

Direct Legislation Banquet

Three hundred supporters, including leaders in every calling,
attend successful affair—Strong array of capable speakers

Direct Legislation has become a live and practical issue in Manitoba. The banquet in Manitoba Hall last Wednesday night under the auspices of the Direct Legislation League proved beyond gain-saying that this reform has enlisted the support of prominent men of every class and calling. Merchant princes, doctors, ministers, labor leaders, representative farmers, legislators and editors were among the speakers, and as each one viewed the question from a different standpoint, showing how Direct Legislation would improve the present governmental machinery, the combined testimony of all the thoughtful speeches made an argument that could not be resisted.

The banquet was a pleasant affair throughout. Charm was added to the function by the presence of several ladies. A feature of the gathering was that nearly all the officers of the Grain Growers' association and the Grain Growers' Grain Company were out in force. As is well known, these men have for years championed the cause of Direct Legislation.

Herod After Its Life

"The people surely have the right to be consulted on a question vitally affecting them," declared Dr. J. N. Hutchison, the president of the league, in the opening address. "The proposition is axiomatic. The party system is allowed to continue blocking the way because the 'other party' is just as bad, so we sit down and think there is no remedy. There never was a great reform born but a Herod was out seeking its life. There is a Herod after this Direct Legislation reform, but it is thriving in spite of this."

One Government in Line

Secretary S. J. Farmer announced that the opposition parties in the three prairie provinces had endorsed Direct Legislation. Alberta's legislature had unanimously supported it, while the Conservatives of Alberta and Saskatchewan had made it a plank in their platform. Letters of regret had been received from Hon. A. L. Sifton, premier of Alberta; Hon. J. A. Calder, acting premier of Saskatchewan; E. Michener, opposition leader in Alberta; Mayor Waugh, Rev. Dr. Chown and others.

"The logic of events has taught us," began F. J. Dixon, organizer of the league, "that an independent Parliament with unlimited power is not the highest possible form of popular government. Therefore we propose to improve it by introducing the Initiative, Referendum and Recall."

Definition of Terms

"The Initiative is a measure by which a certain percentage of the voters, usually 8 per cent., may initiate a law by means of a petition. If upon the presentation of the petition the legislature refuses to pass the law it must be submitted to all the voters at the polls for their approval or rejection."

"Where the Referendum is in force all laws are suspended for a period of time after they have been passed by the legislature, usually for ninety days. If during that time a certain percentage of the voters, usually 5 per cent., petitions for rejection before it comes into force, it must be so done."

"The Initiative is a measure by which the people may start legislation."

"The Referendum is a measure by which the people may stop legislation."

"The Recall is a measure by which the people may discharge any dishonest or incompetent public servant without waiting for the expiration of his term of office. It is a means by which a certain percentage of the voters in any constituency, usually 15 per cent., may demand by petition that their representative stand for re-election if he is not giving satisfactory service."

Ex-Mayor Ashdown

"Not only have the people nothing to say, but even the representatives are told when they may speak and when they may not. The country in reality is governed by an oligarchy, a few members of the cabinet," said Ex-Mayor J. H. Ashdown, honorary president of the league. He supported woman suffrage as heartily as Direct Legislation, for women were always on the right and moral side. Nowadays there was nothing to make a government live up to its promises. Direct Legislation would insure this.

An eloquent presentation of Autocracy

vs. Democracy was given by Rev. Dr. G. B. Wilson. In tracing the fitful rise of democracy, especially in Anglo-Saxon countries, a steady growth in the freedom and self-government of the people was clearly evident. As Direct Legislation appeared to be a surer and better way of registering the will of the people, he supported it.

A Change Needed

"Why do we need a change?" asked W. W. Buchanan. "Direct Legislation does not propose to supplant responsible government or to abandon representative institutions for pure democracy, but simply to add a safety valve and governor to conserve the purity and power of responsible government. Direct Legislation will not interfere with the legislative or administrative progress unless something goes wrong. It would provide a needed check upon hasty legislation by giving electors the right of veto. Our cabinet, too, needs a check, for it has grown into a tyrannous oligarchy, reducing a large portion of our representatives into mere office boys or rubber stamps. Corporations and special interests have grown so powerful with our legislators that in self-defence the members need direct power vested back with the people."

