

OTTAWA LETTER.

No Excuse or Apology for Gerrymandering St. John.

Mr. Blair is the Author of the Clause, Which Accounts for Its Injustice.

Colonel Tucker's Maiden Speech—Some Correspondence That He May Possibly Have Received from His Constituents.

OTTAWA, July 11.—The gerrymandering bill has gone to the senate after a final afternoon discussion on the St. John clause. The government might have escaped this last criticism if the ministers in charge had not blundered. But there was a mistake in the wording of this clause and the house was moved back into committee to amend it. This directed the attention of the house again to this feature of the bill.

No excuse and no decent apology was given for the St. John gerrymandering. The most that Mr. Blair had to say was that the present system is anomalous and that it is improper for the people of St. John to vote for the city member and then take part in the election of the member for the county. But this anomaly existed long before Mr. Blair was born and might have been allowed for two years longer without serious injury to anybody. For it is to be remembered that Sir Wilfrid Laurier has over and over again stated that the only purpose of this bill is to right a wrong done by the conservatives. Within a week a letter has been published, which the member sent to the petitioners in the Kootenay who asked that their district should be recognized in the re-arrangement. Sir Wilfrid replied that the bill was not intended to adjust representation, but merely to right a wrong that had been done and that it went no farther than to correct the evil.

It came out in the discussion that Mr. Blair is the author of the St. John clause. That accounts for its injustice, and also, perhaps, for the blunder which made it necessary to send the bill back to committee. Mr. Blair may have deceived Sir Wilfrid. He certainly tried to leave the impression on the house that St. John county was a municipality by itself, and that the bill was in line with the claims that municipal boundaries should be respected. For an hour some of the Ontario members were misled, but they succeeded in ascertaining the true situation from Mr. Ellis and other members having local knowledge.

Another interesting feature developed was the opposition of the member for St. John city to the bill. Mr. Ellis took the position that might be expected of a representative of the St. John people. He pointed out that the city contained 20,000 people by the last census and the county only 10,000. The bill deprives these 30,000 people of the right to vote for two members, a right they had enjoyed since confederation. It created two constituencies of equal power, though one had 11,000 voters and the other only 3,000. Mr. Ellis did not see any reason for a change at all, but if it were necessary to remove the anomaly which had suddenly become so grievous, it could have been done by dividing the city and county equitably into two ridings, or by making it a double member constituency. It appears that at the request of Mr. Blair the government has violated several principles.

It has departed from the rule only to make changes where the late government had done some alleged wrong.

It has created side by side two constituencies, one four times as large as the other, and has given them equal representation.

While pretending to call in judges to make a division where a municipality is cut into ridings, it has allowed Mr. Blair to be the sole judge in this case.

It has done all this in opposition to the representations of the member representing the people who are deprived of their votes, though that member is a supporter of the government.

Mr. Blair explained that he had consulted the members and found Mr. Ellis was not very strong against the change, while Col. Tucker was in favor of it. The colonel himself made a speech, the first that has been heard from him in the house of commons. It stands to his credit that his one speech during these four sessions has been a request that the people of St. John city should lose half their voting power and that he should be relieved of more than three-quarters of the constituency. Col. Tucker expressed a lofty disregard for representation by population and also for ancient traditions. It did not worry him in the least that the people of St. John had been voting for the city and county members all their lives, and that they now reduced to voting for one member, giving them a smaller representation than any other city or town in Canada. Col. Tucker said that he had written to his friends in St. John and they had not offered a word of objection to the bill in their replies. He did not read the letters, but it is said that some of the replies received by him have been discovered. The following copies of letters said to have been received are not vouched for, but are offered on the score that internal evidence favors their authenticity:

St. John city:

"Dear Col. Tucker—If the bill is passed and you cease to represent this city, we feel we can bear the loss with composure. Let the bill go."

Here is another:

"Dear Colonel—Tell the government

to go ahead and disfranchise the city. Nothing else can save you."

One more city letter reads as follows:

"Dear Sir—St. John people are strongly against the bill. The government take away from the people of their votes, and you will have some chance in the next election."

From St. John county the favorable replies to Col. Tucker's enquiry are said to be of this sort:

"St. Martins.

"Dear Colonel—Leave the city out. We can use the whole \$20,000 in the county next time."

"Simonds.

"Dear Sir—Replying to your request, the friends here suggest that the bill is quite necessary to your salvation. You will need all the county votes this time to get elected."

"Munquah.

