

Undue Exaltation of Property Versus Humanity.

The speech of Theodore Roosevelt in Paris a week ago is the first gun of a new and mighty struggle in the United States. We mean the speech in which he unfolded his views in regard to the rights of property as against the rights of humanity, or as they put it in England in the great struggle now on there, the rights of the individual as against the rights of privilege, meaning by privilege the property and political rights of the hereditary house of lords and the landed class.

Roosevelt said that any and all property belonged to man, and, therefore, the rights of a thing which belonged to man were of less account than the rights of man himself. In other words, when the convenience and the comfort and the progress of humanity came in collision with the rights of property the rights of man should override those of property, or in other words, that the rights of property should take second place.

Look at the United States to-day and you see deplorable conditions in the way of government; you see the consolidation of wealth in the hands of a few, the control of legislatures and congress by interests, the all-powerful influence of the railways, the capture of the press by money, widespread corruption in municipal, state and federal politics, and a thousand and one evils that beset the various forms of organized society. It would be hard to ask one to believe and yet we must ask the reader to believe, that as a basis of most of these evils is the undue importance that is attached to the rights of property and the lack of appreciation of the rights of humanity that characterized the political documents that are at the basis of government in the States and that marked the transactions of the men who started the political machine at the outset. So imbued were the early Americans with the sanctity of property that they put provisions in the constitution, and it follows down thru all the minor state and municipal institutions, that any legislation that violated a contract was unconstitutional; and so from the foundation of the republic up to the present time no congress, no state government, no municipal organization has been able to interfere with a condition that existed by reason of a contract, no matter how improvident, no matter how much against public interest, no matter if obtained by bribery or corruption, no matter how much it interfered with public or human rights or the convenience of the citizen. Such a contract is held sacred and not to be interfered with. Little or no provision was ever made for the cancellation of these contracts by purchase or expropriation at their fair value or anything of that kind. There was just a straight declaration of the sanctity of contract, the sanctity of property, no matter how much the citizen or organized society might suffer. The supreme court would seem to have had as its greatest object the maintenance of this doctrine of the sanctity of property. We have no hesitation in saying that the demoralized condition of things in the States is due to this worship of the idea of property. One way it works out at the present moment is that the United States Railway Commission cannot regulate railway rates if it can be shown that property is unfairly affected; and legislation by state commissioners for the benefit of the public has from time to time been declared illegal for this reason.

We, therefore, take Roosevelt's speech to be that he recognizes what we have above set out, the undue prominence given to property, and that he is prepared either by his own act or the act of others who may follow him, to either change the constitution or in some way to override it so that the rights of man, of the individual, shall be placed above the mere rights of property, especially when this involves the comfort and convenience of the citizen, the fair treatment of man by all the corporations that have been created in that country. Roosevelt would secure for the citizen something like the fairer treatment which is accorded in England, in Germany, in France, and sometimes even in our own country, tho we too have been awfully hampered by this doctrine of the sanctity of contract and the sanctity of property.

Let us give just one specific instance of the situation here in Toronto which will illustrate what we mean. The citizens of Toronto are crowded like cattle in the street cars of the Toronto Street Railway. The company, by reason of an improvident, perhaps a corrupt contract made twenty years ago and ratified by the legislature, has been allowed to do this. It has refused to extend the lines, has exacted double fares in places within the city and in a hundred ways has brutally ill-treated, ill-used and ill-served the people of this great and growing city. They are sewn up like fish in a net and are considered fair victims of the corporation and they are held by this contract irrespective of their suffering, irrespective of their rights no matter who betrayed them in the past. In other words, these property rights of the Street Railway Company are of much greater account, apparently, than the human rights of the citizen! And yet Canada is not bound up, fortunately for us, in the way the United States is bound up to the sanctity of contracts. Our legislature is free to declare that Toronto can rid herself of all the inconvenience, not only of this traction outfit but of all other public utility companies by the right of expropriation being given to the city by the legislature. There is all the difference in the world in our freedom in this respect and the lack of freedom of the people of the United States and, what we say is this: If we do not exercise our rights now in this respect we will some day be in the same ditch in which our neighbors find themselves. No damage is done to property in connection with public utilities if its value is assessed and that value is handed to the owner of the franchise; and when this is done all the grievances of the public can be removed, the service can be taken over by the public and the public can thereafter secure a remedy to their grievances, a better service, and be free thereafter, which is the great thing; to do whatever they like whenever they like with what is their own. In other words, in our country there is a money measure for property rights as against public rights.

