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BOWSER AND THE BENCH.

Probably never in the history of parliamentary institutions was such a disgraceful and discreditable scene enacted as that which took place in the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia yesterday afternoon. The attack by the Premier and the Attorney-General, the latter gentleman "the head of the Bar" (says the mark) of the province, was unparalleled in its disregard for all that is seemly in parliamentary procedure. The manner in which the question was brought before the House proved, if further proof were necessary, how unworthy the two ministers who conducted the proceedings are of the high and honorable positions they hold.

Probably the most extraordinary feature of the lamentable affair was the new light it cast upon the character of the Attorney-General. The popular conception of Mr. Bowser is that he has sufficient self-esteem and effort to be capable of leading an attack upon the ramparts of Paradise itself if there were any prospect of gaining notoriety for himself and political capital for his party thereby. But even Mr. Bowser seems to have hesitated about initiating a movement against the Bench of the province. Doubtless under the advice of his leader (because the Premier confessed that he had discussed the matter with Mr. Hawthornthwaite) that duty task was handed over to the Socialist leader, thus further emphasizing the fact that the working agreement with the revolutionary party which kept the government in power for three years has not been "denounced." It is still in effect and can be utilized under circumstances which prove embarrassing to the "Honorable the Attorney-General." It is to the credit of the Speaker of the House that he displayed a high conception of the dignity of the Legislature and did all in his power to preserve that dignity and the decorum which should properly characterize legislative proceedings. But the Premier in the instance under consideration was against the Speaker and in alliance with the demagogues, with the result that the Attorney-General was given the opportunity he craved and a lasting stigma was cast upon our provincial parliament.

What was the cause of all the fuss and fury? The judges of the Supreme Court in their judgment upon the Bowser Act simply gave expression to current opinion as entertained by professional authorities and laymen. The terms of the British North America Act are so simple and direct as to be comprehensible to even the lay mind. There is no question whatever that the Bowser Act is repugnant to the British North America Act. The Chief Justice in the original judgment upon the case did not call upon counsel representing the imprisoned Japanese to reply to the "arguments" of Mr. Cassidy, the legal representative of the Attorney-General. He peremptorily ordered the release of the imprisoned men, intimating that they had good cause for action against "some one." An appeal was taken to the Full Court. The judges sitting upon that appeal concurred in the judgment of the Chief Justice, also without calling upon the legal representative of the Japanese to reply to the "arguments" of Mr. Cassidy. Four of the judges of the Supreme Court have expressed the opinion that the case of the Attorney-General is hopeless. They are all men of judicial eminence, men in respect of whose judgment and impartiality no responsible person would dare to express even the shadow of a doubt. One of them is recognized as a high authority upon constitutional questions. His opinions have been quoted in the Legislature during the present session by the Premier as of great weight. Mr. Justice Clement says he regrets that an attempt should be made to enforce the provisions of the Bowser Act because he foresees that no good result, and he fears that evil consequences, may follow such an attempt. There is no doubt in the mind of any man of patriotic sentiments that all the other judges concur fully in Mr. Justice Clement's opinions. Furthermore, the judges of the Supreme Court have given expression to opinions expressed in the Legislature by the leader of the opposition, a gentleman of acknowledged legal attainments, upon the Bowser Act. Mr. Macdonald told the members of the House what the inevitable result of an attempt to enforce the provisions of the Act would be, and the Chinese must be Mr. McPhillips, who has filled the position now brought into disrepute by Mr. Bowser, said the bill was not worth the paper it is written upon. The Attorney-General is not a fool, whatever conclusions may be founded upon his actions as a public man and a legislator. He knows that his Act is absolutely without value. The public knows from the history of his pet political measure that it was

