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ST. JOHN'S, NFD., JAN. 24, 1914.

OUR POINT OF VIEW.

THE PRICE OF FISH

The Government newspapers have had a great deal to say about the price of fish the last few days. Of course, they are very emphatic in their declarations that Mr. Coaker had nothing whatever to do with the high prices paid last fall. Supply and demand, they say, are exclusively the determining factors.

Practically every remark made by these subsidised papers and by the mouthpieces of the Government in the House is entirely beside the question. The game, apparently, is the old, old one of bluff and dust-throwing. The familiar "red-herring" has been so often drawn across this trail that it is worn almost to shreds.

We have yet to learn that any member or adherent of the Union Party ever allowed his enthusiasm to influence him to the extent of making the ridiculous claim that Mr. Coaker directly or indirectly, controls the foreign markets or regulates conditions there. Such a contention would be too absurd and unreasonable to withstand for one moment the facts of the case, and Mr. Coaker has never, in all his public career, made such a claim, nor has it been made for him by any responsible follower of his.

But Mr. Coaker has had a great deal to do with the high prices paid for fish in this country. We assert that it was practically entirely owing to his influence that such high figures were paid for fish the last four years.

The situation is so plain that the most casual observer can easily understand it. Low prices in the market would, of course, prevent Mr. Coaker or anybody else from buying fish in this country at a high price and making a profit thereon when marketing. But it is a fact of common knowledge that while low prices in the market influenced the local prices, before the F.P.U. was organized, it was not until the Union movement was started that the high prices in the market were followed by correspondingly high prices locally.

In other words when there was a loss to be sustained, it was saddled by buyers on the fishermen; when there were high profits to be made, the cream of them went to local fish dealers.

And the reason is quite plain. The fishermen were absolutely ignorant of market conditions. In fact he was familiar only with such a term as used by fish buyers to conjure his catch from him at a price that would net the purchaser the greatest possible profit when it was marketed abroad.

As far as the local dealers were concerned, this, of course, was business, pure and simple. They were in the fish trade to make the most possible out of it and while the fishermen were getting high prices they could not possibly make big profits. Hence, the fisherman usually got low prices—the market conditions, as a rule, benefiting him but little, even when they should have done so.

Now it is quite plain that there were times when market conditions justified much higher prices than fishermen obtained from local dealers. In all probability, too, had they been aware of actual conditions and prices ruling in the markets they would have demanded, and obtained, higher prices at home. But they were without this information and, lacking the knowledge to assess their fish at its true local value, they had perforce to sell it at a valuation assessed by dealers whose interest it was to buy as cheaply as possible.

And it is just here that the work and influence of Mr. Coaker has made for a higher price for our fish locally. It has been one of the aims and practices of the F.P.U., by circular letters, to keep the members of Local Councils posted as to market conditions and prices and to point out to them that being worth a certain figure abroad their fish should bring a certain figure in the local market the estimated local figure being less than the foreign market figure by legitimate expenses of handling and marketing and by a fair percentage of profit for the dealer.

Of late years the fishermen have been acting on this information and advice and, hence, have profited enormously through the medium of the F.P.U.

It is plain, therefore, that Mr. Coaker has exercised a big influence on the price of fish and that it is through his efforts that the fishermen have obtained such high figures.

Such cavilling as is published by the Government papers comes with very ill-grace from the trumpet-blowers of a party that solemnly pledged itself to post the fishermen on the vital subject of prevailing market prices. This party has broken these solemn pledges and has betrayed the confidence of the people. For it is amazingly instructive to the average man to be told that fish at some place or other is worth so many millions.

Mr. Coaker has done the work. No fair-minded man will deny him credit for what he has accomplished.

OBSERVATIONS.

When is a People's Party not the Popular Party? When it is the Morris Party.

What, under the Bond regime, was dubbed as "the Fog Free Zone" and characterized a hair-brained scheme becomes, when adopted by the Morris party, "a car ferry service," and a triumph of far-seeing statecraft.

Man-on-the-street—"Say, Constable, what's the meaning of this rush to the Court House? Is there a fire in the building?"

