

# EDITORIAL

STATE ownership or control of newspapers and other periodicals is quite as reasonable as state ownership of telegraphs, railways, waterworks systems or milk companies. The influence of the newspaper cannot be over-estimated. Yet this instrument of public instruction is left in the hands of upstarts, demagogues, rogues, hobby-riders, and a few conscientious men, and most of those in the western world are wagged by their tails—their advertisers. One of the evils resulting from this is to be observed in the United States. The advertisers there demand a circulation amongst women—the chief buyers. The periodicals warp their whole product therefore to “catch the women.” Hence the spectacle of emotional journalism—for it is emotional stuff that “gets” the average woman reader. The whole American body politic is affected. The very stamina of the young males of the uneducated classes particularly is menaced by that emotional journalism. And this evil, in earlier stages, already exists in Canada.

State owned or state supervised newspapers might be placed under penalties for printing false news. State-owned or state-supervised news agencies might distribute the facts of the day in clear, concise language. The periodicals would be either state-supported or supported by the revenue from circulation. Thus the reader of a paper would really pay for it instead of paying a mere fraction of its cost and allowing advertisers to make up the balance. A system of state control might issue licenses to reporters and editors based on character, experience and general knowledge of journalism or of particular journalistic fields. And such a system need not muzzle bold thinkers. It might relieve them of the odium of having to accept their hire from department store advertisers. However, we don't expect the state to control our newspapers until it is able to guarantee a wider freedom of individual opinion than exists in Germany—or in Russia.

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IF it is true that Sir Rabindranath Tagore, the Hindu poet, refuses to include Canada in his tour of America because he resents Canada's treatment of the Hindus in British Columbia, then we have to express disappointment. Tagore might have helped Canadians to a better understanding of the Hindu people. As it is he appears to shirk a duty and neglect an opportunity. Possibly the newspaper despatches quote Tagore incorrectly. It is to be hoped so. He should come.

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THE western farmer should make money on his wheat while yet there is time. When Peace releases Russia's accumulating wheat there is likely to be trouble in Winnipeg.

And, by the way, in the proposed tariff-entente between the Allies how will the competition between our wheat and Russian wheat work out? The entente is in danger of having a greater wheat supply than will be profitable to its wheat growers. India, too, will be concerned, and Australia. In other words, it is possible to argue that the price of wheat among the Entente nations at all events is likely to be depressed. Or would the wheat growers prefer to sacrifice the proposed Tariff Entente among the Allies and sell their wheat to Germany, too?

Moral? Let us “feed” our wheat to Canadian workmen and export the finished product of Canadian labour plus Canadian raw materials, instead of selling the virtue of our soil, in the shape of wheat, at low rates to enable foreign workmen to undersell Canadian workmen in world markets.

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FOR the year 1916 we may be over-railroaded. For the first year of peace—which may be 1917, 1918 or 1919—we cannot be over-railroaded. Three years ago we were boasting of the high ratio of railway mileage to population: To-day we seem to doubt: In the first year of peace we shall be boasting again.

In our railways will be the means of easing the shock of returning soldiers and reviving immigration. They will be to this country what the intricate system of little passage-ways is in a sponge. The sponge may be squeezed dry, but it expands the instant it is released in water. Canada is being squeezed all but dry of her men. Thanks to her railways, she will be able to re-absorb her returned men and the peace-hungry immigrants that will accompany them, or follow them, from Europe. Our net-work of railways will make it possible to distribute the newcomers over tremendous areas without congestion, and with a minimum of embarrassment to the labour market. The existence of our railways will make possible elaborate colonization schemes that could not have been dreamed of under any other circumstances.

And what if we had only the railroads of 1900? Suppose with that equipment we were faced with the problem of distributing large blocks of new population? Congestion, depression and disturbance would be inevitable. We should be compelled to build the necessary new roads on 6% money. As it is, we have them on 4½% money.

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SIR WILFRID LAURIER'S speech to Ontario Liberals in London touched high points of idealism. But it is a question how many of his hearers retained any permanent effect. A noble speech or great sermon is too often a mere twenty-minute thrill, tickling the surfaces of the mind and leaving the soul untouched. There is always the danger that an audience is moved only to praise the speaker and marvel at his art, where they should be led to examine themselves in the light of the speech and set their sights for higher things. It is one of the sad phases in our Canadian public life to observe the naive enthusiasm of the party papers over speeches like Foster's denunciation of patronage and Laurier's more recent appeal for selfless devotion to the state's interests. The fact that a Canadian politician excoriated graft and praised honesty is heralded as something unusual. We make it the occasion for revealing how low is our average conception of the duty of public men, how tolerant we are of sham and dishonesty when thinly veiled. If we were really virtuous it would be tiring to hear virtue praised. We should take the condemnation of evil for granted. Instead of that we are delighted to hear an eloquent man expound these ABC's. What result have we from Foster's “epoch-making” impeachment of the patronage system? What lasting result is to follow Sir Wilfrid's flight of words? Everyone knows that oratory is dying out, and one might be tempted to rejoice at the loss. For too often the audience feels that it has done its duty by applauding righteousness, and the speaker feels that he has acquitted himself of his obligations by dressing the moral law in new words. Speech, too often, exhausts the energy that might otherwise be turned into action. For real eloquence one might commend to Liberals and Conservatives alike, action.

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A COMMON phrase among Englishmen seldom fails to provoke smiles from Canadians. To say “O . . . That sort of thing . . . er . . . isn't done—y' know!” seems to us westerners the height—or the depth—of imbecility. It strikes our undisciplined ears as a confession of stupidity. We interpret it as meaning “O . . . I should never think of doing so-and-so because . . . er . . . because nobody else ever does it.” In comic operas concocted by Broadway Jews, “It isn't done” is frequently placed in the mouths of rickety dukelings, and as a “laugh-getter” ranks very high indeed. In our ears the Englishman's “It isn't done” invites sneers, lends itself to irony, begs for derision. As a matter of fact, however, it is one of the heritages of all Britons, and we are the poorer in Canada for having failed to understand “It isn't done,” and to adopt it into our daily speech and into our psychology. For as a comment on the rightness or wrongness of a given line of conduct it establishes the line between acts of debatable character and acts which are not, for one moment debatable. It signifies that there can be no compromise—not even discussion of the tabooed acts. It indicates, on the part of the man who uses the phrase, loyalty to the general judgment of his fellow men, a willingness to be governed by the general weal rather than by his own opinions. “It isn't done” may be abused. The frame of mind which it represents may be abhorred by individualists. Nevertheless it is an honourable and useful expression. Its use would often save us from entering into discussions with evil and making compromises with sin.

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SIR GEORGE FOSTER'S “announcement of trade policy” at Winnipeg is disappointing. We are willing to concede that his speech to the two thousand Western business men was “brilliant,” and it is mildly interesting to know that he “warned the neutrals” to expect no favours after the war. His declaration that when the world faces peace it faces a “stupendous task” had at least the merit of having been said many times in the past year. But beyond this Sir George did not go. His phrase: “Trade is the hand-maid of production” is quaint but scarcely vital. And his declaration that we must have “a new co-ordination of effort,” an almost painful re-affirmation of what we know only too well. It is surprising to observe Sir George flogging a horse that needs no urging. We are only too eager to leap ahead. Direction alone is needed and Sir George, who should be best able to give it, utters a speech instead of a policy.