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The Opposition Won.

In the fight for constitutional rights in the matter of producing original documents in the House of Commons, the Opposition won. When the House met on Monday of last week, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, with a few words of attempted explanation tabled the original documents asked for by Mr. Ames. The examination of these original papers, referring to the leasing of certain timber berths, appear to furnish sufficient evidence of collusion between the Government and some favorite tenderers, and thus on their very face vindicate the Opposition in the fight they made for the peoples' rights. The following reference to the matter by the Ottawa Citizen, briefly sums up the case, as well as anything we can say. We quote:

"The revelations in the original documents produced for the inspection of Mr. Ames, M.P., will not seem so strange to the public as that Sir Wilfrid Laurier should, apparently, have placed himself in a position of personally endeavoring to obstruct their production. Until the evidence of witnesses is secured to further explain the manner in which these timber berths were sold, it would be premature to denounce it as a piece of jobbery; but the original documents, on their face, give strong grounds for suspicion. Three tenders are put in, two of them in the same handwriting. One of the latter is for a ridiculously low amount, and the other, apparently, had the bid left blank, to be filled in when it was known if there were any other tenders. As it happens, there was one other tender for a substantial sum as compared with that placed in one of the twin tenders. The other twin tender was then filled out in different colored ink at a figure which secured the berth. The suspicion is that the blank tender was filled out by an official of the department of the interior after the tenders were opened. It will now be the duty of the Opposition to endeavor to get at the facts. Incidentally, the production of these papers forms a shining example of the importance of access to original documents. Typewritten copies of these letters would have completely removed all evidence of collusion which is based upon the similarity of the handwriting in two of the tenders, and the fact that the amount of the successful tender was written in with a different sort of ink. Also that the signature of the individual who secured the berth is not in the same handwriting as the same signature which transferred the timber limit to a large pulp company. It further renders ridiculous the argument advanced during the debate in the house that opposition members should only be allowed access to original documents when they could point to something suspicious in the copies. Had typewritten copies been substituted for these original documents there would have been absolutely nothing in the copies on which the finger of suspicion could be laid, and yet they would be technically correct copies of the original papers."

The Montreal Gazette goes further into the details of the matter and lets in a flood of light on the manner in which this particular deal was put through. From all this evidence and much more that may be expected, the public will understand why the Minister of the Interior was so reluctant to produce these original documents. Among other things the Gazette says:

"That the production of the original documents, instead of copies, is extremely important from the point of view of the public interest is denoted in the following story which the papers secured by Mr. H. B. Ames reveal. In the fall of 1903 the Department of the Interior advertised for tenders for a valuable timber berth in the Northwest, of an area of seventy square miles. Three tenders were received at the department in the early part of December of that year. One tender was put in by A. W. Fraser, K. C., of Ottawa, the then president of the Ottawa Reform Association, and prospective candidate at the next general election. The tender was on his own office paper, and was for the sum of \$1,000. The second tender, which bears every evidence of being bonafide, was in the name of James Curry, and was for the sum of \$6,420. The third tender is the peculiar one. It bears the same date of the other two, and is signed by W. H. Nolan, whom subsequent developments show to be of Montreal. A comparison of the handwriting of the so-called Nolan tender, with that of Mr. Fraser shows, in the opinion of many members of Parliament, that they were written by one and the same person, except that the tender figures in the Nolan tender, \$7,000, are in different handwriting, and different ink to the Fraser offer. The envelopes in which the Fraser and Nolan tenders were enclosed are exactly the same, as also the handwriting on both. Among the communications which follow the tenders is one apparently in the handwriting of the genuine Mr. Nolan, in which he transfers his interest in the timber limit to the Imperial Pulp Company. The signature of Mr. Nolan on this communication is entirely dissimilar to the signature on the tender submitted in his name. Then follows the lease of the property by the Government to the Imperial Pulp Company, which lease is signed by D. H. McMillan as president, the D. H. McMillan being none other than Sir Daniel McMillan, the present lieutenant-governor of Manitoba."

The evidence of collusion here produced is, we may be sure, only the beginning of very unsavory revelations regarding the Government's conduct in these transactions, and the grand fight for constitutional rights made by the Opposition, and ultimately won, should earn for them the commendation and applause of all honest and independent electors throughout the Dominion.

Death of Premier Peters

Hon. Arthur Peters, Premier and Attorney-General of this Province, died at his residence, Charlottetown, on Wednesday evening last, 29th ult., after an illness of about six weeks, of Bright's Disease. Deceased was the youngest son of the late James Horsfield Peters, Master of the Rolls, and Mary Cunard, his wife, and was born at Charlottetown on August 29th, 1854. He was educated at Prince of Wales College and King's College, Windsor, N. S. He studied law in the office of the present Judge Hodgson, and subsequently went to London, where he was a student of the Inner Temple, and was called to the bar of his Province in 1873.