And just one more remark. It was a condition of affairs something like what prevails in the States which preceded the French revolution a century and a quarter ago and pretty much the same thing is bound to come in America unless some man of great force and some party consecrated to public progress leads the way and effects the reform necessary. Again we say, very few of us recognize how near a social disturbance ten times more serious than the upheaval in France, is at hand in the United States in consequence of the demoralized condition of public affairs, the denial of public rights and the undue exaltation of the sanctity of the rights of property as against the individual and the common welfare of society.

The situation is serious, and it is at the door of every citizen.

Guelph Herald: A little while ago increase of over 700 in the population. Who says the pulpit has lost its position of race suicides. Result: An in-

REPARTEE



WILFRID: Sorry to hear you may lose some of your lieutenants, Robert.
ROBERT: Aren't you more sorry you can't lose most of yours?

Government by Commission

Government by commission is the latest development of democracy. Such a newspaper as The Toronto Globe to the contrary notwithstanding, we think that the most truly democratic government can be evolved under it. The ingenuity of The Globe may not be equal to devising the details, but we prefer to think that it is the innate conservatism of The Globe rather than any real inability which prevents it applying the ordinary principles of common sense to the problem, and utilizing the precedents already in existence and the experience gained in the most intricate of commercial systems to solve the problem.

We confess that the problem appears to be a comparatively simple one, altho the United States municipalities which have adopted the principle have usually been too wedded to tradition, and to what Americans delude themselves into thinking is constitutional practice. A constitution ought to be a living thing with recuperative powers and capacities of adaptation. In the United States they have always been afraid to cut loose and live like freemen. This is what is the matter with The Globe and some other newspapers. They are anchored and happy. A vessel that sails around the world and comes back with new ideas is a terrible adventurer to such organs, and is not to be trusted, but generally suspected.

Government by commission must embody the idea of a constitution in the way that a man has a constitution. It must be alive and strong and muscular and growing. A United States constitution can only be compared to an ossified man. The Globe is afraid that The World would abolish the democratic idea. Government by commission as we understand it would give more democratic government than at present, for it would interest everybody, and politics now only interests the nobodies. Always excepting the professionals.

The new system would also improve the class of men on the council. It would promote efficiency in the municipal services. It would reduce taxation and obtain better value for the expenditures made. It would do away with ward politics, which to The Globe and other partisan papers is a fatal objection. It would annihilate the "pull." This is another fatal

Poetry that Lives

*I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of
clay and wattles made;
Nine bean rows will I have there, a
hive for the honey bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud
glade.*

*And I shall have some peace there, for
peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of morning
to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and
noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's
wings.*

*I will arise and go now, for always
right and day
I hear lake water lapping with low
sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on
the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.*

—William Butler Yeats.

objection in some quarters. It would ensure promotion for merit in the civic service. It would procure the highest class of service for the people.

One of these days The World will suggest a scheme for government by commission. Meanwhile we shall be glad to hear any other objections that may be raised against the principle. None of the objections raised so far are valid. The chief objection which The Globe notes is that a system of government so perfect would be injurious to the people. The people are aching for injuries of that nature.

Someone has referred to President Taft as "the survival of the fittest."

It was indeed ungracious of Hartley Dewart to speak of Hon. A. B. Aylesworth as a high-minded statesman and that sort of thing, after Hon. A. B. had declared himself "a political partisan."

But after all is said, didn't Mr. Aylesworth carry the Liberal banner to victory in North York, and didn't Hartley Dewart, K. C., go down to defeat in South Toronto.

