POOR DOCUMENT

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THE SEMI-WEEKLY TELEGRAPH

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Semi-Weekly Telegraph

ST. JOHN, N. B., JUNE 6, 1900.

WASTING PUBLIC TIME.

The manner in which the time of the House of Commons has been wasted during the present session of parliament has reflected a great deal of discredit upon the opposition. There is no doubt that the opposition is weaker than when the session began, because of their spiteful demeanor and their disregard of the public interest as shown by their conduct in the House of Commons, and their great abuse of the motion to adjourn, which has become on the part of the opposition a means of obstruction. By the misuse of this motion any member of the House has it in his power to waste a great deal of the time of the House of Commons in a discussion which yields no result and which only serves to show the bad spirit of the House. Not long ago we had Sir Hibbert Tupper making a five hours' speech in regard to some little difficulty that occurred between the collector of Dawson City and the owners of a steamship which was cleared from there last year. To listen to the elaborate essay of Sir Hibbert Tupper on this subject it would seem to be a matter of the highest importance and that the people of Canada were eagerly awaiting the result of the discussion which he had brought on. As a matter of fact there was not a single man in Canada except Sir Hibbert Tupper and possibly his own father who cared one straw for this particular Yukon difficulty, and this fact was emphasized by the absence of the members on both sides of the House. Sir Hibbert Tupper's speech was delivered not only to an empty reporters' gallery but to an empty House. There were not more than a half a dozen members in it most of the time while he was on his feet. In the same manner Sir Hibbert Tupper wasted a large part of Thursday's sitting by another attack on the officials of the Yukon, especially Major Walsh. The charges that were brought against Mr. Walsh have long since been disproved and at all events they have been sufficiently discussed to make them of no interest at the present time. Yet Sir Hibbert Tupper for the purpose of wasting the time of the House and adding to his own importance found it necessary to make a long and tedious speech on the same subject in regard to which he spoke at such great length last year. The only remedy that is likely to amend the growing evil of the abuse of the motion to adjourn is to make a rule that motions of adjournment shall not be debatable and that the vote should be taken immediately on the motion being made. Then the only way the opposition could obstruct public business would be by making successive motions to adjourn and demanding a division on each motion, a plan of operation which would disclose their intention to obstruct, and which would remove all pretence of a desire to serve the public interest from their proceedings.

THE TEST OF REAL ECONOMY.

Among the grave problems which confronted the government within a year after their accession to office was one which most people, not pausing to give the matter thought, would scarcely suspect to be a problem at all. We allude to the growing public revenue. The Liberals had pledged themselves before the country to economy—if practicable, to an actual reduction of expenditure. They had given the pledge deliberately and sincerely. But economy, as we have said before, is a relative thing. What would be prudence under one set of circumstances would be waste under another. The test is not by dollars; but by conditions. The man who cuts his coat according to his cloth may be said to demonstrate practical politics in relation to public expenditure, and what the Liberals in office have done is perfectly consistent with what they undertook to do before assuming office.

What was the fiscal situation in 1896? As every one knows the country was in a state of depression. Uncertainty in relation to the tariff during a long period of years had accomplished the inevitable result of hindering enterprises and staying the progress of the people. The revenue on one hand shrank, while the expenditure on the other mounted steadily upward. Was it surprising that under such circumstances deficit followed deficit, and the public debt grew apace? It was with these conditions in mind that the Liberals stood for retrenchment, for the cutting down of needless outlay, for lighter burdens in respect of taxation and debt, and for a new fiscal policy. Public judgment supported them in these views. It was felt that the best interests of the dominion demanded a change, and in 1896 the control of affairs was transferred to other hands.

What did the Liberals do? They at once reduced the tariff, and began to pare down the cost of the public service—not by any drastic process calculated to do harm, but cautiously and judiciously. What they would have accomplished in this way in the course of a few years would have been very considerable; but in 1897 the country began a new life of unprecedented prosperity. Despite the lowered scale of taxation imports began to pour in. The commerce of the country expanded rapidly. Confidence succeeded uncertainty, and capital was applied liberally in the development of new industries. The conditions were entirely changed. The public revenue began to grow, and where there had been a shortage before there was now an excess. The era of deficits was over and surpluses accrued.