"Dear Colonel Tucker—By all means support the bill. Your record in the house is so brilliant that we in the county demand all the glory for ourselves."

Mr. Powell explained to the house under what circumstances the local legislation was accomplished which Mr. Blair now quotes as a precedent for gerrymandering St. John. Mr. Blair did the job in New Brunswick and now comes to Ottawa to cite this proceeding as a reason why the Dominion parliament should adopt this measure. Mr. Powell points out that St. John had elected six members against the Blair government, and that he made this change in order to capture two seats. Having done this he introduced a bill which was intended to have the effect of reviving certain election petitions and unseating the St. John members with the view of capturing the seats. For a year he succeeded in electing two members in the county on the next opportunity. Mr. Blair had informed the house of the fact that the local act separating the county from the city was passed at the request of the county council. Mr. Powell showed that this was quite untrue. The only request ever made was by the Portland city council before the union of Portland with St. John. This petition Mr. Blair disregarded for seven years, and held two more elections under the old conditions. It was only when the city went solid against him that the anomaly was impressed on his mind. And it was only when the circumstances seemed to require that a snug constituency should be set aside for the government New Brunswick that it was found necessary to interfere with St. John representation at Ottawa.

Mr. Henderson, an Ontario member, recalled to Sir Wilfrid his statement that no division of a municipality into ridings would be made except by a judge. But the reminder was quite lost on the forgetful premier.

Mr. Costigan took a hand in the discussion. Mr. Costigan appeared to be impressed with the idea that it was necessary to do something to change the St. John basis of representation, which seemed to him quite improper. Mr. Powell reminded the ex-minister that he had sat with the government which made and passed the present representation bill and came to think then that it was all right.

An all night sitting is getting to be quite the fashion this session. Last evening the house took up Mr. Borden's vote. The minister wants a million and a quarter of money and insists upon having it all voted in one evening. That is the reason that the house sat all night before the minister towards noon on the day following. There are reasons why Mr. Borden's vote should be pretty thoroughly ventilated, and one of them has already been mentioned in these letters. S. D. S.

The Bate contract has already been described. Ten days ago Mr. Borden promised to tell the house on the following Monday or Tuesday how it happened that H. N. Bate had charged freight on goods sold to the government for the Yukon contingent, when Mr. Borden himself had told the house the year before that Mr. Bate was to pay the freight himself. This Bate contract will stand some looking into for these reasons:

It amounts to some \$35,000.

It was given without tender and without competition.

It was announced last year when attention was called to the high prices charged that this was due to the fact that Mr. Bate's firm was paying the freight to the coast.

It turns out that the prices charged are on the whole higher than the Vancouver prices ought to be.

It turns out that the freight was not paid by the Bate firm on any of the articles except flour, meat, and oil, which were not shipped from Ottawa.

Mr. N. H. Bate is a prominent liberal organizer.

It was this same Mr. Bate who at the Ottawa convention of 1898 was vigorously cheered while he adorned the hall with a placard or banner setting forth that "Laurier expects every man to do his duty."

There is an impression that a corresponding notice may now be found in the department offices declaring that

"H. N. Bate expects every minister to do his duty." Evidently this expectation has been brought before the department and has been duly realized. Mr. Taylor has got a return of the prices paid to Mr. Bate, and finds that in nearly every case he got more than the Vancouver price. The proof is complete in most cases, for the government itself bought on the coast the same kind of provisions for the mounted police. The auditor-general's report gives a statement of the prices in each case and the Bate figures are almost invariably higher for goods delivered at Ottawa than for goods delivered at Vancouver.

Mr. Borden offers no other excuse than that the contractor pays the freight on part of the goods. This only means that Mr. Bate bought meat from Armour's in Chicago, who delivered it at Vancouver with charges paid and the same with the oil bought from the producers by Bate, and the flour bought by Bate from the millers. All these articles the government should have bought at the Vancouver prices, and this would have been done if tender had been asked for in the regular way. The other articles, some \$20,000 worth, are the ones which were criticized last year as being too high priced. It was in regard to these that Mr. Bate's explanation of the fact that the price was high because the contractor paid the freight to Vancouver. Now he admits that he was mistaken, and that the price was paid by the contractor, thus adding to the whole and in some cases twenty or thirty per cent to the cost, all for the benefit of the ardent liberal who told the convention that "Laurier expects every man to do his duty."

