The Colonist.

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MR. PARENT'S REPLY.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier has read in the House of Commons the reply of Commissioner Parent to the letter of Major Hodgins relating to improper classification of work upon the National Transcontinental Railway. It may be mentioned that Mr. Parent only replied to the first statement made by Major Hodgins, which he said he took from the Ottawa Citizen and the Manitoba Free Press. As the only letter written by Major Hodgins was to the Colonist, we think that Mr. Parent cannot have had a copy of it before him when he wrote his reply; that is, the copies appearing in the Winnipeg and Ottawa papers were not strictly correct. We find Mr. Parent quoting Major Hodgins as follows: "That the government is paying padded acounts for work done and that the Grand Trunk Pacific people are making no objection because they merely had to pay the added interest." We do not find such a statement as this, or anything like it in Major Hodgins' letter. So far from his holding such a view, he takes the position that the Grand Trunk Pacific is interested in seeing that the cost is kept down. We quote his interview in the Colonist:

It should never be forgotten in considering this matter that the interests of the Canadian public and the Grand Trunk Pacific are identical. The former are building the road east of Winnipeg, and the latter have agreed to lease it for fifty years, paying three per cent. on the cost of construction. Thus both are equally interested in getting the road built on a fair, business-like basis. If any money is paid which should not be paid, it has to come out of the pockets of the Canadian people, while the Grand Trunk has to pay the interest on it. Of course the public will eventually have to pay the extra interest also in the shape of increased freight rates.

Now, if the Grand Trunk Pacific later on refuses to pay interest on certain sums, and give as their reason that their engineers on the work have recommended that they should not pay interest on such sums, the importance of the government immediately insisting on seeing the reports of the Grand Trunk Pacific engineers will be plain to every taxpayer in Canada.

This is quite inconsistent with what Mr. Parent quotes Major Hodgins as saying, and the incorrectness of the quotation destroys the effect of his reply as far as it relates thereto. One of the other quotations is: "The commissioners wanted me to change my ideas based on a good many years' experience on construction for the classification that is allowed contractors in Quebec." This Mr. Parent specifically denies. The other is as follows: "If Mr. Poulin, the engineer appointed by Mr. Parent to replace me on the western district, was not allowed the introduction of a classification similar to that allowed in Quebec, this will account for the estimated cost of the line. If this increase amounts to three or four million the public demanded some explanation." This is incorrectly quoted. Major Hodgins did not say that if Mr. Poulin "was not" allowed certain classifications but "If he has allowed," etc., a very material difference. Mr. Parent dismisses this charge as hypothetical and therefore as of no value. It certainly is of no value unless it is proved, but something more than a mere assertion that the charge is hypothetical is necessary to dispose of it. He also says that he did not appoint Mr. Poulin, but that the whole board appointed him on the recommendation of the Chief Engineer. This is not much more than quibbling. Mr. Parent charges Major Hodgins with a lack of professional dignity, which is a matter of opinion, upon which every one might not be willing to accept Mr. Parent's views. He then goes on to state the reason why Major Hodgins was dismissed, which in substance, he says, was that he proposed a plan of paying the contractors, which the Commissioners had no authority to adopt. This is important because we note that the object of the committee is to investigate Mr. Parent's letter as well as Major Hodgins' charges. It is to be noted that at the time Mr. Parent wrote his letter to the Premier he had not seen the statements of a specific character made by Major Hodgins in his interviews published in the Colonist. His general denial, to which we have referred, only goes to the points quoted above, and one of them is a statement which Major Hodgins did not make, and the other an incorrect report of what he did say.

A "LIBERAL" PLATFORM.

We take the following extract from the Ottawa Free Press. It refers to the resolutions adopted by the Liberals of Yale-Cariboo in convention.

They had no direct interest in advocating the rounding off of Confederation by the inclusion of Newfoundland within the Dominion. Yet that was one of their planks.

The building of a railway to Hudson Bay could in no way benefit them. Yet it met with their unanimous endorsement.

The construction of the Ottawa and Georgian Bay canal must have appealed to the sentiment of the average delegate to the convention as little as would a canal from Georgian Bay to Toronto. Yet they had patriotism enough to see that it was one of those works which are necessary to the full development of Canada, and so it was unanimously endorsed.

In the same way the establishment of an All-Red steamship line could have had no direct attraction for the electors of Yale-Cariboo. Yet the delegates realized that its fruition was necessary to the complete realization of the position which we all hope to find Canada occupying in respect of the Empire at large ere long.