Patient Policeman—"Not at all. That's a bunch who have been reading the Premier's statement in the House yesterday that there's one vacancy in the Legislative Council."

The Premier bragged in the House that if he went to Bonavista District 1700 would listen to him. We doubt very much, however, whether he would obtain an audience of any length if he went there endorsing the pronouncement of the Minister of Finance that the men who voted for the Union are "ignorant" and "illiterate."

The Government organs show conveniently short memories at times. Hence the fact that the remarks of the Minister of Finance regarding the fishermen who voted for the Union Party are carefully omitted from the reports of the proceedings of the House as published by the Morris papers.

A Morris newspaper is our authority for saying that, in an Assembly debate, Mr. Cashin stated that Mr. Coaker used Sir Robert Bond's support to attain his present position. Well, now, there are very few of us who dreamed of crediting Sir Robert's influence with that majority of 2600 rolled up by Mr. Coaker in Bonavista District.

"If Mr. Coaker could raise the price of fish, he could also lower the price of other articles," asserted the Minister of Finance in the House on Thursday, and went on to declare that he had not done so.

It is evident from this statement that Mr. Cashin does not hold a membership ticket entitling him to trade at Union Stores. What about the price of salt—and still more recently—the price of coal?

Our morning and evening contemporaries who work overtime eulogising the present Government are strongly in favor of the publication of the debates—in their own columns. Giving these two papers—at a very generous estimate—a combined circulation of ten thousand, it is difficult to discover the justice or advisability of taxing the whole country to the extent of thousands of dollars that these two newspapers might be subsidised.

Judging from his remarks in the House of Assembly, the Minister of Finance regards the members of the Opposition as undesirable. After listening to a speech by one of these gentlemen, he suggested that it would be a good idea for him to emigrate. There are also in this country almost 20,000 fishermen, the great majority of whom voted for the Leader of the Union Party and his candidates. This the Minister of Finance regards as sufficient cause for terming these voters "ignorant" and "illiterate." Well, now, if all these "undesirables" are to be sent packing his next budget will reach a dead low-water mark.

How pitiable a spectacle a public man presents when he permits his temper to gain the upper hand; and too, how completely he usually gives himself away. Thus, carried away by what looked much like violent passion, the Minister of Finance, from his place in the House, charged the people of Bonavista Bay with ingratitude in voting against the Government after the latter had spent \$150,000 in their district on public works.

And, just think, some of us were innocent enough to believe that these expenditures were made because of necessity and to benefit the country generally. But we guessed wrong for Mr. Cashin very frankly admits that the Government expected these expenditures to gain them votes.

The member of Burgeo in championing the Branch Railroad policy of the Morris party, declared that "the cost did not frighten him," and this country would benefit from it and he did not doubt that all the branches would be paying well after a few years. Yet the returns of the Newfoundland Co. show a deficit every year. Thus does theory conflict with fact.

Mr. Moulton's inspiration was doubtless the Premier, whose dictum of this matter we refuse to accept. If he knew so little about railroad construction business as to underestimate the cost of the branches by four million dollars, he can hardly be quoted as a reliable authority on the possibility of their operation turning out profitable to the country. And as for the Minister of Finance, he very cleverly made a mistake of \$280,000 in our estimates.

TO THE EDITOR.

CONCERNING DETECTIVES

(Editor Daily Mail)

Dear Sir,—It is not often that you hear from this part of the country, although we may be able to boast of very many more great things here than there are in some other far more pretentious places. Not being of a very serious turn of mind the present writer could only be induced to commit himself to print on something that would put Puck or some other comic paper in the shade. Ye gods, if we only had a cartoonist to properly picture our latest addition of Sherlock Holmes.

What an Awakening!

We all went to bed in our usual quiet and slow way the other night; and woke up in the morning to discover that we had in our midst—a detective, one Thos. Hooper. Said Thomas had been a game-fish warden here for the past two or three years; a very modest man indeed was Thomas, not dreaming for a moment that he had any such qualification. He was truly the uncut diamond.

But a "master mind" (?) in St. John's, one Alex. McDougall, the convener of a meeting of the prosecuting committee of that very desirable body known as the Game and Inland Fisheries Board (better known here as the "Game Cod") discovered in our local Thomas the qualifications of a detective.

