

A POLITICAL VACUUM CLEANER

AMONG the silent, workaday personalities who belong to the essentially new regime in the West, count on Albert Bluelock Hudson, Attorney-General of Manitoba. There's a big significance about the advent of a man like Hudson to the public life of the West. No man in the Norris Cabinet so well exemplifies the spirit of the protest movement that put machine politics on the shelf in this Province. This has little or nothing to do with party politics. The result would have been the same if Hudson were a Conservative. It has, however, a great deal to do with Hudson; and it's the personality of this lawyer pushed up from plain business into public life that helps to make the new way in Manitoba feel as much ahead of the old machine game as the elevation of W. M. Martin did to the Premiership of Saskatchewan.

The new men in the West are not all a protest against either one party or the other. They are a kick against the machine, no matter which political trademark it bears. And Attorney-General Hudson, of all the new men who have stepped out and are yet to step out into an evangelized public regime, is the most silent, the hardest-working and the most consistently determined.

A glance at the physiognomy of this man is something. Short, thick-set, bulldog-jawed, suggesting the steam roller, he flattens down the roads of progress for other men without pausing to consider who's hurt. On a hot day he will be found in shirt sleeves, quietly getting through a mass of laborious details. If he is suddenly asked for his opinion on any phase of public administration, he comes at the answer with a curious mixture of off-handedness and political precaution.

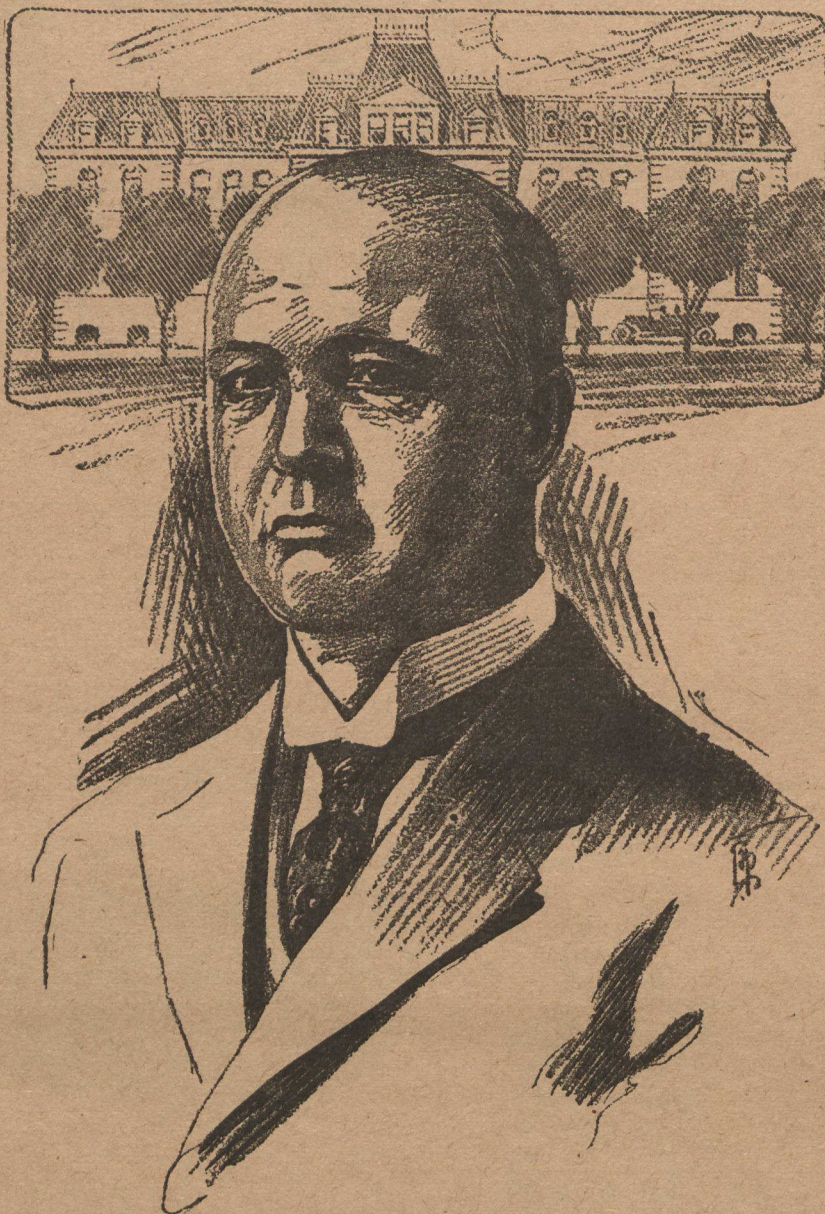
There is a free-and-easy atmosphere of cordiality about those old Legislature halls of Manitoba that may be gone when the Legislature moves into the new building. A. B. Hudson's shirtsleeves demonstration is part of it. But Hudson is not a countryman. He is a townsman, a hard-working lawyer who, before he took over the Attorney-Generalship, was building up a business of far bigger dimensions than he can ever hope to make out of interpreting law to a Province.

“WHY is he our Attorney-General?” The man I queried, a friend of Albert Bluelock Hudson's boyhood, thought for a moment and replied, “Because he's his father's son.”