Mr. Taylor had various other figures. He found that Mr. Bate received \$794 in the case of the contractor. The Mounted Police prunes were bought in British Columbia for \$6, and the government had to pay freight on the Bate article besides. For canned peaches Bate charged \$9.30, and one dollar freight for goods that were sold on the coast for \$6.50 to \$7.35. Even in so small an article as table salt, there were extraordinary profits. It is said that this salt can be bought here for less than a cent a bushel, and Mr. Bate charged a cent a lb. and another cent a lb. for freight to Vancouver. The Vancouver members ridicule the idea of shipping salt across the continent, and it is landed on the coast from British ships as cheap as it is here. Lard was charged at 84-c, when Henderson and other members say that the common price at Ontario at the time was 7-1/2c. Mr. Taylor's explanation of this return, comparing the prices of each article and insisting that they were all from 20 to 50 per cent too high.

Dr. Borden and Mr. Patterson, who came to his relief, rather objected to Mr. Taylor's quotation of market prices. But they both recognized as a competent authority Mr. Earle of Victoria, a wholesale dealer in provisions, whose particular business it is to supply mining camps with provisions packed for distant transportation. Mr. Earle is a moderate and reliable man, whose own business is to supply his political opponents will question. Last night Mr. Earle testified that the Bate prices were, in his opinion at least, as high as the British Columbia prices, and in some cases were considerably higher. Therefore the Bate firm got a clear rake-off of the amount of the freight. Again Mr. Earle said that it was not the custom on the coast for packing in tin boxes and four cents a pound for the nails they used, this being double the cost of the nails.

Naturally the opposition members in these circumstances did not feel that over a million dollars ought to be voted to Mr. Borden in one evening without a full discussion of these extraordinary business methods. But the government was determined to go through with the bill, and the opposition should be put through before adjournment. That is the reason for this all night session. The government supporters are standing by the ministers who are renewing the agreement after the vote of Mr. Bate, who charged twice as much as he did and had added freight several times across the continent.

Mr. Borden expects every member to do his duty—by Mr. Bate for S. D. S.

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If Sir Wilfrid declined the offer of a house from his friends, he seems to have declined it wisely, seeing that the house cost less than \$10,000, and he is to have a testimonial of ten times that much. Sir Wilfrid had no remarks to make on the subject of presentations from men occupying the relations that Lord Strathcona does toward the Dominion government.

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There is some interest felt in the appointment of the apostolic delegate from Rome. It will be remembered that Mr. Russell, the Canadian government solicitor in London, went to Rome a year ago and appealed there to the Vatican for this appointment. Mr. Russell, representing that Sir Wilfrid Laurier was very anxious that the pope should be represented at the Canadian capital. The government will now be able to conduct negotiations with Rome more easily than by the slower process of sending solicitors general, solicitors in particular, and other messengers to the Seven Hills. S. D. S.

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Probably some more united action on the part of the conservatives in the senate might have been reached if Sir Mackenzie Bowell had at the beginning decided upon his own course and followed out his decision to the end. It may be of interest to state what is known generally to the senators and to the politicians on the hill. Up to the time that the bills reached the senate no attempt had been made to secure an opinion from the senators as to whether they were disposed to withdraw their opposition to the measure. Their previous action had resulted in so many changes and amendments that it was possible for them to accept the bills as now presented without condemning their previous action. At the same time it is known that the bills were still regarded as an improvement and objectionable by most of the senators, and the opposition party in the house of commons had voted against them, with the exception of two members. After the second reading of the government bill two bills were placed together on the order paper and two great railway companies began the work of canvassing the senators. The Canadian Pacific railway corporation was opposed particularly to the traffic agreement in respect to west-bound freight. The Grand Trunk lobby was in favor of the bill as it stood. For a week or two the railroad men were very much in evidence and then the minister of justice gave notice of an amendment which seems to have satisfied the C. P. R. At all events Mr. Shagnessy and his people disappeared from Parliament Hill and were seen no more.

By this time the rank and file of the senate began to look for some sort of direction in the matter. They began to consult and it was found that a considerable number of the conservatives were willing to let the bill through, provided the most objectionable features were removed. They were not all of this mind, however, and the vigorous convayer of the Senate, Mr. Santford, who was favorable to the passage of the bill, met with strong resistance. Sir Mackenzie Bowell had spoken rather strongly against the measure in the sittings of the house.