Is Balfour Un-British?

"We are told that Direct Legislation is un-British," began J. W. Daffoe, editor of the Winnipeg Free Press. He then proceeded to refute this allegation by quoting some leading Britishers such as Hon. A. J. Balfour, Lord Rosebery, the Marquis of Lansdowne, who had endorsed the measure, in addition to Prof. A. V. Dicey and Sir Wm. Anson, the leading constitutional authorities in England. Mr. Balfour had earnestly defended the

principle in one of his campaign speeches, contending that it was not American, but British in origin and had been embodied in the constitution given by the British government to Australia.

The Farmers' Standpoint

How Direct Legislation would help the farmer was ably handled by John Kennedy, vice-president of the Grain Growers' Grain company. He recalled that the farmers had been pioneers in this reform, the first resolution being presented by Mr. Scallion and himself at the Brandon convention 1909, and the resolution was cheered to the echo by the 600 selected delegates, Liberals and Conservatives alike.

"Direct Legislation will give the people control of the legislators," proceeded Mr. Kennedy, "and this is their right. It matters not which party comes into power we get class legislation rather than legislation for the masses. I believe in placing insurgents within both parties to make them what they ought to be."

Pointing out the burdens resting upon the shoulders of the farmers, the speaker said that the 25 foot tariff wall prevented them shipping wheat to their next-door neighbors.

"Worse still, we are not in a position to ship our grain to the Eastern provinces or to the British market without being compelled to pay toll to Special Privilege for carrying our grain through our own country. We have a loading platform and when we get our own car and load our grain over the loading platform, and get the quotations of the day, I claim that we are then taking 10 to 15 cents per bushel less than the intrinsic and milling value of our grain."

Three Toll Gates

"We have toll gates all along the line. First, our local elevator system collects a heavy toll, but there is relief in sight from this particular point. The second toll is the grading system, which is a one-sided jug-handled system, and places a heavy tax on every bushel of grain that leaves the farmers' hands. The third

is a sample market that is existing in Winnipeg for the benefit of Special Privilege and against the interests of the producer. This allows the big fish in the pond to select the strong cars in their respective grades from export parcels for foreign markets, thereby reducing the standard of our wheats in the foreign markets of the world. The last is the toll collected in the terminal elevators, which also reduces the standard of our wheats in the foreign markets, and sets the price for our good wheats in the Western country. The remedy is a sample market, and until we get Direct Legislation there is little or no hope of getting a sample market. Direct Legislation means the brotherhood of man, and the removal of these Special Privileges. The great plain people must unite and help each other, otherwise we must continue to take the same old medicine."

How Canada is Enslaved

How Direct Legislation would overcome the evils of partyism was the subject dealt with by George F. Chipman, editor of The Grain Growers' Guide.

Starting with the proposition that political parties dominated Canada as no other country was dominated, and that party worship had degenerated into party slavery, Mr. Chipman showed how abuse of the system had brought the government of Canada, as given by both parties, into disrepute. Any intelligent man will admit corruption even in his own party, but he condones this on the ground that the other party is probably worse. This has produced a callous public conscience even among Christian people.

"The party system is founded," said Mr. Chipman, "upon the attractive theory that all our elected representatives are earnestly and unselfishly working for the benefit of the people whom they are supposed to serve. By having two parties we are supposed to believe that a proper balance will be maintained. The rights of the people are supposed to be amply protected by the competition of the two parties."

Direct Legislation would break down this undemocratic, unrepresentative and slavish party system, contended Mr. Chipman. The worship of party would cease; reform legislation would be more frequent. The whole electorate could not be bribed or corrupted, and politicians will be more careful when they realize that the people can both repeal legislation and discharge unfaithful servants.