These altered conditions imposed an unlooked for test upon the capacity and statesmanship of the government. The question immediately suggested was, Whether it was the part of wisdom to continue the process of retrenchment or to utilize the larger revenue now flowing into the public treasury? We believe we are in the judgment of thinking men at large when we say that the government answered to this test in a way that will be approved. They did not adopt a niggardly policy, closing their eyes to the needs of the country under the new circumstances and preferring to pile up huge surpluses for the mere sake of closing the mouths of those who might reproach them with inconsistency. On the contrary they realized the nature of the trust in their hands, and acted upon the sound doctrine that the interests of the dominion had first claim upon the enlarged revenue.

The expected happened. No sooner did the government show a proper appreciation of the claims of the country upon the new income than their opponents raised a hue and cry against them. It was charged that the Liberals, who had pledged themselves to economy, were spending more money than their predecessors. The government, however, disregarded these complaints in the assurance that they were doing right, and whatever vindication was necessary came from the mouths of the very men who were shouting condemnation. We allude to what occurred in the House last session. When the estimates were brought down they showed, item by item, just how the government proposed to expend the additional money asked for. Here then was an opportunity for the opposition to assert their objection to the intended outlay; but they contented themselves with challenging three paltry items amounting to $35,000 in all.

Friends of the government will feel a strong sense of pride in the manner this test has been met by the Laurier administration. They will realize how the Tories would have chuckled if, in the face of an overflowing treasury, the government had turned a deaf ear to the calls upon them from all points of the dominion. They would have been the first to point to it as a signal proof of incapacity, and we are confident public judgment would have sided with them in that view. It is with satisfaction Liberals are able to show how prudently and usefully the money has been expended, and, what is equally worthy of note, without even the shadow of scandal. Large public works have been carried out, and while the Conservatives added $6,800,000 per annum to the debt during their regime, the Liberals have done more at less than one-third of that charge upon the permanent burdens of the people.

NEWFOUNDLAND.

We published yesterday a statement from the London Times to the effect that the official organ of the Bond ministry in Newfoundland strongly advocates union with Canada and foreshadows political action with a view to the attainment of that object. If this news is true, and there seems to be no good reason to doubt it, it indicates a remarkable change in the views of the Bond ministry and points to the possibility of the union of Newfoundland and Canada being brought about at an early date. It has always been understood that Mr. Bond was strongly opposed to union with Canada, and indeed it was reported a few weeks ago that he preferred union with the United States. This rumor, however, which was published on the authority of a St. John's, Newfoundland, despatch, was denied by Mr. Bond in most emphatic terms in a telegram to this paper, which we were well pleased to be in a position to publish. Now that Mr. Bond has accepted union with Canada as inevitable, and as the manifest destiny of the island colony, a great point has been gained. There is no denying the fact that Newfoundland as a separate colony is a source of danger to Canada and likely to be a cause of difficulty in the future. Newfoundland commands the entrance to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, it shares in the same, fisheries as Canada, and it is altogether in such a position that a hostile Newfoundland could give Canada an infinite amount of trouble. It is not many years ago that Newfoundland started to make a reciprocity treaty with the United States which would have been highly injurious to Canada. Certain people in the United States, who are very cunning diplomatists, are always glad to extend their favors to some small colony of the Empire, for the purpose of detaching it from the greater colonies. Many of our people will remember the effort that was made to detach Prince Edward Island, prior to its union with Canada, and the same thing has been attempted in the case of Newfoundland. Canada has no financial interest in annexing Newfoundland, because it is highly probable that we would have to contribute more to the maintenance of that island than any revenue that we would receive from it, but in a political sense its union with Canada would be an event of the highest importance, and it is an object which the present government will no doubt do everything to forward.

THE BOER DELEGATES IN BOSTON.