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The Bowell amendment has not been accepted by the government nor by the Grand Trunk. Other conferences have been held between Sir Mackenzie and the Grand Trunk men, with the result that some modification of the Bowell proposition is said to be in view. Meanwhile Sir Mackenzie, Mr. Ferguson and the other ex-ministers have voted for the second reading and against the six months' hoist, and so the affair will stand until Monday. It may be said that there is considerable dissatisfaction among the conservative senators over the want of continuity in the policy of the senate leadership. They might have been persuaded to follow a direction in favor of allowing the second reading and making the fight in committee if Sir Mackenzie had strongly adhered to one course from the beginning. In the uncertainty of affairs the senators largely followed their individual direction, which, perhaps, after all is not a bad thing. But the result is that there is now no concert of action and therefore it is impossible to know what may happen when the bill comes to be considered clause by clause. The minister of justice and the secretary of state will be obliged to do some skilful steering or they will find their bill wrecked on some of the rocks that lie in its course.

Mr. Taylor has something more to say about the Bate firm, whose leading member was once so anxious to impress upon the country the fact that Laurier expects every man to do his duty. The Bate firm purchased last year all the binder twine made by the government in the penitentiaries. Mr. Bate has written to the papers stating that he purchased the goods by tender. As a matter of fact there was no advertisement for tender, but only an invitation to sell. The circular, which Mr. Bate stated that these circulars were sent to all the leading dealers in Canada. As a matter of fact they were sent only to the following persons, most of whom are not dealers in binder twine: At Hamilton, Wood & Co.; at Toronto, John Hallam and Rice, Lewis & Co.; at Kingston, H. Moore and Dalton & Strang; at Winnipeg, J. H. Ashdown; at St. John, C. B. Brown. They were also sent to the Farmers' Binder Twine company at Brantford, to a firm in Manitoba and to the Bate firm in Ottawa. None were sent to Halifax, Montreal or Quebec, nor to the largest dealers in binder twine in Ontario.

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Both the Ontario government and the Canadian government have been manufacturing binder twine and yet the produce is kept at combine prices and the farmers are paying heavily twice as much as they did before the duty was removed. The country gets no benefit whatever from free trade in binder twine, seeing that the whole import is controlled by the same ring to which the government sells its product. Mr. Henderson, Mr. Taylor and the other members say that the government should sell direct to the farmers in small lots in order to protect the consumer from combine prices. Instead of doing that it has first removed the duty, causing some Canadian factories to cease operations, and then has itself become a member of the combine controlling the whole importation and local output to the great injury of the farmer. Mr. McMullen in defence of the government, boasted that the Farmers' Binder Twine Company, which was organized by the patrons for the ostensible purpose of giving the farmers cheap twine, made 90 per cent profit last year. This is an odd boast to be made on behalf of the concern which

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Probably some more united action on the part of the conservatives in the senate might have been reached if Sir Mackenzie Bowell had at the beginning decided upon his own course and followed out his decision to the end. It may be of interest to state what is known generally to the senators and to the politicians on the hill. Up to the time that the bills reached the senate no attempt had been made to secure an opinion from the senators as to whether they were disposed to withdraw their opposition to the measure. Their previous action had resulted in so many changes and amendments that it was possible for them to accept the bills as now presented without condemning their previous action. At the same time it is known that the bills were still regarded as an improvement and objectionable by most of the senators, and the opposition party in the house of commons had voted against them, with the exception of two members. After the second reading of the government bill two bills were placed together on the order paper and two great railway companies began the work of canvassing the senators. The Canadian Pacific railway corporation was opposed particularly to the traffic agreement in respect to west-bound freight. The Grand Trunk lobby was in favor of the bill as it stood. For a week or two the railroad men were very much in evidence and then the minister of justice gave notice of an amendment which seems to have satisfied the C. P. R. At all events Mr. Shagnessy and his people disappeared from Parliament Hill and were seen no more.

By this time the rank and file of the senate began to look for some sort of direction in the matter. They began to consult and it was found that a considerable number of the conservatives were willing to let the bill through, provided the most objectionable features were removed. They were not all of this mind, however, and the vigorous convayer of the Senate, Mr. Santford, who was favorable to the passage of the bill, met with strong resistance. Sir Mackenzie Bowell had spoken rather strongly against the measure in the sittings of the house.

but he did not make it quite certain that he would vote against the second reading.