This may be, as the Free Press says, "the Liberal policy," but it is what the people of British Columbia have been educated in for the past decade. Before speaking of the several subjects particularly, we may express surprise that the Ottawa paper should think it extraordinary that the Liberals of any part of this province should display a live interest in questions of the character above described. Although the Liberal representatives of British Columbia have not been conspicuous, to put it mildly, in their advocacy of the greater projects which are requisite for the realization of the full greatness of Canada, the people of the province, Conservatives and Liberals alike, are awake to their importance. The papers of British Columbia, and, we are glad to be able to say, without distinction as to politics, have ever kept to the front the greater problems of Canada. While their eastern contemporaries have been devoting columns day after day for years in succession to partizan debate and violent denunciation, as though the one end and aim of Canadian journalism is to keep in or get in a political party, as the case may be, the press of British Columbia has been endeavoring to develop amongst the people a robust Canadian sentiment, which will place the country's welfare first and party success second, with a wide margin between them. We should, in British Columbia, be ashamed of a political convention, Conservative or Liberal, which failed to take note of the broader questions of Canadian public life.

Referring to the several subjects mentioned in the above quotation, we wonder why the Free Press thinks that the people of Yale-Cariboo have any less direct interest in the annexation of Newfoundland to the Dominion than the people of any other part of Canada. It is too much to expect our Ottawa contemporary to have followed the course of the British Columbia press on this subject, but if it had been able to do so, it would know that the rounding out of the Dominion in the manner mentioned has been a very frequent subject of discussion here. Perhaps the broad life of the West adds to the interest which Western people take in all questions affecting the development of Canada as a whole, but whatever the reason may be, we can assure our contemporary that the British Columbian does not regard federal issues from a parochial standpoint.

Our contemporary thinks that the building of a railway to Hudson's Bay could in no way benefit the people of Yale-Cariboo, and it is surprised that they should favor the construction of a canal from Ottawa to Georgian Bay. This shows how little the Free Press understands the West. It will be surprised to learn that one of the earliest and most persistent advocates of a railway to Hudson's Bay was the Colonist. We shall not enter into the reasons for this, and shall content ourselves with saying that every enterprise which makes for the benefit of Canada as a whole, will, if it is based on sound principles, receive the hearty support of the people of British Columbia irrespective of party. If our contemporary knew British Columbia as British Columbians do, if it knew the place we are all confident that our province will occupy in the development of Canada, it would not be surprised that everything tending to the upbuilding of the country receives hearty support here. The same observation holds good of the All-Red line. We venture to say that the first newspaper in Canada to declare its support to the All-Red project was the Colonist, and there is no reason for surprise in this. For years we people here on the Pacific coast have been looking seaward. We have learned by observation and by reiterated instruction, from qualified sources what the future of trans-Pacific commerce is destined to be, and there is not a valley in all British Columbia where white men live, which is not inspired with the belief that in the expansion of this commerce the secret of its own prosperity and the future greatness of Canada is to be found. British Columbians see the importance of the geographical position of their province. They realize that to and from the six degrees of latitude, which form its coast line, there will flow a commerce to which the history of the world can afford no parallel. They were advocates of an All-Red line before the All-Red project was suggested.

The Liberals of Yale-Cariboo have no monopoly of faith in the future or of a broad and progressive policy for Canada as a whole. They have only stated in their platform a few of the things for which all the people of British Columbia stand and have always stood since such questions were before the public. The restatement of such matters in the platform of the dominant political party is only a belated recognition of their importance. There are other matters which the Liberals of Yale-Cariboo might have mentioned, matters having a more local application, and we wonder if, when they are advanced, the Liberals of Eastern Canada will meet them in the same generous spirit as has surprised the Ottawa paper.

THE ALL-RED ROUTE.

We have already had a telegraphic reference to the paper read by Lord Strathcona at the Royal Colonial Institute, on April 7th, in which he dealt with the proposed All-Red route. The mail brings a synopsis of his observations and we give the thirteen points which he advances in favor of the project. They are as follows:

1. The service would improve the communication between the United Kingdom and Canada, and enable mails and passengers to be conveyed between the two countries more rapidly than at present.

2. It would draw a certain portion of Canadian travel, which now passes by way of New York, back to its proper channel, and by its geographical advantages and its quicker service to the United States, secure many American passengers and some of the mail traffic to Western points.

3. It would provide a faster service than at present to New Zealand and Australia, saving at least ten days to the former, and two days to the latter.

4. It would utilize an alternative route to the East, possessing natural advantages which have not been properly utilized.

5. It would strengthen Great Britain's position in the Atlantic, and furnish additional armed cruisers to aid in keeping the route open in time of war.

6. It would assist in giving Great Britain the control of the Pacific trade, which may pass out of her hands if the route is not utilized.