While the British flag was waving over Johannesburg on Thursday evening, the Boer delegates in the United States were having a great reception in Faneuil Hall, "the Cradle of Liberty." The meeting was presided over by Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a writer of books, who was at one time a colonel of a colored regiment and, therefore, it is to be presumed, is in sympathy with the black man. Probably it is out of desire to propitiate him that Mr. Fischer, one of the delegates, took occasion to deny the charge of slavery brought against the Boers and to declare that when the war broke out, the blacks all begged to be allowed to fight for the Boers. It is rather a singular coincidence that almost while Mr. Fischer was making this astounding statement, the London Times was publishing the news that correspondence had been found in the house of Commandant Crowther, showing that the Boers invited the Basutos to rise and drive the British into the sea. The statement that any black man in South Africa would be willing to fight for the Boers except under the compulsion of the whip, is too ridiculous for serious contradiction. The reason that the Boers did not place arms in the hands of the black men at the beginning of this war was that they knew right well if they did so these arms would be turned against them. The blacks have suffered incredible wrongs from the Boers in South Africa. They have no political rights; they are in a worse position than the negro slaves of the South were before the war; they have no standing in any court; they have no opportunities of obtaining an education; they are a crushed and enslaved people, and the hoisting of the British flag over the Transvaal will be for them emancipation to as large a degree as was the conquest by the North of the Southern States to the negro slaves who toiled on the plantations. The story which Mr. Fischer told in regard to the negotiations between the British government and the Transvaal was a tissue of lies and the only excuse that can be offered for him is that he no doubt supposed the men who heard him were all utterly ignorant of the question. Instead of Great Britain being the aggressor in this contest, no fact is more potent than that this war was brought about by the utter refusal of the Boers to do anything to ameliorate the condition of the Uitlanders, and by the insulting ultimatum which was issued, which practically meant the withdrawal of Great Britain from South Africa. If Great Britain had obeyed this ultimatum she would have sunk to the condition of a third-rate power, as the men who issued it well knew. But they did not believe it would be obeyed, therefore we must conclude that they brought on this war deliberately. There is no doubt that when they issued this ultimatum they had assurance from some continental government that the nations of Europe would interfere and protect them from being crushed. They will know now how far they can trust their pretended friends in continental Europe. They have had the bitter experience which comes from relying too implicitly on the enemies of Great Britain, and now they can take the consequences of their folly. All the sympathy that these Boer delegates will receive in the United States will do them no good, nor will it be helpful to their cause. The war will be over before the national conventions meet, and even such a recognition as might come from a paragraph in the platform of the Democratic party, will be denied to them. The best thing these men can do is to settle down to some honest business in the United States and keep quiet.

FIRE.

There is no enemy that the people of New Brunswick have to dread so much as that good friend of us all, fire. The amount of property that has been destroyed by fire in this province since the landing of the loyalists, the greater part of which was a total loss and a tax on the industry of the people, would make up a sum of startling magnitude, and if published would show how enormously our people are only in respect to actual loss of property, but also in regard to the cost of insuring against it. In the countries of the old world, fire is much less a source of danger than it is with us. Who ever heard of an Italian place, where everything is of stone, being destroyed by fire? The walls, the stairs, and in many cases the floors are of that material, so that the amount of combustible matter is reduced to a minimum. But the great cause of the safety of these structures is the fact that wood is dear and that the fires which are built to warm the people, as well as those to cook their food with, are very small and easily handled. Here the climate makes it necessary to burn fuel lavishly and the result is an enormous number of fires, which are largely the result of carelessness, of neglect, and of defective construction in our buildings. The greatest losses by fire, however, have been in the destruction of our forests. The Miramichi fire of 1825, which burnt over 6,000,000 square miles of forest, an area as large as the state of Massachusetts, was probably the greatest conflagration which was ever recorded in history, and no man can calculate how much this province was injured by that unparalleled disaster. At the time it took place the Miramichi was as great a port of export of the products of the forest as St. John, but in a day the whole of the forest wealth which formed this large trade, was swept away, and it is only now after the lapse of three-quarters of a century that the forests then destroyed, have been in part renewed. We have been suffering from fires of late in various parts of this province and there is no reason to doubt that every one of those fires has been the result of carelessness on the part of someone. A fire in the forest does not start by itself. Either it has been maliciously set for the purpose of destroying property, or it is started by some person for a useful purpose and then neglected and allowed to spread because no precautions have been taken to put it out and so prevent it from doing injury. The penalties for letting fires remain in the forest ought to be very severe, because fires that are set in this way are an actual menace to our prosperity and more forest wealth may be destroyed in a day than can be replaced in a quarter of a century. One great difficulty has been that our people are too careless in the handling of fires. They do not think sufficiently of the consequences that may ensue from fires being allowed to get the upper hand. If every man could be educated into a proper estimate of the dangers from fires, we would have far less difficulty on this score than we have now. We believe that the number of fires that are set for the purpose of deliberately destroying property is not large. The greater destruction comes from those careless people who leave fires behind them smouldering in the forest, because they are too indolent to put them out, and too negligent to take proper precautions.

JUSTICE TO THE LOYALISTS.

