



## When is a Bribe Not a Bribe?

**P**ERIODICALLY we are told of some constituency of "easy virtue" being bribed by a Minister who either calls its attention to what he has put in the "estimates" for its benefit or tells it frankly before hand what he proposes to put there. It seems to a "rank outsider"—so far as party politics goes—like myself, that it is time we ceased to chatter nonsense of this particularly naive sort. Does a government bribe a constituency by giving it, or promising it, public works? Isn't that what a government is for? It is precisely charged with the task of establishing certain classes of public works throughout the country, and with maintaining certain kinds of public services. When it decides to build some of these public works in a particular constituency, it is simply doing what we pay it to do; and, if the methods by which it decides where these public works should be built are unsatisfactory to us, we have the remedy in our own hands. We can turn the government out. But if governments of both shades of opinion pursue a certain policy in this regard, year in and year out, taking now this constituency and now that; and, so far from "kicking them" out on that account, we never even seriously hold it up against them. What are politicians to infer, if not that the country likes this policy?

**N**O one would argue for a moment that a government has not a perfect right to seek a legitimate political advantage in the eyes of the electorate by the proper and wise expenditure of public money. A Prime Minister may surely argue that his government is entitled to be returned to power because it has spent the public revenues well. He has as much right to demand the confidence of the country on that ground as on his railway policy or his tariff policy or his naval policy. Very well, then. How is the noble constituency of Stuffuss to judge the wisdom with which the government has expended the public money? Who is to decide for the Stuffussians what standard they should apply? Why, surely the public-spirited and high-priced—I mean, high-minded—Stuffussians themselves. They would scorn to permit Toronto or Montreal or any other place to lay down the principle by which they, the free and independent (or the expensive and independent) electors of Stuffuss, should govern their duty as patriotic citizens. They will attend to their own judgments themselves, thank you. And how, then, will they judge the propriety and wisdom of the government's expenditures? Very likely by that part of its expenditures which they can most easily and clearly see—that is, the part nearest to them.

**I**T will be of no use to tell the Stuffussians that the government is giving the country a fine line of post offices if Stuville still gets its mail in the back-room of a frame grocery as it did before the flood—that is, the flood which swept the government into office. And it will be equally idle to tell the Stuffussians that the government is wantonly extravagant in the matter of post office buildings, with real stone trimmings, when they can see for themselves in their own shire-town of Stuville that the government is erecting precisely the sort of attractive post office which the country needs. In two words, the constituency of Stuffuss is going to vote—so far as the building of post offices affects its vote—for or against the government as that government builds or does not build it a fine post office. That single fact will decide its vote on the post office issue. And in this regard there are no constituencies which are not worthy of the name of Stuffuss.

**T**HAT being granted, what does it matter whether a Minister waits until Stuffuss can read the item in the "estimates," or sends it word of its good luck beforehand? It has the same right to vote on a prospective policy as the rest of us. We do not regard it as immoral when a party says—"Put us in power, and we will give you Protection or Home Rule or 'lower cost of living.'" Why should it be immoral, then, when a Minister says to a constituency, about to vote—"Elect our man, and we will give you a post-office building policy of which you will ardently approve"? Why should

it be wrong to vote for a "public works" policy you want, and right to vote for a "tariff" policy you want? This is a question of higher ethics which I would like to submit to a Commission of College Professors. "Ah, but," you say, "the government make voting for their man a condition precedent to the granting of the desired policy." Quite so. Governments must always do this, more or less. A government cannot go to the country at a general election, declaring—"We will give you reciprocity, whether you vote for us or not." If the country does not vote for the government, the government will not be in a position to give it reciprocity or anything else. The government must always say to the country—"Vote for us, and we will give you the fiscal policy you want. Vote against us, and you will not get it." Is that immoral? That is the way we manage our system of popular government.

**B**UT if it is perfectly moral and legitimate for the government to say this to two hundred odd constituencies, why does it become immoral for the

government to say it to one constituency? It would probably not be regarded as immoral if the government said it to ten constituencies, for it is well recognized that, if a government were to submit a proposed policy to ten constituencies and they were to reject it, the policy itself would be dropped. At what precise point, then, between ten constituencies and one constituency does it become immoral for a government to tell the voters that its policy depends upon their approval? Again I refer this nice question to our Commission of College Professors. They seem to like "fool," or academic, questions of this sort. They must remember, however, that if they do not find the point at which legitimate consultation of the people ends and bribery of the people begins, they are committed to the statement that a Minister may properly make lavish promises of public works to a constituency about to vote in a buy-election—(typographical error—I mean bye-election). Which is the whole point at issue. "But this has a bad influence on politics," you insist as a last argument. You do not quite know why it is wrong, but you are entirely positive that it is wrong. And so am I. But the wrong lies, not with the Minister, but with the nation which will permit such a policy with regard to "post offices" or other public works to pass unpunished. If that is the standard of Stuffuss and all its sister Stuffusses, then a Minister would be very self-sacrificing not to profit by it. And self-sacrifice in politics leads to where Alexander Mackenzie went.