But Thomas being of a doubting nature, like his celebrated namesake, had to be assured by his friend McDougall of his great capabilities, with the result that he was appointed a

detective by A. McDougall, under the supervision of that worthy Constable Cramm.

Wael of Woe.

The writer had the pleasure of seeing that Thomas' appointment and listening to his wail of woe, since it appears that Mr. McDougall had power to appoint and instruct Thomas, also to give certain instructions to Const. Cramm, but had no power to pay the bill.

So now that we have the one man that we were all proud of, put into a humiliating position of not being paid for the work performed, and having to let out the whole show as public property for the simple reason that Thomas can neither read or write, and must get another person to make his demands for payment.

Who is McDougall? Who are the Game Board? Who are in charge of the police of this country, and what are the people to be subject to? Is this a repetition of an account I read in The Advocate of one Stephen French being engaged by this same McDougall, to do detective work in St. Barbe District? Have the Government created a new department to be known as a local Scotland Yard with A. McDougall as its chief?

Wants Information.

Not being very well posted on these matters in this out-of-the-way place I would thank you, Mr. Editor, for some light on the subject.

We are a very quiet and retiring class of people down here, and perhaps needlessly alarmed; but when A. McDougall starts to convert Thos. Hooper into a detective we get upset, fearing that the said Mr. McDougall, being a ladies man, may next start a suffragette movement in our midst. Then Heaven help us with such an able champion of their cause behind such a movement.

PULP-WOOD.

Campbellton, Jan. 12, 1914.

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

THE PANAMA CANAL

A cable message a few days ago called attention to the fact that the Panama Canal has so far neared completion that it is now possible for large ocean-going steamers to pass through it.

There is an eventful history behind the project to unite the Atlantic and Pacific oceans by a canal across the isthmus of Panama. In 1881 an undertaking of this kind was commenced by a French engineer named De Lesseps and the work was continued until 1889. At the end of this time it was abandoned for lack of funds although \$260,000,000.00 had been spent on it during the eight years.

Five years later, in 1894, a new company was formed with the intention of resuming the work but it accomplished very little. Finally, in 1903, the United States made a treaty with the Republic of Panama, and started the canal which is now nearing completion.

Length of the Canal

The distance, in a straight line, from Colon, on the Atlantic, to Panama, on the Pacific, is twenty-two miles, but the route chosen for the Canal is fifty miles long from deep water to deep water.

The excavation for the Canal portion is forty miles long, the additional ten miles being accounted for by cuttings through the shallows at each end.

The Canal bed is not level, rising eighty-five feet at one place, called Gatun, where a great dam has been built. Between this dam and the Atlantic port there are three double locks by means of which vessels are raised to the level of the Gatun Lake midway between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. By using this lake a water course of six and three-quarter miles is obtained.

The Gatun dam is 7500 feet long, is 100 feet wide at the top and 2100 feet wide at the base.

The Channel of the Panama Canal varies in width from 300 feet to 1000 feet and is of sufficient depth to permit the passage of the largest ships afloat.

The Canal will be well equipped in every way. There is to be a very complete system of electric lighting which will make it as easy for ships to use the channel by night as by day. A big wireless station is also to be constructed on the Canal and the intention is to put up three masts each 600 feet high, giving the instruments a radius of 3000 miles.

The actual cost of the Panama Canal is very much in excess of the early estimates. In 1901 the engineers reckoned that it could be constructed for \$140,000,000.00. A slightly lower estimate was made in 1906, but up to June, 1913, the cost had been \$232,000,000. The final total will hardly be less than \$350,000,000.00. Of this amount almost \$40,000,000.00 was paid for the original French interests in the Canal.

The work throughout has been done by the Government of the United States, the engineer in charge being Colonel Goethals.

Apart from the difficulties of excavation and the various other engineering obstacles to be surmounted one of the greatest problems that the constructors had to solve was that of rendering the Canal zone healthy. During the period in which the French engineers were constructing the Canal there was a frightful loss of life from various tropical diseases. To provide for sanitation and thus prevent this excessive mortality the American Government spent a sum of almost \$15,000,000.00.

