

A STATEMENT OF THE TREATMENT ACCORDED TO THE BRITISH AMERICAN
BANK NOTE COMPANY BY THE MINISTER OF FINANCE,
HON. W. S. FIELDING.

THE history of the first large contract entered into by Hon. W. S. Fielding after his translation from the Provincial to the Federal Cabinet, that by which is given to aliens instead of to Canadians the delicate and responsible duty of producing Canada's currency, is not only instructive, but is of interest to all classes of the community. Nothing can be of greater importance to the Capitalist, the Banker and the Merchant, than that the current money of the country should be undoubtedly genuine, and that there should be no possibility of counterfeiting. It is of vital importance to the Contractor that the secrecy of a tender submitted by him, under seal, to a Minister of the Crown, should be most strictly observed; but should the course which has been followed by Hon. Mr. Fielding in this case be generally adopted, contractors will find that the results of their labor in preparing tenders are merely supplying Ministers gratuitously with data on which to negotiate with outside parties for a lower price.

To the skilled artisan it is necessary that as much high-class, and therefore well paid, work as possible should be produced in Canada, but the result of this contract will be to allow all the government engraving and skilled labor to be done at Canada's expense, in the neighboring Republic.

To every Canadian, it must be clear that our public men, especially those in positions of trust, should, like Cæsar's wife, be above suspicion; that their every act should be capable of bearing the closest inspection; that those who have to repose trust in them, should in every case find that trust sacredly kept, and that Canadian interests of Capital and Labor, whether public or private, should be defended in every way possible.

Unhappily, Hon. W. S. Fielding has not taken this view of the case in the matter of the Bank Note Contract. To show how this has been done, it is necessary to give a résumé of the facts since the accession of the Liberal Government to power in July, 1896.

When Mr. Fielding became Minister of Finance, he found existing a contract between the Crown, represented by his Department, and the British American Bank Note Company, (of which Mr. G. B. Burland is the president) for the printing of the Dominion bills, stamps, etc. This particular contract had been in force for some years, and was the last of a series of contracts for this class of work extending over a period of 35 years. During all this time the Company have the satisfaction of stating that no accident or error of any kind has occurred, and the work has always been done at least 30 per cent. less than current American prices.

One clause in the contract stipulated that it could be terminated by giving six months' notice; and on September 26th, 1896, Hon. W. S. Fielding gave legal notice to the British American Bank Note Company of the closing of their contract at the expiration of the six months' term. This notice was duly followed by an advertisement inviting tenders for November 23rd, 1896.