The people of St. John are indebted to the Rev. John deSoyres, LL. D., for some interesting information which he has communicated to an evening contemporary, in regard to Dr. Moses Ciol-Tyler, "the distinguished American historian, who did us the honor last week of accepting an honorary degree at our university." The condencension of this act was increased by the fact, so pointedly stated by Dr. deSoyres, that Dr. Bridges, who performed the office of introducer of the recipients of honorary degrees with dignity and efficiency, was prevented from doing justice to the merits of Dr. Tyler, "on account of the absolute impossibility of finding anything to say about many of those others, whom the extensive sympathies of the Senate had added to the list." We join with Dr. deSoyres in regretting that no special recognition was offered in the province of the Loyalists to Dr. Tyler who has done justice to the merits and difficulties of the Loyalists in his "Literary History of the Revolution," but this cause of regret might have been avoided if Dr. deSoyres had written his letter in advance of the arrival of Dr. Tyler instead of after his departure. We fear, however, that Dr. deSoyres is hardly doing justice to another American writer when he speaks of Dr. Tyler as "the first of Americans to do justice to the merits and difficulties of the Loyalists." Lorenzo Sabine, whose book on the Loyalists was published in 1847, dealt with the founders of this province in quite as kindly a fashion as anything that Dr. deSoyres quotes from Dr. Tyler's book. Indeed we cannot help thinking that the latter must have read Sabine while preparing his own work. Dr. Tyler says:

"On whose cheek should have been the blush of shame, when the habitations of the aged and feeble were sacked, and no refuge was left but the woods! When the innocent were outraged, and foul words spoken to women?"

Half a century before Dr. Tyler's book was published, Sabine wrote as follows:

"On whose cheek should have been the blush of shame, when the habitation of the aged and feeble Foster was sacked, and he had no shelter but the woods? When Williams, as infirm as he, was seized at night, dragged away for miles and smoked in a room with fastened doors and a closed chimney top? What father who doubled, wavered and doubled still, whether to join or fly, determined to abide the issue in the land of his birth because foul words were spoken to his daughters, or because they were pelted when riding or moving in the innocent dance?"

CHILDREN'S CLOTHING.

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Anxiety; as to quality, fit and finish, never arise with parents in this store, and the only thing that bothers them is to choose from this universally attractive stock---it's immense, and each suit is as pretty, good and desirable as its fellow. There's such a multiplicity of good things as is not to be encountered elsewhere.

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OLD FASHIONED GUNS.

A writer in the London Mail is endeavoring to alarm the British people by telling them that a large number of the British men-of-war are armed with obsolete guns, old-fashioned muzzle-loaders. This is not by any means a new discovery. More than a year ago The Telegraph called attention to this fact, which certainly is not creditable to the administration of the navy. At the same time the deductions which the writer in the Mail draws from the fact are much greater than the facts warrant. Although some of the British battle ships are armed with muzzle-loading guns, not one of them that is armed in this fashion is counted among the first class ships of the navy, although some of them are very powerful vessels. All the battle ships that have been constructed during the past twenty years are armed with breach loading guns. Of the sixteen battleships that are armed with muzzle-loading guns, two are rated as coast defence vessels, three are rated as second class battleships and the remainder as third class battleship. Moreover it must be remembered that although the main armaments of these vessels consist of old-fashioned guns, their auxiliary armaments of quick fire guns would make them formidable, and the experience of the Spanish war seems to show that for all practical purposes a six-inch quick fire gun is as efficient as the heavier guns which the larger ships carry. Take a vessel like the Inflexible for instance, which was once the pride of the British navy. This ship was constructed in 1876 and at that time she was by far the most powerful war-ship in the world, carrying as she did four eighty ton guns and being sheathed in armour 18 and 24 inches thick. The Inflexible still stands on the list of efficient ships of the British navy and properly so, because, although an old ship, she is still formidable and quite as good for many purposes as a more modern ship. Any foreign ship that undertook to tackle the Inflexible and thought it would have an easy task because its eighty ton guns were muzzle-loaders would speedily discover its error. An eighty ton muzzle-loader is not as powerful a gun as some guns of the more modern type, but still it is a very formidable weapon, and we believe that for all practical purposes it could be handled as rapidly as a breach loading gun of the same size. The trouble with the Inflexible is that her speed is only thirteen knots so that she is too slow a ship to be worth rearming, but on the the other hand, why should so useful a vessel be struck off the navy list. In a close contest she would, perhaps, prove more efficient than many vessels of a more modern type. The British government is pursuing the proper plan in building as many new and efficient warships as possible, and allowing the old-fashioned ones which cannot well be improved to remain for whatever service they are fit for. The fact that the French have struck off nearly all their old-fashioned warships is a matter which does not at all concern Great Britain or the British admirality, because it is well known that all the old French ships were wooden vessels, plated with iron, while all our old-fashioned warships are built of iron or steel and therefore for all practical purposes are as sound as the day they were launched, so that the conditions are wholly dissimilar and the reason which influences the French does not apply to the British navy at all.