THE MONOCLE MAN.



**T**HE CANADIAN COURIER mentioned last week that Ham Burnham was recognized as the Bad Boy of Premier Borden's parliamentary family. But the bell prize goes to "Tom" White, the young gentleman who has been entrusted with the making of surpluses and other excellent-sounding things. Tom is the Good Boy. There is a great difference between Ham and Tom. Ham goes his own sweet way, and does as he jolly well likes. Good Boys do what they are told. And—whisper it, as they do in the corridors—that's the real, and perhaps the only, weakness about Tom. Everybody thinks that Tom does what he is told. The other day, when the West Indies trade agreement was before the House for discussion, Tom engaged in a verbal tilt with Dr. Michael Clark. In the course of the interchange he observed, with kindly courtesy: "I always enjoy listening to my honourable friend from Red Deer. He is always original. He is always Dr. Clark." A political friend and personal admirer, hearing the comment, turned to his deskmate and exclaimed: "If Tom White was always Tom White he would be Prime Minister of Canada some day." That's the rub—there's no use denying it. Ottawa looks on Tom White, and he is fair to look upon. Ottawa likes Tom White, and there are few more likeable fellows. Ottawa recounts his already brilliant career, expresses admiration—and adds, "Too bad, he's always been somebody else's man." They run the whole gamut of his achievements. They trace his rise as a public speaker. They recount his contributions to public affairs. They praise the aptness and eloquence of his famous "Naboth's vineyard speech," and recall that it was delivered in a campaign in which the interests which he served were involved. They commend his elevation to the high position of Finance Minister for Canada, and express the conviction that, before the issuing of the also famous "manifesto" by the "noble eighteen," there was an understanding with some one that affected Mr. White, though he was probably not specifically named in the protocols. And thus they go on their way, extolling the personality and accomplishments of the individual, and lamenting that he is always a Man Friday to Someone Else.

All this isn't just to the Good Boy. He isn't half so good as most of his associates think. There are times when he wouldn't do what he was told. He has ideals of his own; he told the House so in the first speech he made. He is a big man because he has been in touch with big things, and, they say, he has succeeded, in the short time in which he has

been in office, in mastering with amazing thoroughness all the intricacies of the complicated financial system of the country. Tom White, they tell us, doesn't have to depend on his deputies.

But it was the general notion that the Good Boy was doing what he was told that let him in for the storm of parliamentary protest which broke about his head, from both sides of Mr. Speaker, when he essayed to pilot through Parliament his recently revised act. Tom hasn't yet caught the spirit of the corridors—perhaps he doesn't mingle with his fellow-members quite enough. The corridors were throbbing with protest, even before the storm broke in the House. Everybody was sorry it was the Good Boy who had to take the brunt of the criticism, for everybody was satisfied that the Good Boy was doing simply what he was told. And everybody thought that the Good Boy was the Bankers' Boy.

Even the Opposition has caught something of the sentiment. They give him the most curious form of attention when he speaks. They, too, think of him as the Good Boy—and Oppositions don't usually find any good boys among the members of the Government. It has been pointed out with truth that in cases where they charge misdemeanour and scandal and whatnot, and Mr. White comes to the defence of the Government, they cry: "Oh, oh," much the same as a crowd of children on the street would cry out if the shining example of the neighbourhood came along smoking a cigarette.

The peculiar problem before the Minister of Finance is living down a good reputation. Maybe, if, like Ham Burnham, the baddest of bad boys, he would cut loose a bit, smash up some furniture, and tell everybody to go to blazes once in a while, he would find the parliamentary path easier. The parliamentarians want him to be Tom White for a while.

**B**IG Frank Carvell, the tall, sinewy New Brunswicker, who loves a parliamentary fight and always wants to be where the shot and shell is thickest, is credited with turning the retort courteous in the most gallant fashion at one of the recent social functions at the Capital. The fighting man from Carleton, according to the story, arrived somewhat late. His name was announced to one of the "ladies of the cabinet" who was assisting in the duties of receiving.

"Mr. Carvell?" the Minister's wife exclaimed in clear tones which carried almost the length of