THE AWFUL RECORD OF 1913.

The year 1913 goes down to history with an unenviable record of a long list of storms and floods, earthquakes and other natural disturbances, which took a heavy toll in human lives.

Early in January of last year tremendous storms were reported from all over the North Atlantic and the steamship "Carmania" completed a trip across the herring pond in three days longer than her ordinary time after experiencing "the roughest passage she had ever known." Towards the middle of this month terrible floods took place in the Ohio Valley of the United States as a result of which 3000 persons were rendered homeless.

Stormy weather still continued on the ocean and its terrors are evidenced by the fact that the steamship "Snowdon Range" arrived at Queens-town from Philadelphia having made a passage of fifty days across the Atlantic, the longest time ever taken by a modern steamship to make this trip.

Heavy Storms.

At the beginning of February there were heavy wind and snow storms in Germany which stopped all train traffic, and at one time 2000 men were employed in Berlin, the capital of the Empire, clearing the tracks for the street cars.

On the 20th of February there was a terrible fire in Tokio, the capital of Japan. Four thousand buildings were destroyed in this awful conflagration which rendered 15,000 persons homeless and did damage to the extent of almost \$8,000,000.

This terrible record of disaster was continued in March, towards the middle of which month severe storms occurred in the United States, causing much loss of life and doing big damage to shipping and to railways. In Chicago alone the damage done by these storms was estimated at upwards of \$1,000,000.

On the 23rd a violent tornado occurred in Omaha, U.S.A., causing the death of 200 persons, and on the 26th there were great gales and floods in the Southern Ohio Valley, as a result of which two thousand families were rendered homeless in Indianapolis.

250,000 Homeless.

During this storm the Mississippi River rose 37 feet above its normal height, rendering 250,000 persons homeless and causing the death, by drowning and otherwise, of upwards of four thousand. The Legislature voted \$250,000.00 for relief works.

Destructive floods occurred in New Zealand on the 30th of this month doing damage to the extent of half a million dollars.

During April there were minor storms and floods in various countries but few fatalities were recorded and the damage done to property was small as compared with that done during the preceding months of the year.

Towards the end of May the steamship "Haverford" went ashore at Cork Island in a dense fog. She had 1200 passengers on board but, fortunately, there were no lives lost.

On the 12th of this month there were disastrous floods in India. At one place called Politana sixteen inches of rain fell in six hours causing terrible inundations which led to the loss of 250 lives and did damage estimated at over a quarter of a million dollars.

On the first day of July there were extensive forest fires in Canada. One of these burnt a path through the trees two hundred and fifty miles wide, causing an incalculable loss of timber.

Big Typhoon.

The month of August passed comparatively quietly until the 18th of the month when a typhoon was recorded in Hong Kong, China, during which the wind attained a velocity of 105 miles per hour. During this storm one hundred and fifty lives were lost at Macao, a Chinese town. On the 24th there was a violent hurricane in Missouri, U.S.A., and much damage was done.

One of the worst fires of the year occurred at Hot Springs, Arkansas, U.S.A., on the 7th of September. The disaster was a frightful one, rendering two thousand people homeless and causing damages amounting up to \$5,000,000.00.

On the 30th of this month disastrous thunder storms in South France

caused the death of quite a number of people and seventy lives were lost in floods which occurred at Constantinople, the capital of the Turkish Empire.

The closing months of the year were also made remarkable by floods and storms. In a flood which occurred in Texas, U.S.A., the rice crop was damaged to the extent of \$1,250,000.00. During October month also a terrific storm occurred at Nome, Alaska, demolishing five hundred houses.

"Have you got a very nice room?" inquired the little girl of her suburban visitor. "Why do you ask, dear?" "Because papa said your room is better than your company."

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WERE PREMIER?

With the House of Assembly in session, things political and legislative are very much to the fore. Now anybody and everybody can perform a job better than the chap who holds it down. What would you do if you were in Sir Edward Morris's place? We'll be glad to hear from you and publish in The Daily Mail your ideas of what the Premier should undertake. Get busy and drop us a note.

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