

THE EDMONTON BULLETIN

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C. F. HAYES, Business Manager.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1910.

A LOST TREASURE

The Legislature very sensibly turned down the bill to amend the Elections Act, introduced by the junior member for Calgary. The bill proposed that—

"After the preparation of the first list of voters as provided by this act no person shall be qualified to be a candidate whose name does not appear on the list of voters for one of the electoral divisions of the province."

"And should a judge of either of the courts resign his office his name shall not be entered on the list of voters for any electoral division of the province until after the expiration of six months from the date of his resignation."

The purpose of the bill was quite obvious before the author explained it in his speech on Monday. It was brought in to afford the worthy gentleman an opportunity to spume and sputter because Mr. Sifton accepted the call to the Premiership of the Province and Mr. Mitchell quit the bench to become Attorney General. The object of the bill as set out in its clauses is to make it impossible for a jurist to enter politics for six months after leaving the bench. It did not take much astuteness to conclude that the suggestion for the bill came from recent events and not from any abstract reasoning as to the wisdom or unwisdom from the public standpoint of having such restriction on the statute books. Any doubt there may have been on that score the author cleared up in his speech. The least of the bill was the clause of the bill, but the subject matter was the entrance of Premier Sifton and Mr. Mitchell into political life. That is what is worrying the real leader of the Opposition. There is room for thinking that what induced him to give up the nominal leadership. It is all very well to lead an Opposition when the Opposition has hope. But when the Opposition finds itself confronting a Government leader admittedly and unquestionably more than a match for its own chief, the position of the latter gentleman becomes one of much trouble and little profit. The retirement of Mr. Bennett from the nominal leadership was his admission that he saw no chance of winning against the Liberals headed by Mr. Sifton. That he had good cause for the conclusion, and for the wrath which the conclusion has provoked, nobody will question. It was a sore touch that after his labors to defeat the late administration he found himself confronted with a man whom he had no chance of beating. His opponents may well extend to the non-unionist gentlemen some measure of jealousy for the head he displays over this matter.

The bill in itself has not much merit. It amounts to saying that an elector shall not go before a constituency for election until six months after his retirement from the bench. What would that accomplish when put to the test? What would it have accomplished in the circumstances which caused the chagrin of the junior member for Calgary and the indignation of the Lieutenant Governor as to whom he shall call to advise him when his former adviser resigns. With this bill on the statute books he would be as free to call a judge, or a man who had resigned from the judgeship a day or a week before, as he was six months ago. Its sole accomplishment would be to prevent the newly chosen adviser going into a constituency and asking for a seat in the Legislature. Had this been the law when Dr. Rutherford resigned it would still have been as possible as ever for the Lieutenant Governor to call Mr. Sifton; but Mr. Sifton would not have been able to ask confirmation of the appointment at the hands of the electors until six months after being called to the position. Mr. Sifton was sworn on May 26th. Had this bill been law he would have been unable to go before a constituency for election earlier than November 26th. Is the object to prevent an appeal to public opinion as to whether the man chosen is a fit and proper person to undertake the task? Obviously that is all that would be accomplished. Now it is only a week since the gentleman Mr. Bennett professes to follow was demitted Premier Sifton for not being called on a general election. And though the Premier ran his election of Vermont during the latter part of June, Conservative papers were denouncing him long before that time for not calling on his election sooner. Mr. Bennett's bill would, have made it impossible for him to either hold the by-election or to bring on a general election earlier than November 26th. Consistency seems to be the lost treasure of the Opposition.

To the Alberta and Great Waterways bill Mr. Bennett proposed

an amendment that the money only be taken over "Subject to any just claims thereon or thereto by the A. G. W. Ry. Co. its successors and assigns." Who is the real leader of the Opposition talking for now?

THE END OF THE GAME.

The Conservatives of British Columbia are pressing upon the Provincial Government the necessity of undertaking some policy looking toward the settlement of the vacant agricultural land in that Province. That they have had to do so is in itself significant. Conservatives are not given to telling their Governments what they should do. Their traditions come from a different direction and tend elsewhere than to democracy. Authority is their motto, and obedience to authority the outstanding characteristic of their party. Never will they have delegates of the national Conservative party met in convention to tell the national leaders what they should do. They are not given to indicating what they thought should be done on any occasion—let alone couch the sentiments in a resolution which necessarily expresses dissatisfaction with what the leaders had done or were doing. British Columbia Conservatives can hardly be supposed to be different in this respect from their fellows in the country over. They have a Government in which they have repeatedly expressed confidence, led by a gentleman for whom they have no great admiration. It is not to be supposed that they are rising to remind the idol of one thing he has left undone without there being some good reason for it, and without some pretty careful consideration of the matter. There must be some foundation for the claim they set up that nothing in the way of attracting settlers has been done, and something also to suggest that nothing is likely to be done unless they get up in arms and demand it.

It would be neither fair nor reasonable to conclude that the Government of British Columbia is hostile toward the increase of population, or indifferent toward means for securing it. There can hardly be alleged regarding any public man in Canada, unless it be the newly chosen leader of the Alberta Conservatives, who confesses that he is not much concerned whether the progress of settlement be retarded or not. This gentleman can not be supposed to speak for the party in British Columbia, nor to voice views that are shared by those members of the party who occupy the treasury benches of that Province. Mr. McEwen is a native of British Columbia, and his colleagues are all familiar with its conditions and needs. It cannot have missed their observation that chief among these needs is a very much larger population than now resides within the provincial boundaries. There are within those borders millions of acres of land which will in time be brought under highly profitable farming. There are forests of magnificent extent and of almost incalculable value. There are in the mountains minerals known to be vast in quantity, but surpassing knowledge in worth and in the opportunity they offer for utilization. British Columbia has all the natural resources for supporting and sustaining a large farming population and also an immense industrial population. These are things well known to the gentlemen who shape her policy. It cannot be supposed that they are indifferent to her requirements as set to the political advantage which would come to them if they could with propriety point to a settlement of thousands of industrious and desirable people from the corners of the earth to utilize the splendid resources of the Province.

