

# The Standard

Published by The Standard Limited, 22 Prince William Street, St. John, Canada.

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SAINT JOHN, SATURDAY MORNING, JAN. 28, 1911

## THE PRIMARY IN CIVIC ELECTIONS.

Before resuming discussion of certain features which seem objectionable in the Des Moines plan of government by commission, which it is proposed to introduce in St. John, The Standard wishes to make it clear that it has no thought of attacking the Advertising Committee of the Board of Trade, or the Board itself, for the stand they have taken in favor of the change. The object they have in view, the betterment of civic government, is fully recognized. The Standard is not passing judgment on the commission plan as a whole, and in taking the negative side and submitting points which appear pertinent to the subject, the intention has been and is to give the people of St. John an opportunity to consider all sides of the civic problem. That the Telegraph and the Times should regard the objections which The Standard has raised as neither "legitimate" nor "honest" and "the work of an enemy" is not material at the present juncture, as neither Journal, so far, has shown that it has an intelligent grasp of any side of the question.

The provision for primary elections is a distinguishing and important feature of the Des Moines commission plan, and, as in previous articles, the subject will be considered from the negative side of the argument as affecting St. John. In the United States, when a single party enjoys an overwhelming majority, nomination by that party is tantamount to election. To insure popular control of the choice of officers, the device of the primary election is resorted to. Each voter in the party may at the primary election register his preferences as to candidates, and the persons receiving the highest number of votes are declared the candidates of the party. The device is essentially the main-spring which also controls party machinery in Canada, and that there are wheels within wheels connected with it, which do not always run smoothly, has been demonstrated quite recently in this city. The point to consider is, what will result from the introduction of the primary into civic politics in St. John. Will it give a fair field and no favor, and let the best man win, or will it lead to combinations, factions, deals and even graft from which, under our present system, we are almost, if not entirely, free?

Reverting to Des Moines, let us review briefly the conditions which prevailed at the time of the first election under the commission plan in March, 1908, and again at the second and last election in March 1910. The advocates of the new Des Moines charter, previous to the first election, divided into two camps, those who emphasized its Democratic character as placing the control of municipal affairs in the hands of the community as a whole, and others who contended that there must be organized action to elect the best citizens, that a ticket of five men should be selected on whom the better element would unite at the primary, and carry on a campaign on their behalf until the final election. Into this controversy entered a personal element. A third party supported Mr. John MacVicar, former Mayor of the city, and "one of the most adroit politicians in the state." It may be as well at this point to mention that the foregoing facts and the above quotation are taken from Mr. Hamilton's "Dethronement of the City Boss," the guide, philosopher and friend of the advocates of commission for St. John, and a most interesting and instructive work, to which the Times called our attention.

Now here we have in Des Moines a situation developed, absolutely foreign to our ideas of civic elections in St. John. A sectional or party spirit was roused, and it is small wonder that the press of Des Moines should refer pointedly to "political machinations." Further complications arose. Mr. MacVicar became an independent candidate. The party which favored organization carried out its plan and placed five men, known as "the slate," in the field. An influential local paper with a strong hold on the working men abandoned the supporters of the charter, and urged the election of Mr. MacVicar and two other independent candidates, Mr. Charles W. Schramm, a city assessor, and Mr. John L. Hamery, a reform member of the old council. A fourth newspaper urged the election of candidates put forward by the "city hall gang."

This was a fairly healthy mixture of rival factions, combinations, "slates" and other interests for the citizens to decide between at the primary, and we can well believe from what the author of "The Dethronement of the City Boss" tells us that strenuous efforts were put forward to capture the vote. "The partisans of the 'slate,'" says Mr. Hamilton, "succeeded at the primary in getting four of their five candidates on the final ballot." Against these candidates were pitted A. J. Mathis for Mayor, and for Councilmen (commissioners) Messrs. MacVicar, Hamery and Schramm, with Wesley Ash, a coal miner, and W. H. Brereton, a contractor, who had been prominent in city politics, and was a member of the old council.

