



REFLECTIONS

IIII BY STAFF WRITERS IIII

IT is gratifying to note that the Liberal press is not afraid to come out frankly in favour of the work done by the Civil Service Commission. The *Ottawa Free Press* argues that the Commission may have gone too far afield and discussed questions outside their

LIBERAL PRESS AND THE REPORT

purview, but admits that the allegations they make form a distinct reason for further inquiry. The *Free Press* states that even if the investigation should reveal something of which the Liberal Party will feel ashamed, it is better that the truth be known and an effective remedy provided without delay.

The *Toronto Star* takes the same line. It suggests that even if the report contains errors and exaggerations, even if it is blunt and harsh, attention should be concentrated on what is good in it rather than what is bad. The *Star* is especially strong in its support of the suggestion that the Government should appoint purchasing agents to the number of three or more who should buy for all the departments. It says: "Probably no one measure would do so much to check extravagance and corruption as a complete reform in the method of purchasing supplies."

It is gratifying to be able to pay a slight tribute to a portion of the party press on an occasion of this kind. We must have parties and party leaders and party journals perhaps, but it is not necessary to have pettiness or cowardice or lack of public spirit as characteristics of these. A man should be able to edit either a Conservative or a Liberal journal and yet be highly respected by those who are on the other side of the argument. The members of Parliament, who must go down each day in the arena of party conflict, where speeches and remarks are made suddenly and under conditions which do not make for calmness and judicial attitude, may be excused at times for extreme partisanship and petty views. It is not so with the party editor who writes his leaders in the quiet of the editorial sanctum, and has a chance to study his language, recast his sentences and modify his attitude. Yet in the past, the party editor has often been more partisan than the politician, though it is gratifying to note that this spirit is being modified in recent years. In fact, if one were inclined to prophesy, he might venture to estimate that the first feature of our present party system to vanish would be the party press. As the editorial chairs come to be filled by trained journalists with a university education, the extreme editorial bias so characteristic of the past should vanish.

FEW will deny that it is probably as difficult to get honest public service as it is to secure honest private service. The men who work in offices for a government are presumably much the same as those who work for private companies. The Civil Service Commission go even further, for they say: "It cannot be doubted either that it is a much more difficult proposition to preserve a uniformly high state of efficiency in a government staff than in the ordinary work of the world carried on by money-making organisations."

HONESTY IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

This is startling.

If this statement is true, then government ownership is not advisable.

If this statement is true, then the work of government should be confined within the narrowest limits.

If this statement is true, then political partisans are less worthy of trust than the man who takes little stock in political controversies.

If this statement is true, then it is high time that the Civil Service should be selected, promoted and dismissed by an independent commission who would choose from others than political workers.

It seems, however, to be a strange commentary this. Why should it be more difficult to secure honest public service than honest private service? Is there something in our party system or in our political thought-methods which tends to breed dishonesty among political

workers? Canadians have gone to the United States and won a name for themselves as honest and trustworthy individuals in money-making and money-handling organisations. Have all the honest young men gone abroad and the dishonest ones remained at home?

Searching about for an explanation, it will probably be found that in spite of our religious beliefs, in spite of our acknowledged high moral ideals, there are very few of us who think it a crime to rob a government. We evade paying taxes where we can; we try to get the government to do for us what we should do for ourselves; we take slices of the public domain at ridiculously inadequate prices; and we sell everything to the government (federal, provincial or municipal) at a higher rate than we sell to a private individual. This is a curious twist in our moral make-up.

The public service is no more to blame than the people outside the service. The Man-with-the-Pull is the worst offender against public morals, for he corrupts both the service and the politician. He corrupts the latter in order to secure his Pull; he corrupts the former in order to transform his Pull into Profit. If the public service were placed on an independent basis where promotion would come not through a political chief but through a commission which rewards only industry and integrity, then honesty and efficiency among civil servants would be easily and naturally secured.

MR. THOMAS W. LAWSON is again looking for Canadian lambs to shear. Judging from the stock exchange reports, he has found quite a number. The Yukon Gold Company, a Guggenheim gold-dredging proposition, is being put on the market and some

THE CANADIAN LAMBS AGAIN

Canadians have rushed to buy shares. Those who know the Yukon claim that the chances of much return from these frozen Canadian gold-gravels are not great and that the proposition is a dangerous one. It was the Guggenheims who sent Nipissing stock, a Cobalt proposition, up to \$35 for \$5 shares, and it was their withdrawal which sent the shares back to \$6 or \$7. Canadian investors would be wise in avoiding these New York promoters, who are too adventurous to be safe leaders. Mr. Lawson is selling the stock now and the Guggenheims may not be responsible for his flaming advertisements and his manipulations. Mr. Lawson is no safer as a leader, if as safe as the Guggenheims. He is even more adventurous and his exploits are mostly with other people's propositions. Those who know him best use strong language when describing his attempts to jolly the public and it is strange to see Canadians giving the slightest consideration to any of his propositions.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND is the funniest spot on earth. Mark Twain should go down and write it up, since Canada has not yet produced a humourist equal to the occasion. Considering its population of about 100,000, it makes more noise than any other portion of the Canadian public. Because it is small, is perhaps the reason why it shouts so loud.

THE ISLAND IN THE GULF

It wanted a railway, and it got it—one which curves and twists through nearly half the farms on the Island. For years it was a common joke that the conductor could lean over from the back platform of the last car and hand a dinner pail to the engineer as the train rounded one of the numerous curves. Yet that railway has never been satisfactory, probably because it is a government institution.

It wanted better communication with the mainland and it got steamers. For a few weeks in winter, the ice stopped them. So ice-breakers were provided. Even these get stuck once and a while and now they want a ten-million tunnel, twelve miles long. Owen Sound in the winter of 1907 was cut off from railway communication for a week, but it has not yet asked for a tunnel.

Then the Island hates commercial travellers who hail from other