Labor Supports It

Organized labor had for years supported this reform, stated R. A. Rigg, because it was in line with democratic development. Labor's prayer was "Lord, give us no more giants, but elevate the race."

The final speeches by J. W. Wilton and R. L. Richardson were brief, but to the point. They contended that the British constitution was not fixed, full-grown and changeless, but a growing development, instinct with life and constantly in need of new adaptations. For this reason, in addition to the others urged, Direct Legislation was in harmony with the spirit of the times.

A MILE OF TRACTORS

One solid mile of tractors arrived in Winnipeg last Saturday on the Rumely Co. Great Northern special from Minneapolis. It is said to be the largest shipment of farming implements ever made.

The train load of tractors are worth \$500,000 and in crossing the boundary line a duty of \$50,000 was collected. Each engine weighs 26,000 pounds and the whole shipment amounting to 1,300 tons.

Mr. Rumely, head of the manufacturing firm which turns out these tractors, accompanied the train. They are bound for various destinations throughout the Canadian West, and more are said to be on the way.

"Ah, once a Bohemian always a Bohemian!" exclaimed the unscissored poet. "A Bohemian never changes."

"No—not even his collar," remarked the practical man who had met a few Bohemians.

At Belfast a football match was played between Ireland and Scotland. One of the home supporters, who was getting excited, kept shouting out:—

"Sit on 'em, Ireland!"

An old Scotsman in the crowd, unable to stand it any longer, cried out:—

"Ye might be able to sit on the leek, mon, an' mabbe on the rose; but I tell ye, mon, ye canna sit on the thistle."

The Empty Homestead

By GERALD J. LIVELY

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Have you seen an empty homestead, with its little empty shack,
With its sagging doors, and plaster all a-dropping from the wall?
It was built with loving labor, it was built with eager hope,
And it represented Someone's all-in-all.

Oh, the careful plots and schemings, and the pictures that were drawn.
Oh, the castles that were builded, and the golden Keeps of Spain.
The days we spent in working out the plans of yestereve,
And the nights in planning out fresh work again.

But now the place is empty and all dropping to decay.
The lights of Life have left it, and the fires of Home are dead,
And the sound of honest labor's heard no more upon the land,
And the soul of simple happiness has fled.

And the barn's sod roof is sinking, and all overgrown with weeds,
There are pools of stagnant water behind the cattle stalls,
And clumps of clammy fungus grow on every sodden log,
While a cloud of pigweed hides the rotting walls.

Where the wheat was once a-waving and a-shimmering in the Sun,
You will find the fertile acres all going back to sod.
The pasture fence is rotting and the rails are falling down,
And the garden's smothered out with golden-rod.

And the place is steeped in sadness and soaked with futile tears,
And the ghosts that haunt it ye will never lay,
For some broken toys are lying in the shadow of the wall,
Where once the children played, the gophers play.

You'll find that empty homestead, nestled down upon the plain,
Tucked away amongst the downlands and beside the chattering streams.
It's the picture of lost life-work, it's the model of despair,
It's the shadow of dead love and shattered dreams.

It's the total of spent labor, it's the end of vanished hopes,
It's the sum of lost endeavor, it's the stalking ghost of greed,
It's a sketch of simple suffering, an unsung fight with fate,
It's the photograph of poverty and need.

It's the stamped receipt for taxes and bitter unjust dues,
It's the sealed bond the modern Shylock hold.
It represents an evil that is older than our land,
That is older than the Vedic Hymns are old.

It's the price we pay for workshops in a thousand reeking towns,
It's the price of sin and shame and the suicide of Race,
It's the price we pay for cripples instead of stalwart men,
It's the price that keeps our Masters in their place.

Oh, ye high and mighty Masters, whose gain is all our loss,
Ye talk a lot of Empire, and of nations hand in hand,
But ye'll never build an Empire on a base of empty farms,
Ye first must clear that evil from our land.