THE TORY FAMILY QUARREL.

Mr. S. D. Scott, one of the editors of the Sun, but evidently not the principal one, has been writing a letter from Ottawa in regard to the quarrel between Mr. Birmingham and Sir Charles Tupper which is a curiosity in its way. It is a labored attempt to smooth over a difficulty which threatened to destroy the Conservative party for when good Conservatives who are leaders of the party begin to call each other names and to accuse each other of all kinds of rascality at election times, the matter really begins to look serious. We should be very far from desiring to interfere in so interesting a family quarrel as that which is now on, but it is impossible to avoid noticing the acknowledgments which Mr. Scott finds it necessary to make in regard to the conduct of his party. He in fact admits that there has been a great deal of wrong doing in the Conservative party, which Mr. Birmingham if he choose might make public, for he says:

Now there is no doubt that Mr. Birmingham can do the Conservative party much harm by carrying out his threats. He has not been an organizer for eighteen years without knowing a great deal which his party would desire to have concealed. No one disputes that both parties spend money in elections contrary to law, but neither party is anxious to have it known where and in what way this money is expended. Mr. Birmingham could no doubt cause some inconvenience to his friends by explaining how the campaign funds were expended.

Again there are many matters of organization, of strategy and tactics, which are known to an organizer, and which it is not profitable to have known to the other side. It is not convenient for an army in the field to have one of its officers go to the opposing forces and explain its difficulties, its strong position, its weak points, its equipment, its hopes and fears, and designs. All these party secrets may be connected with perfectly legitimate methods and plans, but they are not supposed to be made public or to be conveyed secretly to the other camp.

Here Mr. Scott admits that Mr. Birmingham, who has been an organizer for eighteen years must know a great deal about the Conservative party which they would desire to have concealed. He admits that the Conservative party has been spending money contrary to law, and that the campaign funds have been expended by the Conservative party in a manner which would be inconvenient to have explained. These are interesting admissions and we trust that the readers of the Sun will take them to heart so that they may the better understand the arrant hypocrisy of Mr. S. D. Scott and the paper which he in part edits, when he undertook to accuse the Liberals of spending money illegally about election times. It is no wonder that Mr. Birmingham, who probably has a conscience, although it must be severely seared by his association with men like Sir Charles Tupper for so many years, desires to unbosom himself and tell the people what a very dishonest lot the Conservative politicians are. We hope that the quarrel between Mr. Birmingham and his party will go on, and then we will have the truth in regard to the conduct of the Conservatives in the elections of 1882 and 1887. Then, perhaps, we may be able to learn what became of the missing Kings county ballot boxes in 1891 and how they were dealt with by the persons who had them in charge. We trust that the motto of this election inquiry may be that of the late President Grant, "May no guilty man escape."

THE WHIPPING OF BOYS.

It is to be much regretted that the clause permitting magistrates and judges to order juvenile offenders to be whipped was dropped from the amendments to the criminal code now before parliament. This action was taken because of the outcry raised by Dr. Montague and Mr. Gillmour, neither of whom, we suspect, has given the slightest study to the matter. It is much more probable that they opposed the clause simply because it was in a government measure, and without pausing to consider what they were doing. What they said plainly showed that they had not given judicial thought to the question which lies at the bottom of the whole matter: "Is it better to whip a bad boy, or to imprison him?" We believe that no one who has given consideration to the problem of how best to deal with boys just starting on a career of crime, or who has looked into the conditions which often prevail with respect to boys in cities and towns, would favor the imprisonment plan.

Dr. Montague's assertion that the boy who has once been whipped is ruined is directly at variance with the experience of a score of years in England, as well as with the history of the greatest reformatory in the world—that at Elmira, N. Y. We have no sort of patience with that weak and thoughtless sentiment which saves a boy from a whipping and leaves a magistrate with only one of two alternatives to choose—either to let the boy