Now mark the result of this primary election system in Des Moines, and we quote Mr. Hamilton's own words:—"Judge Mathis who had, as head of the police court, been a prominent factor in maintaining a virtual license system for prostitution, levying periodical fines on fallen women," **WAS ELECTED MAYOR**, every candidate on "the slate" which consisted of "five exceptional men," to again quote Mr. Hamilton, **WAS DEFEATED**; MacVicar, "one of the most adroit politicians in the city and state," **SECURED ELECTION** as one of the commissioners, with Schramm, Hamery and Ash, as his colleagues. Ash represented "the liberal element." Mr. Hamilton tells us, "who DESIRED WHAT IS KNOWN AS A WIDE OPEN TOWN AS TO GAMBLING, SALOON RESTRICTIONS, AND THE SOCIAL EVIL." Schramm and Hamery, the remaining two commissioners, appear to have been fairly decent members of society.

Taking the personnel of at least the majority of the commission, the mayor who levied "periodical fines on fallen women," the commissioner "who was one of the most adroit politicians in the city," and the other high minded gentleman, who desired "a wide open town," we venture to think that the primary election system which placed them in office, and we know how primaries can be "worked" even here in St. John, has nothing to commend it over our present time honored custom of the single ballot.

But this was the first election under the new plan in Des Moines. The election of 1910, we are told by Mr. Hamilton, "took on a radically different aspect from that of 1908, although it was characterized, as was the latter, by the formation of numerous local clubs, improvement leagues and other organizations." It is regrettable that Mr. Hamilton does not particularize as to those "other organizations." Judge Mathis had

for his opponent for the mayoralty, Mr. James R. Hanna, a professor at Highland Park College, and an expert in civics and economics. He had been a member of "the slate" in the previous election, and was a man of exceptional character, but "the judge" beat him out by 1700 votes at the primary. All the other members of the first commission qualified for the final ballot.

But there was a new and surprising development when the names of all the ten successful candidates at the primary came to be considered together. Five of the ten nominees, it was discovered, Messrs. Mathis, Ash, Brereton, Needham and Roe, stood for "a wide open town." They were "a slate," to quote Mr. Hamilton, "that had been unobtrusively endorsed by the 'consolidation club,' an organization extemporized by the liberal element in which saloonkeepers, gamblers and advocates of licensing the social evil had been active and prominent." The primary in this instance served one good purpose, it exposed the game that was being played, and only Ash and Roe of the "wide open town" gang secured seats on the commission. Judge Mathis put up a strenuous fight, but lost by 16 votes.

The point to be considered from this brief review of the working of the primary system on the commission plan in Des Moines is the opportunity it affords for combinations, slates and other organizations to work secretly to the detriment of the community. A commissioner, once in office, is going to remain in office if he can. It is his living, for he has no other employment, and he needs the money. Will his salary support him and pay the election expenses of the organization he is bound to maintain? Are we expected to believe that graft and its attendant evils did not influence the election of the mayor "who maintained a virtual license system for prostitution," the commissioner, still in office in Des Moines, who was such an "astute politician," and the two members who stand for "a wide open town?" St. John, in spite of all the sins which are laid at the door of the present system of civic government, is happily on a higher social plane than Des Moines; perhaps even the enthusiastic band of civic reformers will admit that. It will be well to consider whether some less drastic method than a complete revolution of our constitutional system cannot be devised before we stoop to apply the remedy which it is evident is not proving entirely successful in the city when the experiment is being made.

It may be urged that in St. John the primary would be no draw back to the adoption of the commission plan, that it has demonstrated its usefulness in Des Moines and would be equally effective here. That it has only partially succeeded in Des Moines is evident from the composition of the present council. In St. John conditions we admit, are different. We are not talking politics in this article, but if inquiry should be made in the proper quarter, we believe information is obtainable that primaries can be silently, but effectively, controlled even in St. John, with the most surprising results.

## CARPING CRITICS.

If any individual took the editorial utterances of the Telegraph and Times seriously, he would be disposed to take the view that the Hazen Government is composed of very perverse men indeed. They do nothing right, whether it be the repairing of roads, the mending of bridges, or the protection of the forests. Whatever they do is wrong in the estimation of those astute gentlemen, who control the destinies of the Canterbury street journals, apparently because the thing is done by the Hazen Government.