Washington legislators neglect their public duties and hie them to the ball game. Somebody ought to introduce the game in Ottawa and stop the talk-

Canadian Black Squirrel.

Among the wild animals that are rapidly becoming extinct thruout the bushlands of Ontario, one of the brightest and liveliest is the black squirrel. A few years ago there were a great many of these pretty little creatures in the woodlands where, morning and evening they fed, gambled and chattered among the fruited beeches and tall hickorys of the ridges.

True, there are still a few black squirrels left in the sparse timber lands of Ontario, but with man pursuing them and their wooded retreats being thinned day by day, it is but a matter of a few years before not a single squirrel will be seen save in parks, where they are protected by the government.

For many years the animal has been a prey to the small boy with the long musket and the sportsman with the modern Winchester. He makes a toothsome dainty for the table when properly served and epicures will go to some trouble to secure him for this purpose; at the same time Mr. Black is not easily bagged.

Not every boy with a long musket nor every man with a modern Winchester has learned the art of getting within shooting distance of the wary black. The novice, who, having sighted him on a mossy patch of the woodland or seen him painting a sable streak across the old gold of the leaf-carpet, attempts to creep within range of him, seldom ever catches more than the first glimpse of the cunning fellow. High in some giant elm the squirrel will be lying close in the crotch of a great limb, or from tangled foliage will be peering down at the hunter with beady eyes; but the hunter does not see him.

On the other hand there are boys and men who have studied the black squirrel and know how to stalk him. They have learned that when the animal is first sighted the thing to do is to run straight towards him. The little fellow allows fear to master wisdom and takes to the first tree in sight, there to fall an easy prey to his pursuer.

Black squirrels are playful, harmless little creatures that find life very good. If they are to be preserved in the sparse woods of Ontario they must be protected. They are fond of human society, and if left unmolested, become very tame and gambol about in the open aisles of the wood paying not the slightest attention to passers-by.

British Political Situation.

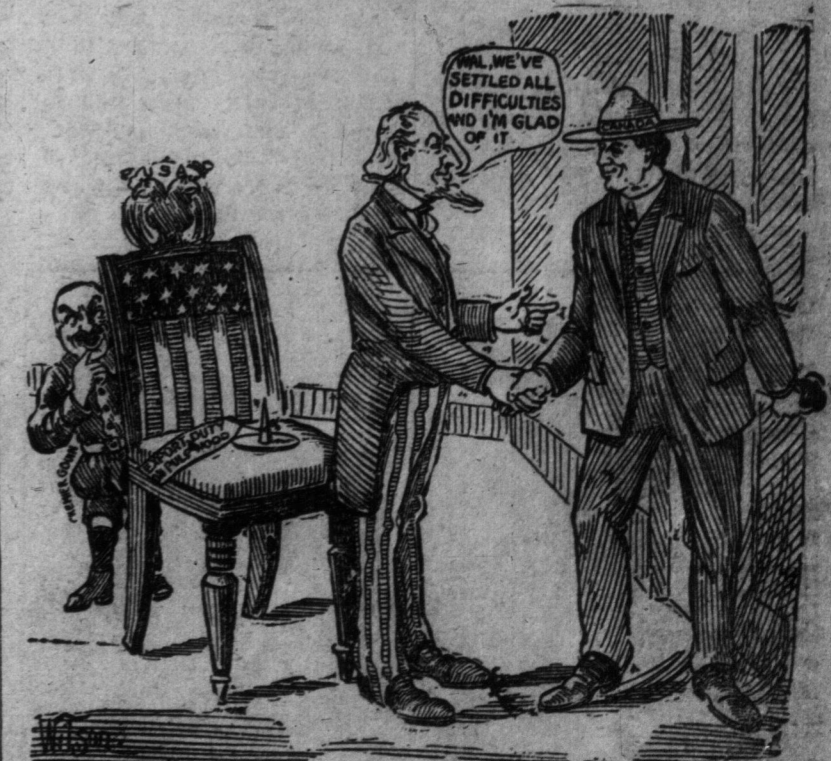
With the rising of the British parliament for a month's holiday, opportunity is afforded for a review of the political position. This adjournment marks the close of the first period of the present session and it leaves the government in stronger shape than at any time since the general elections. The verdict of the electors was admittedly not conclusive on any of the issues submitted. England gave a majority of 13 against the government, while Scotland supported it by a majority of 50 and Wales by 21. Ireland returned 71 Nationalists, 10 Independent Nationalists and 21 Unionists. The net result gave the government a majority of 42 over the opposition exclusive of both sections of Irish Nationalists, that led by John Redmond thus holding the balance of power; a position they had not occupied since the Gladstone administration of 1892.