In 1890 he was first elected to the Legislature from the Second District of King's County, and continued to represent that district up to the time of his death. He became Attorney-General on the formation of the Farquharson Government in 1900, and on the retirement of Premier Farquharson in December, 1901, Mr. Peters became Premier and continued so until his death. In 1884 he married Amelia Jane Stewart, daughter of the late Charles Stewart, Rosebank, who with two sons and two daughters survive him. Besides these he leaves two brothers, Mr. Frederick Peters, in Vancouver, and Mr. Thomas Peters, of Gagetown, N. B., and two sisters, Mrs. Edward Bayfield and Miss Margaret Peters.

His funeral took place on Friday and was largely attended. It was a public funeral and was participated in by the judges of the different courts, the members of the Government and Legislature, and public officials. The body was taken to St. Peter's Episcopal Church in the morning, and from there to the Legislative Council Chamber, where it lay in state till 2.30 p. m. The remains were then taken back to the church, where another service was held, and then the funeral cortege proceeded to the cemetery belonging to St. Peter's Church, on St. Peter's Road. The cortege was preceded by a military escort, who fired a volley over the grave. Mr. Peters was a Liberal in politics, and we disapproved of his policy, his methods and his administration of Provincial affairs; but personally he was agreeable and affable, and kind and considerate in his home life. His widow and family have the sympathy of the community in their bereavement.

A copy of the accounts of the City of Charlottetown, for the year 1907, has just been received. We are unable, in this issue, to do more than give the totals, amounts of revenues and expenditure for the year ending Dec. 31, 1907, was \$105,643.75, and the total expenditure for the year was \$105,192.70. This leaves a balance in favor of the city on the year's transaction of \$451.05. To this is to be added the amount at credit of the city in Bank on Dec. 31, 1906, \$7,587.42, making a total to the city's credit in the Bank on Dec. 31, 1907, of \$8,038.47. The balance sheet shows the liabilities of the city to be \$786,400.02, and the assets \$806,892.07.

Ottawa Weekly Letter.

Ottawa Jan. 25 1908.
The question of Senate reform was before the House of Commons on Monday in the shape of a resolution and two amendments. Mr. McIntyre of Perth, one of the Liberals who take the Ottawa Liberal platform seriously, proposed joint action with the Senate to change the constitution of the Upper Chamber. Mr. Miller, another Liberal, proposed the abolition of the Senate, while Mr. Lewis, conservative, of West Huron, asked for a referendum at the next general election on the question of abolition or change. Appeal was made by several speakers to the Liberal platform of 1893 supposed to be the creed of the Government, which says:

THE PARTY PLEDGE.

"The present constitution of the Senate is inconsistent with the Federal principle in our system of government, and is in other respects defective, as it makes the Senate independent of the people and uncontrolled by the public opinion of the country, and should be so amended as to bring it into harmony with the principles of popular government."

This declaration is more than fourteen years old and the party which adopted it has been in power more than eleven years without taking the first step to give it effect. On the contrary the government has made the Senate more independent of the people by a long succession of appointments of party men who have been defeated at the polls. In this week's debate, as in the discussion two years ago, Sir Wilfrid declared that he was still in favour of Senate reform, still opposed to life tenure and the present method of appointment. He suggested changes that might be made but gave no sign that he proposed to do anything about it. In fact he is not so far along as he was two years ago when he promised some action.

ANOTHER BROKEN PROMISE

In 1906 a senate reform motion

was before the House, and the Premier got rid of it by promising that the matter would be brought before a conference of Provincial Premiers to be held that year. Sir Wilfrid said: "We are going to have this year a conference of all the Provincial Governments, and I think this question may be left for consideration by them. On a question where so much delicacy exists it is not inadvisable that we should have the opinion of and consultation with the Premiers of the late Province who are to meet here in the course of the present year. The suggestions which I have made may or may not appeal to them, but if we do appeal to them perhaps we may discover some method of dealing with it."

The conference met and Sir Wilfrid appeared before the provincial representatives to lay before them the questions to be settled. He forgot Senate reform. The subject was not mentioned by him nor by the provincial premiers during the whole of the conference. Evidently Sir Wilfrid Laurier never meant to bring it up. In his speech this week he did not even mention his action two years ago. On this occasion the Premier contented himself by asking for the adjournment of the debate. He is determined to keep the Senate as it is "a mill stone hanging to the neck of the people" as Sir Richard Cartwright described it, before he became a senator.

A FRUITLESS MISSION.

At last Postmaster-General Lemieux has made his report from his mission to Japan. It took him nearly three hours but may be summed up in short space. The minister has assurance from the Foreign Minister of Japan that Japanese Government is and always has been opposed to emigration of labourers from the country. They were never allowed to come away without a passport from the Foreign Office and then only in limited numbers. It is claimed that all the Japanese who came to Canada last year were from Hawaii which is beyond jurisdiction. Those from Japan direct obtained passports from the false representation that they were much needed in Canada and would be warmly welcomed. Otherwise they would have been kept home to develop resources under Japanese control. For the future the Japanese Minister has written a letter stating that his government "will give careful consideration to local conditions prevailing in Canada, with a view to meet the desires of the Government of the Dominion as far as is compatible with the spirit of the treaty and the dignity of the State." This is the result of Mr. Lemieux's visit.