It would be impossible for any intelligent body of men, and even the Telegraph and Times admit that not only the Premier himself and the members of his Government are not lacking in intelligence, could be wrong as often as the Telegraph says they are wrong. Even a blunderer must of necessity do a thing rightly on occasions. It is contrary to all precedents that a man or a party must be always wrong, just as it is impossible that even such wise men as those who dole out the humor, the pathos and the twaddle that daily does duty on the editorial pages of the Telegraph and Times should be always right.

Nothing could be more absurd than the attacks made upon the Hazen administration by these two opposition journals. It is a daily display of ignorance that must startle such men as the Leader of the Opposition and bring a mantle of shame to the brow of that master of rhetoric, Mr. Copp, of Westmorland. Both these gentlemen know much about the affairs of the province, both financial and legislative, and if they make a statement that will not bear very close investigation, they do so with the intent to better a very bad cause.

Any attempt to defend many of the transactions of the old Government requires not only an athletic mind, but an elastic conscience—more elastic certainly than that of Mr. Robinson who has permitted a great many charges made by Mr. Hazen to pass unanswered. There was good reason for this. There was no answer because the acts were wrong and utterly indefensible. Even the Telegraph does not attempt to defend the old Government, and when the acts of some of those upon whom its own life blood depends are exposed, howls in desperation that it is Mr. Hazen who is on trial, not the old Government.

This answer was all very well two years ago, last year, but this year the Hazen Government, having been in power for two full years, there is now an opportunity to compare the kind of government they have given the province with what they had before, and the comparison is altogether in favor of Mr. Hazen.

The Telegraph charges the Government with extravagance because more money has been spent on the public service than by the old Government. It is true that Mr. Hazen has spent more because he had more to spend. Part of this increase came from the larger Dominion subsidy, but the greatest part from the better administration of the Crown Lands, and the collection of the stumpage on the lumber cut. It was claimed that this increase was due to an increased cost of lumber, but the lumber reports for a series of years show that the Telegraph and Times were wrong in this statement as in many others. There has been no increase in lumber shipments for several years. There is a variation of one year with another, but the lumber shipments from New Brunswick have not shown any considerable change for years past. The real truth of the matter is, as has been stated time and again by Mr. Grimmer, that the present system gives an honest administration of the Crown Lands and the people of the province are being paid for their lumber.

The Telegraph has no word of commendation for Mr. Hazen and his Government for what has been done to increase the revenue of the province. They condemn the Government because the main roads of the province have not been paved. They compare the roads of some states in which millions have been spent to secure permanent highways with those of New Brunswick.

The outgoing Government of Mr. Robinson left the Hazen administration a legacy of bad roads and rotten bridges, which have cost much to repair. The Telegraph has nothing to say about this. Practically every bridge in the province has been repaired to a greater or lesser extent by the Hazen Government, and this has been done without adding a single cent to the bonded indebtedness of the province. Half a million almost has been expended in this work and yet the Telegraph can do nothing but criticize.

What the editors of both the Telegraph and Times require is to take an elementary course in the political history of New Brunswick for a few years back. At present they display an ignorance of provincial affairs that relieves their misstatements of any sting.

