

The Toronto World

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FIGHT ALL ALONG THE LINE

The Conservative party at Ottawa seems to be moving toward complete ownership. The line of attack chosen by most Liberal journals is that the movement is not made in good faith, but merely to win popularity, votes and power. This is a very old mission that the cause of public ownership is strong in the support of the people.

The charge of trifling and insincerity can be met by Conservatives only in one way—by throwing themselves heart and soul into the cause of public ownership, and helping it wherever and whenever the opportunity presents itself. And here it must be borne in mind that public ownership is not merely a federal question, or a provincial question, or a municipal question. The relations between railways, electric companies, telephone companies and the people have arisen largely since our constitution was framed. They cross the old constitutional boundaries; they break down the old constitutional fences. For instance, a municipality seeking to establish an electric light system finds itself hampered by the Commence Act, enacted by the Ontario legislature. The legislature and its committees must be continually watched to prevent encroachments on municipal rights and powers. Public ownership means municipal as well as government ownership. Conservatives must be found fighting in every field, must be on the alert at every point, if they desire to take the lead in this great struggle for the rights of the people. They must be like the Japanese, ready and willing to fight on land or sea, as occasion may require.

The telephone stands another good illustration of this necessity for watching the corporations at every point. If you seek to regulate telephone companies at Ottawa, the question of provincial rights will be raised. If the municipalities seek to regulate them they find themselves hampered by privileges obtained by the Bell people at Ottawa. The mayor and council of Toronto are now trying to settle the telephone question. They can make terms with the independent companies. But the Bell people stand upon the powers they obtained at Ottawa; the city is dependent for fair treatment largely upon laws and regulations made at Ottawa. Again, the long-distance service is beyond the power of the municipalities. The questions involved are municipal, federal, provincial. We must have friends and champions in all these fields.

The City of Toronto has a peculiar interest in all these questions of railway, electric and telephone service. It can help itself and also help the whole country by electing mayors, controllers, aldermen, members of the Dominion parliament and members of the Ontario legislature, who are out-and-out advocates of government ownership. The City of Toronto is strongly Conservative. Its Conservative electors have it in their power to elect representatives in every field to fight the battle of government ownership. In this way they will advance the public interest, which is the first consideration; and they will strengthen the hands of Mr. Borden and the Conservative party by showing that the party is in earnest. The fight for public ownership is a big fight, and it cannot be won except by sincerity, whole-hearted advocacy and consuming zeal.

CHINESE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Political parties in Great Britain are still hotly disputing the question of employing Chinese labor in South Africa. The charge made by the opponents of the government is that the system is virtually one of slavery. Premier Balfour replied that similar systems had been in force in British dependencies for many years, under the name of indentured labor. Mr. Sydney Buxton says there are great differences between the South African system and that in force in British Guiana some years ago. The object of the British Guiana ordinance, he says, is to secure faithful observance of the contract and proper treatment for the laborer. After the contract is terminated, the coolie is free either to leave the colony or to settle down and become an ordinary citizen, which he is encouraged to do by cheap grants of land, etc.

On the other hand, the object of the Transvaal ordinance is very different. The first object is to treat the laborer merely as a chattel, and to prevent him from coming into living contact with those among whom he is to reside, and for whose benefit he is to work. In order to secure this the immigrants are to be confined together in large numbers in compounds, and kept under lock and key. They are to be prohibited from going outside the Witwatersrand district even when on leave. They are not to be allowed any leave without a permit; and the permit is to be given entirely on the part of the employer, who need not let them out of the compound at all, and who must not give them more than 48 hours' leave at a time. They are limited absolutely to "unskilled labor in the

exploitation of minerals." They are prohibited from acquiring any property of any sort or kind, or from engaging in any trade, and, finally, it is provided that at the end of the term of indenture the laborers shall without fail be shipped back to China.

Mr. Balfour replies that he did not assert that the two systems were identical, but that it was unfair to defend the one and denounce the other as slavery. Whatever may be thought of the details of the controversy, there can be no doubt that the raising of the question has done good. A costly and bloody war was waged to secure equal rights for all sorts and conditions of men in the Transvaal, and it would be deplorable if in the haste to get rich the precious results of the conflict should be lost or even imperiled.