But there is another side to the shield; and it is to the other side that the gentlemen on the treasury benches of the Provincial Government are applying. For one thing, roads, bridges, and railways must be built, and it takes a large amount of money to build any of these in British Columbia. This money the Government must find. They do not, as Alberta, draw subsidies from the Federal treasury calculated on the amount of crown land within the Province. On the contrary they have the land and no subsidies. They must get the revenue out of the land. This means that they cannot give the land away. Still more, it means that they cannot spend money in persuading people to come and take it. They must sell it if they are to get revenue from it. And to sell it they must first find a buyer. So far the only buyer who has appeared in any numbers is the speculator. Recognizing that land intrinsically valuable cannot for ever lie undesired, the man who has money to put out in hope of future gain has gone to British Columbia and bought immense tracts of agricultural land. As usual, he picked out the best of it. But he is not farming it. He is holding it till farm prices come along willing and able to buy it and pay him his profit on the transaction. The net result is that the Province got the money and spent it, and the speculator has the choice of the land. Should the Provincial Government now undertake a settlement policy and spend money to bring people of the Province, it would then have to tell them that the remaining crown land was "cull" land which the speculator had rejected, or land so poorly situated that that gentleman municipal politics. The originator of

the idea is said to have been Superintendent McLean, of the waterworks department.

HE MADE A MISTAKE.

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HARDLY CONCLUSIVE.

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IN LIGHTER VEIN.

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INCOME TAX ABOLISHED.

The income tax in Edmonton is a thing of the past, the Legislature having abolished the clause in the city charter legalizing its collection. The poll tax clause has been allowed to drop into disuse this year and the resumption is impossible. Two of the subsidiary sources of revenue are thus abandoned. There remains only the business tax to be wiped out to put the city squarely on the single tax system. There has been a tendency this year to relax rather than to increase dependence on the business tax, and a sentiment in favor of its abolition is rapidly growing. The prospect is that this remaining exception will shortly go the way of the others, and the whole revenue needed for current expenses be thereafter levied on real estate.

DESERVING OF RE-ELECTION.

If the absence of criticism is a proof of good conduct and a sign of public favor, the three aldermen who are running for re-election both deserve to be re-elected and are likely to regain their seats. The campaign has now been under way for a week, and with eleven candidates in the field for five vacancies the record of the present council has hardly drawn an complimentary reference, certainly not what might be called a severe criticism. To the members of the council this can be only taken as commendation, for aspirants to seats at the council board are not usually reticent about alluding to the shortcomings of the men they are likely to oppose. This immunity from censure should count in favor of the three members of the council who are again in the field, and will no doubt recommend them to those electors who are themselves in a way to arouse no hostility should be given another term.

A SANITARY CITY NOW POSSIBLE.

One of the amendments to the city charter passed by the Legislature empowers the city to initial water and sewer services in private premises and to collect the cost by a special tax levied against the property for a number of years. It is significant that this clause successfully ran the gauntlet of the municipal law committee when that committee was struck off all amendments likely to provoke protracted discussion and delay the progress of other business. Those who have urged this line of civic policy have the satisfaction of knowing that it met with the immediate approval of the members of the House comprising the committee when they were looking most closely for proposals likely to provoke disagreement; and that they considered it not likely to even arouse serious difference of opinion among their fellow members. The passing of this amendment opens the way for carrying out the long-denied object of enforcing the installation of water and sewer services, and of thus putting the city in a thoroughly sanitary condition. It will no longer be possible for the householder to plead financial inability against being compelled to put in the services for if he cannot make the improvement himself the city can now make it for him, collecting the cost from him in a series of annual payments. The next thing is to make preparation for utilizing this power promptly and generally. With the opening of spring the dormant by-law compelling installation should be put into force. If this is done, the "use of the summer should find the city as thoroughly sanitary condition as practicable, with a corresponding decrease in epidemics, and a substantial increase in the revenues of the water and sewer departments. Mayor Lee and the council of 1910 deserve a preceptive re-election for having cleared the way for this civic improvement by securing the necessary power from the Legislature. Excise, Mansion, too, deserves a share of the credit, for he made this proposal a plank in his platform in the mayoralty campaign last year, and thus helped to bring it into the field of practical municipal politics. The originator of

the House of Commons should have in it a majority favorable to protection it would be the duty of the new ministry to submit to it at once a tariff reform measure. Mr. Law very naturally and justifiably wanted to know what the people of Manchester preferred in the way of national taxation, and they have left him and his associates in no doubt on the subject. They believe in Mr. Lloyd-George and his land taxes, not in Mr. Bonar Law and his food taxes.

There will be a large majority in the new House against protection in any form and under any name. North-west Manchester has helped to make certain. It follows that the Lloyd-George budget will be continued for a few years without material change, and that it will then stand as little chance of abolition as the fiscal systems of Mr. Gladstone and Sir William Harcourt. By the time another general election comes round it will have taken root so firmly in the national system of finance that no government would venture on any bid to destroy it. Two free trade victories within a year means that there will be no serious assault on it as a system for a generation. So much the better for Great Britain's commercial and financial pre-eminence, which cannot be imperilled so long as she prefers to keep her trade free while other nations prefer to hamper theirs.

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