## MACKINTOSH'S WEEKLY LETTER

St. John, N. B., Jan. 27.—After a prolonged discussion at the meeting of the directors, the Bank of England reduced the rate from 4 1/2 per cent. to 4 per cent. Money seems to be easier, discount rates in foreign centres are also lower than in London and there seems to be an absence of foreign gold demand. The New York call loan rate is easier, ranging from 2 3/4 to 2 1/4 per cent. On the other hand the Montreal rate holds firm at 5 1/2 per cent. The bond issue of \$60,000,000, 4 1/2 per cent. New York city debentures were sold at 100.904. This issue was over-subscribed more than five times. On this showing it would seem there is enough surplus money in American investment circles for all presumably sound enterprises and it would seem to prepare more effectively for successful bond issues by the various railways. There is a rumor to the effect that Morgan, who left this side this week, has sold \$25,000,000 Southern Pacific 4 1/2 per cent. bonds in Paris with the option of \$25,000,000 additional. It has been known some time that the Harriman roads were contemplating new financing to be accomplished during the early part of the present year. The New York market has been dull and firm during the week. On Monday the bears tried to lower prices by raiding United States Steel on the news that the House Rules Committee at Washington had given a hearing to Congressman Stanley, of Kentucky, in advocacy of his resolution proposing a congressional investigation of the U. S. Steel Corporation. The proposed resolution was very sweeping in its scope and if adopted would authorize drag-net investigation of all affiliations of the Steel Corporation. The Commission on the investigation of monopolies and investigation committee asked for under advisement. Contrary to expectations, the Norfolk & Western declared the regular dividend of 1 1/4 per cent. quarterly. It was freely rumored that this stock would go on a 6 per cent. basis. Atchison has been firm with about two points advance on the highly favorable report for December which showed an increase of \$550,000 net income. Copper stocks are still weak, the demand for the metal seems to be falling off and business is being done at declining prices. The general market seems to be awaiting further developments, stocks offered are readily absorbed and there is no doubt are big short interests in such stocks as Union Pacific and Copper, and until these interests are eliminated it looks as if the market will go higher. Business conditions continue to show slight improvements and the reports coming in of railroad earnings is much better than for the last month or two.

**The Cotton Market.**  
The cotton market this last week had been firm, but inactive, prices ranging for latter months from 15.05 to 14.85. The general interest seems marking time. Liverpool is still a heavy buyer at an advance of prices and at the same time there is apparently accumulated short interests in New York. If Liverpool continues to absorb cotton at these prices there is a chance of New York over-selling when, if such is the case, there will no doubt be higher prices for cotton.

**The Montreal Market.**  
The Montreal market has held the gains of last week and in some instances prices worked higher. Canadian Converters an ordinarily inactive stock, gained 4 to 5 points. Rio was again strong on buying from Toronto and reached 109 1/2. Plenty of this stock came on the market and it appears to have been readily absorbed at 107 1/2. The buying of R. and O. still continues making for higher levels in price for this stock. Cement Preferred has had more than its share of weakness, which, the stock being taken off the market by investors, one block of 3200 shares being purchased by Thornton Davidson and Co. This is the largest individual transaction on the market for some time. Cement Common appears to have weakened on advice that the earnings of the company did not come up to expectations. It is estimated that only 2 per cent. instead of 3 per cent. will be carried on the common stock. C. P. R. is firm owing to the idea that reciprocity between Canada and the United States will open up a brighter prospect for the road. B. J. Bennett, general manager of the Amalgamated Asbestos Company, has retired and the directors have appointed D. J. Sharp, of the Peabody Coal Company, who enjoys a wide reputation as a mine manager and practical man. The Amalgamated Asbestos Company has made entrenchment in the last few months and altogether has saved about \$40,000 in administration expenses. The directors have had frequent meetings lately and it is understood that reorganization now under way will result in a saving that will thereby save the company mentioned. La Rose this week has taken a further rise and is now selling from 4 1/4 to 4 3/4. No doubt the good news on the earnings of this company is having its effect, and if the dividend is increased the stock should sell higher. Crown Reserve has also taken a move up, the apparent cause being that the stock is oversold. The directors declared the regular monthly dividend of 5 per cent. which would net about 22 per cent. upon the present selling price of this stock.

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## NO PREFERENCE FOR THOSE MAINE SPUDS

Objection Taken to Plea That Tariff Rebate Should be Made on Maine Potatoes Through St. John.

According to the Bangor Daily News it is reported from Washington that the state department is not disposed to accede to the request of the Maine representatives in congress, made two weeks ago, that the government should protest against the refusal of Cuban customs authorities to allow a rebate of 10 per cent. on Maine potatoes imported into Cuba via St. John, N. B. It was argued by the Maine delegation that these potatoes, shipped in bulk from Maine to St. John, and there packed in barrels for shipment to Havana, should have the benefit of the

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preference clause of the reciprocity treaty, but it is said that some of the Massachusetts delegation, acting in behalf of a line of steamers between that port and Havana, have objected, saying that the Maine potatoes shipped via St. John are packed in barrels of Canadian make, whereas the customs regulations require that original packages must not be changed from time of departure from a United States port in order to insure merchandise the benefit of preferential discounts in duty; that St. John is not in the United States, and that, therefore, the preference cannot be granted in this case.

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