never intended to possess any virtue. Yet because it has met with the fate anticipated he connives with the leader of the Socialist party to give him an opportunity to make a disgraceful attack upon the integrity of the Bench and he publicly threatens the members of the Bench with coercion in case they dare in future to express any opinions which can be construed by him as affecting his political career. In this course Mr. Bowser is aided and abetted by Mr. McBride. It is difficult to select words in which to fittingly characterize the conduct of such men. They are simply political incendiaries of the most mischievous type. They never anticipated that the Bowser Act would come before the courts, and now that the judges characterize their measure in appropriate terms, they hint at reprisals. The fact is the Bowser Act was never intended to face the ordeal of the courts. It was brought in as a sop to the "workmen" and as a cloak upon the real designs of the government with respect to the rights of workmen. The government had the power to "do something" for the workmen without bringing in legislation ultra vires of the province. But it would not do that because in doing so it would have incurred the censure of the corporations which dictate its policy. It hoped to keep up the farce indefinitely by carrying on a mock conflict with the Dominion government. But the Dominion government decided to put an end to the farce by testing the courts deal with the Bowser Act. The courts have dealt with it and expressed a candid opinion upon it. The effect upon the minds of Messrs. McBride, Bowser and Hawthornthwaite, congenial political associates, has not been soothing. They are perturbed by the exposure, and they turn upon and try to intimidate the courts. The Attorney-General as "leader of the Bar," says it may be necessary to show that the Legislature is the highest court in the province and to do other things to prove his ascendancy. But there is little probability of the judges of our courts becoming palsied with fright because of the stage thunderings of Mr. Bowser.

KILLING LAND MONOPOLY.

It is charged, and apparently there is substantial ground for the charge, that the reason British Columbia is not receiving her share of the immigration pouring in to other and far less inviting fields in other provinces of the Dominion is that nearly all the land available for settlement has passed into the hands of speculators. Other countries under the British flag have passed through a similar experience. And some of the other countries have taken radical measures to remedy the evil, due in the first instance to lack of government, or something that could properly be characterized in less pleasant terms. One of these countries is a sister colony in Australasia. The value of a progressive land tax, says the London Chronicle, as a means of "smashing" up big estates, forcing the landlord monopolies to sell at reasonable prices, and promoting closer settlement, has long been realized in New Zealand. It has for years possessed a graduated tax, superimposed on an ordinary land tax of 1d. in the £ (¼d. in the case of mortgages), with a liberal exemption for poor and struggling landowners who only get a bare living out of the soil. But it has never been quite satisfied with the severity of the penalties on the holders of big estates.

In 1900 the scale began with an exemption of 5,000 and then rose from ¼ of a penny in the £ on land of which the unimproved value was between 5,000 and 10,000, and ran up to a tax of 2d. in the £ on estates valued at £20,000 and over. In 1905 the scale was altered and made to begin at 1-16 of a penny on land valued at over 5,000 and less than 17,000, rising to 3d. in the £ on estates valued at £20,000 and over. In March, 1906, however, under a new law passed by the New Zealand parliament two and a half months ago, a further change is to take place. The scale remains the same on estates of which the unimproved value is assessed at over 5,000 and under 140,000, then it alters considerably. For land having from 140,000 to 240,000 of unimproved value the rate is 8s. per cent, and for every additional £1,000 of unimproved value the rate is increased by 1-5 of a shilling, and the increased rate in each graduation is chargeable on the total unimproved value of the land owned. The rate reaches the maximum at £200,000 and all estates of that value and over have to pay a tax of £2 per cent. of the total unimproved value.

The changes do not stop here. If in 1910 any mammoth estates remain they are to be penalized. After March 31st, 1910, the new progressive graduated scale for land valued at over 140,000 is to be increased by 25 per cent. No wonder land monopoly is doomed in Australia.

"HOLDING UP" VICTORIA.

As the government has taken the liberty of increasing the salaries of its ministers as well as of raising the sessional indemnity (we have been warned not to call it "salary") of the members, we think the public have the right to demand that the legislature shall not be prorogued until it has disposed of all the business properly brought before it. The city of Victoria is asking for legislation which has been deemed of importance to the municipality. It has been charged—and there seems to be substantial foundation for the charge—that there is a disposition manifest on the part of

the lawyers representing corporations interested in the legislation asked for to block the proceedings until it will be too late for the committee to report to the House. The Premier, who ought to be the final authority in such matters, is the representative of the city of Victoria. He ought to consider himself charged with the duty of seeing that the claims of the city receive fair consideration. We know he will take refuge behind the subterfuge that he cannot control the actions of the committee. But such a subterfuge will not satisfy his constituents. Nor will it be satisfactory, we are assured, to many of his constituents who profess the Conservative political faith. If he refuses to exercise the power he undoubtedly possesses, Mr. McBride will be called sharply to account. It has been charged that the chairman of the committee, who is a lawyer, is, practically, in the employ of one of the corporations seeking to block the legislation sought. We do not know whether the allegation is true. We are inclined to think it is not. We have always given Mr. McPhillips credit for possession of a fine sense of the proprieties when an issue arose between his public duties and his private legal practice. But there is no question that as chairman of the committee mentioned he has displayed a disposition to favor the companies which are endeavoring to have the powers of the city circumscribed. Doubtless, when his attention has been called to the matter he will make his position clear. There is one thing the Premier and Mr. McPhillips and the committee and the legislature might as well understand—that it will be a very difficult task indeed to convince the people of Victoria that they should not be permitted to exercise rights in respect to public utilities which have been granted to private corporations. If the city of Victoria desires to supply the citizens of Victoria with power for lighting or other purposes, that desire will have to be gratified. It will be conceded, if not by the McBride government, but by the legislature controlled by the McBride government, then by some government which will succeed the McBride government. It is useless in this twentieth century and in the light of the trend of events in other parts of the world, for any government or any influence having the countenance of a government to set itself in opposition to a reasonable popular movement.