IT IS MUCH AS BEFORE.

The spirit of the treaty "and its language as well, is that the Japanese shall have full liberty to enter, travel or reside in any part of the Dominion of Canada and shall enjoy full and perfect protection of their persons and property." What the "dignity of the State" may require is to be settled at Tokio. Mr. Owen asked Mr. Lemieux the simple and practical question, "To what extent has the Japanese Government promised to restrict emigration?" Mr. Lemieux made the pretensions but mysterious reply that if he should answer this question he "would commit an act unworthy of myself." So it does not appear that any definite change in the situation has been established or that the visit of Mr. Lemieux was particularly useful. The Japanese may still come if the Foreign Office in that country shall choose to give them passports and they never had the right to come without them. There is no undertaking that passports will be withheld more than before. Japanese are still coming by hundreds from Hawaii, and the Japanese question is still so serious that the British Columbia Legislature is again enacting an exclusion law.

WHEN THE MISCHIEF WAS DONE

It is found from the papers that when Great Britain negotiated the treaty with Japan, leaving the colonies free to join or not join it, the Home Government represented to Canada that the Dominion might accept the treaty reserving the right to restrict or exclude immigration. Mr. Chamberlain practically recommended that course, which was adopted by Australian colonies troubled with Asiatic immigration questions. The Laurier Government did not accept this suggestion or advice, but ratified the contract to accept Japanese laborers without restriction. After

this it was surely an unjust and impudent thing for Canadian Ministers to complain that Canada had suffered in this matter by Imperial Treaties. The Laurier Government clearly brought on itself the humiliation of sending a minister to Tokio to beg Japan to abandon the right given by a solemn compact only last year. Nor is it surprising that Baron Hayashi should close the discussion with Mr. Lemieux by writing to him that "it is not possible for me to acquiesce in all the proposals made by you on behalf of the Canadian Government."

A CAMPAIGN FOR PUBLICITY.

Half the time of the House of Commons this week has been taken up over the refusal of the Government to produce records required by opposition members. The Opposition decided to fight this matter out and settle it before further supply was voted. The campaign began last week when the motion of Mr. Ames for four original applications for timber leases was rejected by the majority, at the request of Mr. Oliver, the head of the department involved, who had himself previously written to Mr. Ames advising him to move for these same papers. Determined to vindicate the right of members to investigate public business Mr. Borden on Tuesday of this week presented the question directly to the House on the following motion.

A RIGHT ADMITTED.

"It is the undoubted right of the people's representatives in Parliament to be informed of everything necessary to explain the policy and proceedings of the government and for that purpose to have an opportunity of seeing and examining all documents connected with the transaction of public business; and that the denial of such right by the government justifies the refusal by this House of further supplies to the Crown."

Confronted with this issue the Premier was obliged either to accept a declaration condemning the course of his minister supported by the Premier himself a few days before, or to go on record against a principle recognized by all responsible governments and laid down by all constitutional authorities. Sir Wilfrid could make a real or apparent retreat from a false position or could proclaim himself to the world as the head of an irresponsible and autocratic cabinet, governing in the dark and refusing to the people the privilege of inquiring into the expenditure of their money or the control of their domain. Of the two evils Sir Wilfrid chose what seemed to be the least. He accepted the resolution which was passed unanimously. This surrender was greeted with loud and long applause from the opposition benches and confusion on the government side.

HAD TO BE FOUGHT OVER AGAIN.

But it was one thing to force the government to accept the principle and another to get the papers. On Tuesday the right of Parliament to information was admitted, on Thursday following the papers were again refused. Mr. Borden asked whether the application for leases would be produced and was told that Mr. Ames might renew his motion and it would be considered. But a member cannot repeat a motion that has been rejected, while the government had authority to bring down the records without a motion. So when Mr. Fielding moved the House into committee of supply at four o'clock he found the Opposition determined to keep him waiting till the question was settled. Until long after midnight no other business was done. Some fifteen opposition members and one independent Liberal affirmed that the government policy of concealment could not be tolerated. Against this Sir Wilfrid and Mr. Fielding pleaded that the right of the House to information meant the right of the whole House and not of the opposition alone and that the majority was not seeking this information. Their other plea was that Mr. Ames should have stated his reasons and made a mild request instead of demanding records as a right and giving later on reasons that the Premier admitted to be sound.

IMPOSSIBLE DOCTRINES

There can be no publicity so long as a government persuade its followers to refuse motions for papers. The doctrine that individual members have no right to inspect records is contrary to all constitutional principles. As Mr. Lancaster said members will not crawl before ministers and beg as a favor what they ought to

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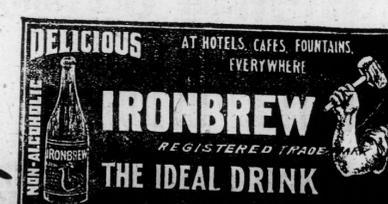
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