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP AND POLITICS

Defenders of monopolist corporations are sadly put to it when they refrain from debating the merits of municipal ownership, and resort to personal abuse and the imputation of wrong motives. These special advocates of public plundering corporations seem to imagine they are using irrefragable arguments when they can say that some men of affairs, under conviction of political sin, have not yet been soundly converted to the doctrine of public ownership of public utilities. But the World and those who have assisted in doing the spade work of this reform movement are not going to intermit their efforts now that the harvest time is come. The World is ready to admit it has been with the advance guard, that it has done much of the scouting, and has encountered positions impregnable meantime by reason of long immunity from attack and the opportunity given their garrisons of mercenaries to raise ramparts and dig trenches both wide and deep. They thought to dwell secure and from them continue to prey upon the long suffering people who had so passively become their hearers of wood and drawers of water. It will not be always so. The hour of doom is coming fast; and even now is visible the beginning of the end. On every side public opinion is being stirred, as it never has been before. No doubt it would have suited the corporations who love the darkness rather than the light, for the usual reason—to ignore the rising tide in the fond delusion that it was but the transient play of a passing gust of popular passion. There is more than that behind it, as they now very well know.

If the special pleaders for this losing cause really believe in their specious protestations, let them come into the open, and discuss this great question on its naked merits. Let them show, if they can, how disastrous municipal ownership and control has been in the cities of Great Britain. Let them answer the figures which have been repeatedly quoted in these columns, and refute the testimony of every impartial investigator who has gone there and seen for himself what it is, what it means and what it does. The World knows it is making a safe challenge; for municipal ownership has long since passed from the region of experiment into that of proven fact. Only one refuge remains to the defenders of private monopoly, and it is a weapon they dread to use. Occasionally it has made its appearance, but handled so gingerly as to show that if it has the virtues it has also the defects of the boomerang. It is impossible, they say, to introduce municipal ownership because Canada has not the class of men who can be entrusted with the control of public franchises. The World regards this as a gross libel on the citizens of Canada. Unfortunately it must be admitted that there are scandals attaching to civic administration in this fair land. Whose is the blame? These very corporations whose advocates now seek to turn the corner by the means of fastening themselves still more firmly upon the body politic of the state. Why is it that in cities like Glasgow, Liverpool or Manchester, "the representatives of the press seek information concerning the latest improvements and not for details of the latest official plundering? There is no 'great' there is no 'pull,' there is no 'pat.' What answer is to be given to these things? The World has no hesitation in saying that the success of the municipal ownership cause in Canada is the first step towards the purification and strengthening of civic administration. It is a gross libel on the Canadian people to assert that men are not to be found here as capable as those who are as public-spirited as those who are honorably and profitably conducting the municipal enterprises of Britain—"men who would no sooner think of robbing their city than they would of stealing from their church or their club." Meantime the opponents of our cause, in their effort to slacken, the World holds itself free to strike a blow anywhere and everywhere, and more especially where the press, which ought to be the guardian and champion of the interests of the people, has been muzzled or is afraid to be independent to expose the wrong and defend the right.

UNION WITH NEWFOUNDLAND

In the Canada Law Review for May there is an article on the Newfoundland question by Col. W. N. Panton, who has given great attention to the question. Col. Panton emphasizes the fact that the initiative lies with Canada, and says that Canada will support the government in offering the most generous terms. He points out that a campaign of education will be needed in Newfoundland to overcome an impression that prevails that Canada does not properly appreciate the position of the islanders. It will be necessary also to contend with monopolies and subsidies which prevent a broad national judgment from being formed. Harm was done in Newfoundland by our declining its proposals for union in 1855, when the island was suffering from financial depression. Rightly or wrongly, the people of Newfoundland feel a little sore against Canada for various causes, and it will be our duty to overcome this feeling.

Col. Panton goes on to point out the importance of Newfoundland to Canada. One half of our Pacific coast is cut off by United States territory. The only Atlantic sea coast Canada has is Nova Scotia, for everything north of the Straits of Belle Isle to Hudson

Straits is under the jurisdiction of Newfoundland.

There is no use in denying the fact that a good deal of federal expenditure will be required if Newfoundland comes into the confederation. There are no public schools, but the denominational schools receive large public grants. Their ways are not exactly our ways. The government is centralizing and paternal, and there are no municipal taxes collected by the City of St. John's. These are matters of detail, and when once the island comes in it will gradually be educated into the same position as the other provinces, and the question of expenditure will soon cease to give trouble. Mr. Panton's article is a very interesting one and full of information for those who desire to study the question.

CANADIAN TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILWAY

Editor World: Instead of a foreign money-lender, railway, as the Grand Trunk Pacific project of the Laurier government will be, it is important that a Canadian transcontinental railway should be built, owned and operated by the government. The Intercolonial Railway should be used to Quebec and the continent from Quebec to Lake Abitibi, and thence direct via the Nelson River, crossing through Edmonton to Port Simpson. For ample evidence of this is furnished by the present two routes from Winnipeg to the north. A third road can be built when required to connect with the transcontinental road east of Winnipeg. To build another railway without its adding to develop the country directly east and west of the Nelson River, crossing in the country from Quebec to Lake Abitibi, and thence direct via the Nelson River, crossing through Edmonton to Port Simpson. For ample evidence of this is furnished by the present two routes from Winnipeg to the north. 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