7. It would provide armed cruisers on the Pacific.

8. It would be available for the conveyance of troops and supplies to the East, and less liable to interruption than any other route.

9. It would bring the different countries in closer touch with each other, and help the consolidation of the Empire.

10. It would be provided at the cost of the different parts of the Empire, and not fall entirely upon one or another.

11. It would supplement the Pacific cable to Australia, which is under joint Government control.

12. It would supplement other steamship routes, and could not fail to assist the commercial expansion of the different parts of the Empire, as well as lead to extra travel.

13. Canada, New Zealand and Australia want the service; and the proposal has certainly been received with much sympathy in the Mother Country.

The importance of these considerations will not be questioned, and it is hardly necessary to attempt to add anything to them. Lord Strathcona's arguments were not absolutely accepted by his audience. One objection made was that the project would interfere with private enterprise. To this he answered:

We need not assume that it is necessary to form a new company or companies. If an arrangement is possible among the existing companies by which the present service could be improved on the Atlantic and on the Pacific, they would certainly be able to make out a strong case for special consideration. It seems to be the idea of some people that the All-Red Route is merely a scheme for company exploitation. Its introduction under official auspices at the Imperial conference must be regarded as a rebuttal of any such assertion. The one consideration is the improvement of the means of communication between the different parts of the Empire, by taking advantage of an alternative route which has not yet been utilized to the extent its importance deserves and the interest of the Empire requires.

He also said that the new route would make a traffic of its own. In time it would soon become self-supporting, but at the outset it would require state aid, because, if left to private enterprise "it might take years or a generation before it is brought into being," and because there is always a chance that foreign competition will make a bid for inter-Imperial commerce. Lord Strathcona expresses his confidence that he would live to see the enterprise in successful operation, and concluded his observation by saying: "I believe it is destined to fulfill the most sanguine expectations of those who look upon it as likely to prove of the greatest possible benefit to the Motherland, Canada, Australasia and the Empire at large."

BUILDING A NATION

We find doubts expressed in the British press as to the ability of Canada to assimilate the various nationalities, which go to make up the tide of immigration flowing into the country. This was to be expected. There are people in Canada who are not so certain about the matter as they would like to be, and have very grave doubts as to the ability of the British type to dominate all others. The failure of the French-Canadians to become assimilated with the English is cited as affording a reason why other nationalities may be expected to remain distinct, but we do not think any argument can be based upon that fact, for the position of the French element of the population is unique. Behind it there has been the strongest organization in the world today, the Roman Catholic church. If it had not been for its influence French Canada would long ago have been Anglicized. The French-Canadian, away from Quebec, readily falls into the ways of the dominant element in the population. There is no organization behind the nationalities, which have come and now are pouring into the Dominion from the Continent of Europe. Hence they will soon lose their distinctive qualities. The first generation, that is the original immigrants themselves, naturally retain many of the characteristics of the race from which they are sprung, but the second generation is usually indistinguishable except by name from Canadians of British extraction. We think we see signs that even the French-Canadian element is falling more into step with the rest of the populataion. We must not be impatient about the work of assimilation of the latter. It is going to take a long time, and in the meantime a type of people is being developed in Quebec, which in some particulars has no superior in the world.

Something can be learned from experience in matters of this kind. In the city of Victoria we have representatives of many nationalities. Disregarding the Orientals, who neither desire to assimilate with us nor we with them, it can be said with truth that among our best citizens are men who are not of Canadian or British origin. They have confidence in our institutions, and would be among the first to defend them. They do not constitute groups by themselves, but take part in municipal, provincial and Dominion affairs with as full an appreciation of the principles underlying them as any other people in the community. Their place of birth may have been in France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Greece or anywhere else, they are in spirit and conduct good Canadians and loyal subjects of His Majesty. Not only so, but they are among the most progressive of our people and as observant of the laws of the land as any one else. We concede that where considerable communities are made up of peasants from the same part of Continental Europe the process of assimilation may be slower than where the alien races form a small minority of the population, but the genius of British institutions will, we feel confident, be equal to the building up in Canada of a nation, whose people will have a diverse origin, but will preserve the best features of the several races from which they are sprung.

FRANCHISE AMENDMENT

The Ottawa Free Press discusses the proposed amendments to the Dominion Franchise Act, and gives the reasons why, in its opinion, there ought to be new provisions governing Manitoba and British Columbia. We have not in our references to this subject made any particlar mention of the condition of the law in Manitoba. The people of that province can be trusted to look after their own interests. We do not believe any reasons exist for placing the prairie province upon a different footing from the other provinces, but into this we will not enter. The observations of the Ottawa organ of the govern ent in regard to Manitoba are applied by it to this province, and therefore we quote them.