Finally a meeting for consultation was held in the house of commons. It would be called a caucus. At this meeting Sir Mackenzie threw out suggestions favorable to the course of allowing the second reading in case the traffic agreement clauses, the most serious blemishes, should be removed. But the meeting was about evenly divided and without counting the chairman, the majority was against this proposition. It is said to have been lost by a majority of one. After this Senator Ferley, representing the majority of the caucus, moved the six months' hoist. Still later another meeting was called and it was decided unanimously that a sub-committee should be appointed to frame amendments covering the particular objections, and especially the traffic agreement clause. This caucus decided unanimously that the minister of justice's amendment could not be accepted. It was also unanimous in accepting the amendment afterwards submitted by the sub-committee at an adjourned meeting of the caucus. This amendment is understood to have been prepared by Senator Ferguson, who has acted in harmony with Sir Mackenzie Bowell from the beginning. Sir Mackenzie undertook to give notice of the amendment, and while the stalwart should be reserved the privilege of voting for the six months' hoist, they all agreed to stand by the caucus amendment and to leave the bill unless it were adopted. Sir Mackenzie thereupon gave notice of the amendment and caused it to be understood that if it were accepted by the government he would not oppose the second reading.

The Bowell amendment has not been accepted by the government nor by the Grand Trunk. Other conferences have been held between Sir Mackenzie and the Grand Trunk men, with the result that some modification of the Bowell proposition is said to be in view. Meanwhile Sir Mackenzie, Mr. Ferguson and the other ex-ministers have voted for the second reading and against the six months' hoist, and so the affair will stand until Monday. It may be said that there is considerable dissatisfaction among the conservative senators over the want of continuity in the policy of the senate leadership. They might have been persuaded to follow a direction in favor of allowing the second reading and making the fight in committee if Sir Mackenzie had strongly adhered to one course from the beginning. In the uncertainty of affairs the senators largely followed their individual direction, which, perhaps, after all is not a bad thing. But the result is that there is now no concert of action and therefore it is impossible to know what may happen when the bill comes to be considered clause by clause. The minister of justice and the secretary of state will be obliged to do some skilful steering or they will find their bill wrecked on some of the rocks that lie in its course.

Mr. Taylor has something more to say about the Bate firm, whose leading member was once so anxious to impress upon the country the fact that Laurier expects every man to do his duty. The Bate firm purchased last year all the binder twine made by the government in the penitentiaries. Mr. Bate has written to the papers stating that he purchased the goods by tender. As a matter of fact there was no advertisement for tender, but only an invitation to sell. The circular, which Mr. Bate stated that these circulars were sent to all the leading dealers in Canada. As a matter of fact they were sent only to the following persons, most of whom are not dealers in binder twine: At Hamilton, Wood & Co.; at Toronto, John Hallam and Rice, Lewis & Co.; at Kingston, H. Moore and Dalton & Strang; at Winnipeg, J. H. Ashdown; at St. John, C. B. Brown. They were also sent to the Farmers' Binder Twine company at Brantford, to a firm in Manitoba and to the Bate firm in Ottawa. None were sent to Halifax, Montreal or Quebec, nor to the largest dealers in binder twine in Ontario.

The Bate firm got the whole supply. They also bought out the Bradford company's output. According to Mr. Taylor they joined the combine and cornered the whole product of the Canadian factories. Included in the ring were the Hobbs Hardware company, controlling the whole importation from the United States. The upshot of the whole affair was that while the Bate people bought it twine from the government at 41-1/2 cents a pound, the farmers had to pay anywhere from 12 to 15 cents a pound for the binder twine. Following Mr. Taylor, Mr. Henderson, Mr. Davin, Mr. Clancy, Mr. Craig and other representatives of farmers in Ontario and the west protested against the course adopted by the government. It was urged on the other side that the price of twine had been increased by the high price of raw material owing to the war in the Philippines islands. The answer to that is that the price which Mr. Bate paid was not increased. It was the farmers who made the loss. Mr. Bate and the combine made the profit.

Both the Ontario government and the Canadian government have been manufacturing binder twine and yet the produce is kept at combine prices and the farmers are paying heavily twice as much as they did before the duty was removed. The country gets no benefit whatever from free trade in binder twine, seeing that the whole import is controlled by the same ring to which the government sells its product. Mr. Henderson, Mr. Taylor and the other members say that the government should sell direct to the farmers in small lots in order to protect the consumer from combine prices. Instead of doing that it has first removed the duty, causing some Canadian factories to cease operations, and then has itself become a member of the combine controlling the whole importation and local output to the great injury of the farmer. Mr. McMullen in defence of the government, boasted that the Farmers' Binder Twine Company, which was organized by the patrons for the ostensible purpose of giving the farmers cheap twine, made 90 per cent profit last year. This is an odd boast to be made on behalf of the concern which

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