The crazy legislation of the British Columbia legislature is creating alarm throughout Canada. The Monetary Times, a purely financial paper, says: "The powers that be in our Pacific Coast Province will act foolishly if they set up an obstinate opposition to the Ottawa authorities. These words have no political significance. The same would apply whether a Liberal or Conservative government were in power. British Columbia sees perhaps only one phase of the situation. With that phase we are in full sympathy. Ottawa must take a broader view of the question. The Dominion government must be in constant and delicate touch with the authorities in London. Unless it is able to deliver the goods to the territories and Ottawa must work together in unraveling an international tangle the like of which has not been encountered in recent years."

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LECTURE ON PIONEERING.

Rev. Dr. Robson Interests Epworth League at Vancouver.

Vancouver, Feb. 25.—Before the Epworth League of Wesley church last evening Rev. Dr. Robson gave a lecture on Pioneer Methodism in British Columbia. The favor with which the address was received showed that the people of Wesley church deeply appreciated it.

Coming to this country from Lanark County, Ont., in 1835, Dr. Robson told of the many privations and hardships he encountered before he reached the Fraser river, where he started his labors amongst the miners.

"We were introduced to the Asiatic problem as soon as we landed," said the doctor. "We were just pulling into Ladman's Point at Victoria when we encountered a canoe load of Chinamen."

Dr. Robson paid a high tribute to Governor Douglas at Victoria. The governor lent them the use of the court house to hold services in Victoria.

One-third of Britain's telegraph operators are women.

THE ESTIMATES

IN COMMITTEE

CONSIDERATION OF THE VOTES IN DETAIL

Minister of Education Thinks Next Normal School Will Be in Interior.

The House yesterday was occupied at both sittings for the most part in committee of supply. A most interesting announcement was made by the minister of education that according to his view of the Normal school question he was inclined to think that the interior would be the site of the next Normal school to be built in the province.

The night sitting lasted until long after midnight.

Press Gallery, Feb. 26th.

Prayers were read by Rev. Robert Connell.

Questions of Privilege.

John Oliver, on a question of privilege, called attention to the fact that the government had been neglecting to pay the salaries of the members of the B. N. A. Act.

Stuart Henderson.

Resuming the debate on the budget, Stuart Henderson called attention to the fact that errors appeared year after year in the public accounts. With reference to the revenue, he said there were mistakes of thousands of dollars, so that the tables did not convey a proper idea.

Yale riding suffered in this respect. The district contributed only \$16,611. But from the land grant from the Dominion government another large sum was to be received. Various other sources indirectly raised this very considerably. The corrected revenue should show that Yale contributed \$73,526 to the revenue. The grant of \$7,000 was made to the district of Okanagan with \$6,734 of a revenue contributed to the province. Similkameen, with a revenue of \$55,680, contributed to the province, got \$34,700. Kamloops contributed \$75,244 and got \$94,186.

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In the meantime it may have escaped the mind of the Attorney-General that the Japanese who were arrested by his officials for persisting in entering the province and released under habeas corpus proceedings have been deported by agents of the Dominion government.

Mr. Bowser's Vancouver constituents are not going to hold another party. Disunion has crept into their ranks. How would it do for the Attorney-General to join his colleague, President Von Rhein, in a movement against the Bench of the province?

The finance minister had taken credit for wiping out a large debt. But who contributed to the funds for that? The debt was paid in large part by the districts of Yale, Lillooet and Cariboo. These districts had contributed \$72,000 more to the revenues than had been received by the districts since the present government came into power. It was unfair that these districts should receive such small grants as were made for roads, etc.

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