. P. R. and all other rogues and rascals who prey upon the frailties of poor human M. P.'s! Shame on your heads, that you should attempt to purchase the honor of a young lady, and she so unused to your ways! Have you no sense of decency, or honor, at all? For Agnes has been tempted. She confesses it herself, bless her delicate countenance, though with proper delicacy she doesn't go into details. Here is what she says:

"If ever there was a house of temptation in the Green Chamber. When you fall for all the temptation in the Green Chamber, you go to the Red Chamber."

According to the Times, the speakers on Thursday evening, "might with good effect have gone a little more into detail in regard to prices, and the actual saving and financial gain to the community through civic distribution." In leaving those matters alone, the speakers showed more sound common sense than our contemporary seems willing to give them credit for. Both of them did gloss over as it was; and when all the necessary outlay is provided for and all costs of operation paid any actual saving and financial gain through civic distribution becomes most highly problematical. And both the speakers knew it, hence they left the subject severely alone.

The estimated Times takes the view that the attitude of the audience at Thursday evening's meeting towards Mr. McEllan and his views on hydro, was a clear indication of popular feeling in regard to the matter. That might be all right under certain conditions, but it is unfortunate for Mr. McEllan that the majority of his supporters belong to that section of the electors who are disenchanted for non-payment of taxes. This of course does not affect their long power when the cheering begins, but it makes quite a material difference when it comes to going to the polls.

The hydro price is too high. Mr. Kennis in his report calculating with coal at a price of \$3.48 found that the hydro current would be as cheap as current generated by steam if the price were 1.264 per kilowatt hour. At the present time the Power Company's current is produced from coal costing 25¢ and upwards. Taking Mr. Kennis's figures the price of hydro would have to be 39¢ to be as cheap as steam power now is and the price of coal is falling and will fall further. But the hydro commission still ask 1.3 for 30 years.

In view of the fact that all persons on board the two airplanes which crashed together on the journey between London and Paris, were killed just how the fatality was brought about will probably never be known. Most people, however, will probably feel that there was surely room enough for the two machines to pass each other without colliding.

The Globe seems to be between the devil and the deep sea. It's hard to say which prospect causes it the greatest dismay—Mr. McEllan's possible occupation of the mayoral chair, or the distribution of the Musquash current by the Power Company.

THE CIVIC DILEMMA (The Globe) H. R. McEllan has many times declared that he paid thousands to an expert engineer for a report on the Musquash hydro possibilities, only to find out that it had no possibilities, is now before the public as the champion of Musquash. He no longer says it is of no value. He now boasts it as the essential of St. John prosperity. It is in the same Musquash. Whether Mr. McEllan was wrong before and right now, or wrong now and right before, is one of the many puzzles of a most puzzling civic situation. The alternative he now advocates would, if adopted by the electors, lead to early embarkation of St. John on the distribution of hydro. There is involved in suggesting that to be desired result the election of Mr. McEllan as Mayor. That outcome few sober-minded and thoughtful citizens can regard with any degree of complacency. The alternative is to try an experiment which there is no assurance can be made effective and which all sober-minded and thoughtful citizens must regard as a foregone conclusion. At least two years, and in all probability longer, the opportunity of shaking free from the binding bonds of Power Company monopoly. That is an outcome few sober-minded and thoughtful citizens can regard with complacency. The prospect of civic control of hydro is alluring, but the prospect of administration of the city by Mr. McEllan can be regarded in no other light than as appalling. The prospect of administration by Mr. Schofield would be less discouraging if there was a shadow of hope with Socialism or Communism in the immediate prospect. We would advance instead of checking temporarily, and it is greatly feared permanently, any prospect of getting cheaper power and getting rid of the Power Company's grip on our utilities. It is a dilemma from which the only avenue of escape appears to be an expression of the community will through an immediate plebiscite. A plebiscite has the double merit of separating principles from personalities and placing responsibility for a momentous decision on the community rather than on fire individuals.

WHAT OTHERS SAY Bohemians Among the Boers. (London Daily Telegraph) The Boer farmer is a sturdy individual, and can have extremely little sympathy with Socialism or Communism in the abstract. But the Bolshevik propagandist is all things to all men. In Asia Minor he can pose as a fervent admirer of Islam; in South Africa he is a convinced champion of local Nationalism and Republicanism, and is seeking to turn to account the old cry of national and racial supremacy. There is no excuse for the wicked attempt to stir up disaffection against the Empire and excite hatred against the natives; but it has been made, and it does undoubtedly render the task before General Smuts more formidable than that which faced his predecessor. That is all the more reason why he is entitled to count upon the assistance of all the sensible and patriotic elements in the Union in order to subdue an abominable movement, which could only succeed by plunging the Rand into economic ruin and all South African life into a state of anarchy.

Commenting upon the fact that the Foster Government entered on the sixth year of its existence on Tuesday last, The Globe's "Galley Man" says, "The child will soon be in pants, and the all youngsters, look around for trouble." Utterly unnecessary; "the child" has been in nothing but trouble ever since it was a week old; and if there is such a child, it is not the Foster Government.

Benny's Note Book

BY LEE PAPE
THE PARK AVE. NEWS
Weather. Grub.
Sports. Last Saturday afternoon at 1.30 a whistling contest took place between Ed Wernick and Lew Davis to see who could whistle the loudest three their fingers, Ed Wernick winning but Lew Davis demanding a rerun match on account of being overstrained, saying his whistle was dry from too much practice.
Big Mass Meeting. Extra! A meeting took place outside of Mommy Simmines store last Thursday to protest against the high cost of soap balls being a cent now instead of 3 for a cent like before the war, and a committee was elected consisting of Benny Potts and Leroy Shooter to go in and tell Mommy Simmines that the price of everything was coming down so why not soap balls, but she chased the committee right out again without giving them any satisfaction.
Pome by Skinny Martin.
THE KING OF FOOD.
I'm glad to eat apples any way.
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All kinds of pencils sharpened with new silver plated pencil sharpening machine. I guarantee to bring them back so you will recognize them. See Artie Alexander for rates retails and wholesale. (Advertisement.)

THE LAUGH LINE

Shop Talk.
"How's things?" asked the tailor.
"On the mend," said the tinker.
"How is it with you?"
"Only sew, sew."
An Easy Convention.
Johnson—"I'm glad it is good form not to wear a watch with a dress suit."
Johnson—"Why?"
Johnson—"Because I never had both at the same time."

A Slight Difference.
Minnie—"I wonder if she takes something for that smooth complexion?"
Mamma—"No; I think she gave something for it."

Another Definition.
Richardson—"What constitutes a successful business man?"
Mawson—"A man who has the horsepower of an optimist and the emergency-brakes of a pessimist."

Early to Bed.
Mr. De Club—"My dear, a great physician says women require more sleep than men."
Mrs. De Club—"Does he?"
Mr. De Club—"Yes, my dear. Unless you'd better not wait up for me tonight."

Disqualified?
He—"You don't love me as you did before we were married, I don't believe."
She—"Of course I don't, John. You wouldn't expect a woman to love a married man as she could a bachelor, would you?"

Quite Right.
"So you go to school, do you Bob?"
"Yes, sir."
"Let me hear you spell 'bread.'"
"B-r-o-d."

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A. McDonald Gives His Experience With Dodd's Kidney Pills.
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