The Dominion Elections Act, in providing for the use of the provincial voters' lists in Federal elections, specifies in clauses 6, 7 and 8 (chapter 6 of the Revised Statutes) two different kinds of provincial lists. One class of provincial lists is permanent, viz., those which are revised from year to year and are, therefore, available for use whenever a Dominion election is called. There is also a provision that where the lists of a province are prepared "not at regular intervals but at such times as are fixed by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, or some other provincial or local authority," for the "purpose of a general or other election," they will be available for Dominion use for only one year from the time they were compiled.

Once the year elapses, new lists, based upon the provincial qualifications, must be compiled by Dominion officials, but according to provincial law. When the Dominion Elections Act was passed in 1898 all the provinces which had permanent election lists compiled them and revised them annually by the agency of the municipal councils. At that time in Manitoba lists were prepared for particular elections and they lapsed after one year. The lists were available for Dominion purposes for only that limited time.

It was not until 1904 that the Province of Manitoba decided to keeps its election lists alive from year to year by an annual revision, so-called. These lists were made permanent for the admittedly sole purpose of giving the Conservative an advantage in Dominion elections. This is proven by the striking fact that the legislation of the Manitoba Government of 1904 took out of the hands of the judges the appointment of elections officials and the power of making regulations governing the making of the lists; and by the well known circumstance that, year by year since that date, the conditions governing the registration and revision have been manipulated in the interests of the Conservatives and, therefore, against the interests of the Liberals.

The Manitoba lists were foisted upon the Dominion in 1904 by sharp practice; that they worked to the direct advantage of the Conservatives and to the disadvantage of the Liberals. Is it any wonder, therefore, that the Liberals of Manitoba, and of British Columbia also (for practically the same conditions prevail there), should now appeal to the grand jury of the nation to remedy that disability imposed upon them by Roblin and Rogers and should be asked to be placed upon the same footing as the other provinces?

Omitting all political references or expressions of opinion one way or the other, we propose to show that there is no excuse for a new revision in British Columbia for the reason that the lists are revised at regular intervals and very frequently. We venture to say that in no part of Canada is there a more regular and systematic revision of the voters' lists than in British Columbia. For the information of the Free Press we quote the law on the subject. It will be found in Section 10 of Chapter 17 of the Provincial Statutes of the session of 1903-04, but the provisions are the same as are contained in Chapter 67 of the Revised Statutes, into which they were taken from the Consolidated Acts of 1888, the provisions of which were substantially the same as those of the Act of 1876. The only important change during the last thirty-two years has been to provide for a revision every six months instead of once every year. The Statute of 1903-04, after providing that the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council may appoint registrars of voters and pointing out how persons may apply to be registered says:

On the first Monday of May and November in each and every year the Registrar shall hold a court of Revision of which two months' notice shall be given by him; such notice shall be published in the British Columbia Gazette, and copies of such notice shall be posted in the office of such Registrar and on the door of the principal Court House of the Electoral District and in not less than three conspicuous places within the district or for the polling division whereof he is appointed.

The Act then goes on to prescribe how the registrar shall deal with applications before him either to add to or strike off names and how he shall finally make up the list. These provisions have always been found to be wholly satisfactory. They have been regarded as fair to all parties, and for thirty-two years no cause of complaint and most certainly no scandal has ever arisen as to the manner in which they have been carried into effect. Under these circumstances we submit that the Free Press has not made out a case as far as this province is concerned. We repeat that we are not discussing the case of Manitoba, although we have no doubt whatever that the existing laws in that province are absolutely fair.

A GOOD SUGGESTION.

We have a letter from a correspondent, in which he says: "Fifty years have come and gone since a few of us old boys landed at Victoria in 1858. Time is passing fast, and I think it would be a good idea for us '58 pioneers to have a bit of a reunion this year so as to keep up old time reminiscences. If we could manage to have a nice little banquet, say, on July 1st or July 4th at some hotel, we might be pleased to again meet each other, exchange old time experiences, swap lies and have a general good time. I mean only those who arrived in 1858, no others; we could invite as many others as we desired. If any of the old pioneers of 1858 think well of this scheme I wish they would write to me. I think we can get up some kind of an affair to astonish the younger generation of mossbacks." Our correspondent is Mr. Frank Sylvester, of this city, and we hope his invitation to his fellow pioneers will meet with a hearty response.

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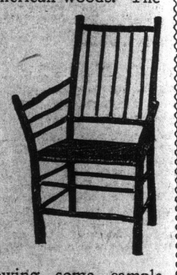

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