“If ever force of character came to its due recognition,” he went on, “it happened in Bert's case, but it was the force of character, primarily, of his father and mother. The father, especially, stands out in my memory as one of the most upright of men, with no compromise in him when it came to a question of right and wrong. He was a Presbyterian of the old school—I don't know whether that had anything to do with it? Bert was born in Pembroke; I knew him when he was a boy at school, at Portage la Prairie. I was considerably older than he, so my impression may not count for much, but I always thought of him as a boy who took things very seriously—almost solemnly. A great boy for ‘grinding’ at his lessons, a hard worker at whatever he undertook; a plodder, if you like. But his plodding has carried him pretty far.

“Another thing—as I size him up—you can't budge him once he makes up his mind. And that's a very cool, deliberate mind, weighing questions well before deciding; a legal mind to the nth power. And he won't be hurried. You remember, perhaps, that at the time of the Royal Commission, when all the graft was discovered the papers spoke of his handling of

Hon. Albert Hudson, Attorney-General of Manitoba, is in public life to make a clean job of it—or leave it alone



By INTERROGATEUR

Illustration by Cappel

witnesses—it was very impressive. He did not browbeat them; he gave them time; and if he thought a man was telling the truth he was given every chance to express himself in his own way without being bullied; but some of those witnesses found that the quiet manner was mighty misleading—that it felt like a thousand of bricks when it cornered the would-be evasive.”

It was as a lawyer that Attorney-General Hudson made his initial reputation—not as a politician. It is as a man in whom the people, Liberals and Conservatives, have the utmost confidence that he appears as the outstanding figure in the public life of the West. The people believed him when he told them of how their leaders had fallen—they have still great faith in him as in one who will see to it, as far as he is able, that graft and corruption shall remain in the category of the absolutely discreditable.

There is a rumour that he would much prefer to drop his honours and go back to his legal plough—that when fate took him from the arena of his triumphs she treated him somewhat scurvily in regard to loss of income and, possibly, interest in life. Of this one may be sure that in his own good time, and when he is ready, he will drop it all if he feels like it. For he believes (though this was not said in connection with any hint of resignation) that a man can always find time to do what he likes best. He will never be the slave of hours and minutes.

Leave it to him, then, to find the way out if he wants it. Oh, yes, you can leave a whole lot to him! Put it all out of your mind. He has a docket for many little things that worry some of us a good deal.

Albert Hudson came to the West while quite

young—he was born in 1875. He graduated with honours when attending Manitoba University, obtaining the degree of LL.B. Practising law in Portage la Prairie, the magnet of Winnipeg drew him, and he soon became one of the city's leading barristers. Senior partner in the firm of Hudson, Howell, Ormond and Marlatt—his services were requisitioned in the most important cases in the province, and by his legal colleagues his sterling qualities and his keen legal acumen were appreciated at their full worth. He was elected a Bencher of the Law Society after preliminarily filling a vacancy.

THE Gimli Election Petition to unseat E. L. Taylor, and the Macdonald Election Petition to unseat Alex. Morrison were entrusted to Mr. Hudson. It was largely his skill that forced the advisers of Mr. Morrison to admit corrupt practices.

He first came into political prominence in the Manitoba General Election of 1914, when he successfully contested Winnipeg South against Lendrum McMeans. The Roblin Government was still in the saddle, and though by means of their machine majority they managed to burk the enquiry into their methods, he kept at them until public opinion was thoroughly aroused. The developments which followed were inevitable. At the 1915 Provincial election, Hudson ran up a record majority, over 4,000. In his great speeches there was no attempt at phrase-making or wonderful oratory, but instead a marshalling of a vast array of facts obtained after weeks of investigation. Concise, almost bald in delivery, his statements presented a damning indictment, and their very repression heightened their effect.

The outward impression of quiet dignity in the Attorney-General, free from any pompous blemish, denotes the quality of strength which is in him. His eyes are expressive—dark-brown; not piercing, not particularly searching; simple, frank,

honest and reflective. He has a very delightful smile which wonderfully takes away from the ultra-serious habit of the man, from the quiet deliberation of his speech. He is most approachable, not seeking the limelight, but willing to say what he has to say, if asked to do so, and he is never at a loss for a word.

WHEN I told him I had been “wished on him” by the Canadian Courier, the courteous gravity of his manner lightened and a little smile crept into the corners of his mouth. He did not want to talk about his Prison Farm project—“still too immature, though we are making progress”; but he was quite willing to speak of the “Government, which had kept its promises,” being evidently proud of its record. “The most advanced legislation in Canada,” in some respects, was passed at the last session. He admits it is an experiment—“you can't legislate men into being good.” “But,” he said, “there has been a revolution in the public conscience during the last two years—partly, no doubt, it was the war which stirred men to more serious conceptions of their obligations; partly, perhaps, the economic pressure which forced men to a little more stock-taking. But we had the people of the province behind us in our investigations. It is interesting, perhaps, or would you find it so? that during the session of 1914 we Liberals met every Saturday in informal conference with men of varied leanings—though in opposition to the Roblin Government—representing various organizations—temperance and social workers, and so on, trying to map out a programme which, if carried out, would secure certain broad reforms. We

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