Mr. Asquith's task was one of exceptional difficulty and it was not lessened by the difference of opinion regarding the best policy to pursue, which made itself evident both in the cabinet and the party. While the general election had been primarily compelled thru the action of the house of lords in requiring the judgment of the people upon the budget proposals, the controversy between the regular parties at once assumed a wider aspect. The government on the one side asked a mandate, enabling restrictions to be placed on the veto power of the peers and a declaration of confidence in free trade. On the other hand the opposition advanced tariff reform, including a readjustment of the taxes on food, as the only safe means of meeting the revenue requirements and providing the means for carrying out measures for social amelioration. The Nationalists stood steadily by home rule but were faced by the appearance in the field of a number of Independent candidates who looked to William O'Brien and Timothy Healy for leadership.

Both Nationalist parties opposed the budget proposals so far as these applied to Ireland, but the independent section took up stronger ground than Mr. Redmond was inclined to do. But for this there is little doubt he would have yielded to the first intention of the government, which was to re-introduce and pass the budget bill before tackling the restriction of the power of the house of lords. Afraid of the weapon he would so place in the hands of the Independents, Mr. Redmond faced the government with an ultimatum requiring the veto resolutions to be passed before the budget and he carried his point. The earlier part of the session saw the debate on the government resolutions absolutely rejecting the right of the peers to amend or reject money bills; requiring other measures to become law after twice passing the commons and limiting the duration of future parliaments to five years. These resolutions have been carried by majorities of over one hundred and will come before the house of lords after the re-assembly of parliament in the end of May.

Further negotiations between the government and the Redmond party resulted in an understanding which enabled the government to re-introduce the budget bill and it has passed its first and second readings by majorities well over eighty. That the peers will now accept it is certain, altho, likely enough, this will only be done under protest. The veto resolutions will as certainly be rejected and Mr. Asquith will then have to undertake the responsibility of requiring guarantees from the King that the house of commons will prevail. What the nature of the guarantees is has not been divulged, but they can refer to only two things—the creation of a number of new peers sufficient to overcome the Unionist majority or to give the ministerial proposals sanction by Royal assent, irrespective of the vote of the peers. That the King will, under present conditions, consent to either course can hardly be expected. Should he decline Mr. Asquith must resign or appeal to the popular vote. If the government is sustained at another general election a third method of overcoming the Unionist preponderance in the house of lords will offer itself—that of limiting the writs of summons to a number that will place the Liberal peers in a majority.

What the issue of another general election would be, were it to take place on the same register of voters is very uncertain. Unionist authorities admit that they can scarcely hope to gain seats enough to give an absolute majority, and anything less than that would not avail and would leave the parliamentary deadlock unrelieved. A further complication arises from the rivalry of the two Nationalist factions. Mr. O'Brien claims to have made many adherents during the campaign he has been conducting in Ireland, but again, Mr. Redmond's support of the budget bill seems to indicate that he is satisfied his own popularity is not only unimpaired but increasing. However that may be, the Liberal organizers affirm that they are preparing for a general election in July which they regard as the crucial month. It is doubtful if any party really desires another election this year but events may prove too unmanageable to prevent an electoral reference. The United Kingdom is in the shadow of a grave constitutional crisis which, whatever its immediate consequence, cannot but involve a recasting of the house of lords, and either a restriction of its powers or the limitation of its hereditary character.



L'ENFANT TERRIBLE. VICTORIA B. C. TIMES.