

The Standard



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SAINT JOHN, SATURDAY MORNING, JAN. 14, 1911.

THE COMMISSION PLAN.

The closer the proposals for civic government by commission are examined, the more it becomes evident that the plan has been launched without due consideration being given to the radical changes which it would effect. It is true a pamphlet has been sent broadcast over the city outlining the commission plan as it has worked out in some centres of the United States. It makes interesting reading, but nothing more. Arguments a good deal more definite and convincing will be necessary to persuade the citizens that the time has arrived when this city's charter, which has stood them in good stead for 125 years, should be ruthlessly torn up and that they should plunge into a revolutionary scheme of which not one in a hundred has ever heard the details.

If we must go to the United States in search of knowledge, if the British form of representative government is not good enough for us, if we are so enamored of the ways and customs of our neighbors to the south let us, for example, pattern ourselves on the cautious methods of St. Louis, which is now considering a form of government not nearly so radical as the commission plan. For eighteen months a committee of St. Louis citizens has been preparing a new charter which has just been published for the consideration of the voters. It will be urged that there are going to be public meetings to discuss the subject. The man on the street does not attend public meetings except at election times. We have so far seen no signs of his being moved with the same fiery enthusiasm which is filling the breasts of the advocates of a commission.

The Standard is entirely at one with the friends of the new scheme in their contention that there is room for improvement in the administration at City Hall. We agree with the principle that the number of aldermen should be reduced, and that more systematic business methods should prevail, but we do not believe a moral revolution in civic affairs will be affected by abandoning representative government as we have it today, or by rushing a bill through the legislature and taking a referendum with the idea of adopting a form of government which is obviously unsuited to local conditions.

There are two main features in this plan which the Standard believes will not commend themselves to thoughtful citizens. We have a proposal to place the city government in the hands of a mayor and four commissioners, and to pay them collectively, at a fair estimate, \$12,000 a year, for which remuneration they must devote their whole time to the city's business. We are assured that this plan will result in the best men being elected. St. John is no poverty-stricken city, its leading citizens are not out looking for jobs of this sort, and will not be prone to relinquish the substantial incomes they derive by attending to their own business, or even relinquish the supervision of their business, to serve the city continuously for four years. We have not yet reached such a pinnacle of self sacrifice. If we cannot get representative citizens, who have a stake in the community to comply with these conditions, one of the alleged advantages of the commission plan disappears.

Even a superficial acquaintance with the routine of civic administration in a comparatively small city like St. John should have convinced the advocates of this proposal that to require five men of business ability to be in constant attendance at City Hall six days a week is wholly unnecessary. Every department of the city's business is organized, there may be room for many improvements, but it will not require the combined wisdom of these five men working 900 days in the year to bring these changes about. Even if a council meeting were held every day, to dispose of questions promptly as they arise, one hour would suffice. Two or three hours a day are more than sufficient time for any body of men with average intelligence to administer St. John's civic affairs. By eliminating this impracticable feature, and by placing the remuneration at a more nominal figure, the prospect of securing good and representative citizens at the head of affairs will be considerably brighter.

As has already been pointed out in The Standard the proposal to make the Comptroller an elective officer is for many reasons objectionable. This official should be independent of the popular vote. As guardian of the treasury, if he is honest, he is no man's friend and many a man's enemy. To render him amenable to the popular vote would destroy the independence of the office. It is satisfactory to note that the Telegraph, which at first favored the scheme without analysing it, now admits that "the office of auditor is not necessarily elective."

Let us have all the light we can on this vital question of civic government. Despite all the sins of omission and commission which are laid at the door of City Hall there are no immediate signs that St. John is going to the dogs. The advertising committee of the Board of Trade has done a public service by bringing the question of civic reform into the limelight. If the scheme put forward is too radical for home consumption, and we believe it is, there may yet grow out of it a better and more businesslike administration of the city's affairs.

CANADA'S HAND FORCED BY SIR WILFRID.

In 1891-2 the Liberal-Conservatives made their final attempt to negotiate a reciprocity treaty with the United States. The negotiations failed on the demand by Mr. Baines that Canada should grant reciprocity on a list of manufactured goods as well as on natural products, and should refuse Great Britain and the Colonies equal

treatment on these lists. The Liberal-Conservatives declined to discriminate against the Mother Country and sister Colonies in favor of the United States, and the conference came to a speedy end. The Liberal-Conservative party thereupon and thereafter renounced the quest for reciprocity with the United States, and turned their attention to the development of trade with the Empire. They maintain that position to this day. The country then and now stands with them in this policy.

Previous to 1896 the Liberal party stood for, fought for, and declared they would, if necessary, die for access to the United States \$80,000,000 market, and to get it were willing to accept commercial union, or unrestricted reciprocity and discrimination against Great Britain. In 1897-8 they pilgrimaged to Washington, they plied all their arts and arguments and came back empty handed and disillusioned. Sir Wilfrid made confession of his errors in the House of Commons itself and later in the Imperial Conference at London in 1907. He declared that Canada had abandoned the long quest, had now turned her back on United States trade, and placed her hopes in the development of British trade.

The Liberal-Conservative party heard these statements with pleasure, and Canada to a man stood behind the united position of the two great parties. The country breathed more freely; with all uncertainty removed, it could now unitedly pursue its course of development at home and extension of interests in the Empire markets. The elections of 1904 and 1908 were marked by no dissent from this policy, and in fact were remarkable as endorsing upon platform and in the public press the stand taken.

Since 1908 nothing has happened in the country to cause a reversal of sentiment. It stands today as it did then. But a complete change has come over Sir Wilfrid, and he has apparently prevailed upon his cabinet. In the latter part of 1909 the first symptoms appeared. In February 1910 they had developed to the point of eruption. In that month large concessions in trade were made to the United States, involving a yearly loss of over a quarter of a million of revenue, and a reduction of tariff on an important list of United States manufactures. With this concession there was coupled a pledge to President Taft that negotiations for further concessions would be forthwith undertaken. Sir Wilfrid himself declared that he hoped to conclude a reciprocity treaty as the result of these promised negotiations.

Immediately protests began from all parts, and nearly all interests in Canada. The financial interests, the transport interests, the industrial interests, the great natural resources which need conservation, the milling interests, and the coal interests are all vigorously protesting. Every Board of Trade that has spoken is opposed. It is safe to say that never has a more general disquiet and disagreement been manifested to any proposal. And yet Sir Wilfrid presses his negotiations forward.

He has no mandate from the people nor from Parliament. Yet he proposes to bind Canada by a ten or twenty year hard and fast treaty. With a treaty signed, Parliament is no longer free to deal with the treaty and its provisions on its merits. It becomes a question of the retention or overthrow of the government, or in fact the existence of the party. Under such conditions the interests of the country may easily be sacrificed to the necessities of the party. And they very likely will be.

Conditions in the country are not just now favorable to the party in power. The Liberal members who dislike the reciprocity movement, and they are many, will have to decide between the public interests and their present political interests. The terrors of dissolution will be held over them. And it is putting too great a strain on our credulity to believe that they will immolate themselves by voting against the government, rather than find excuses for betraying the best interests of their country. To such a pass has Laurierism brought us.

Current Comment

(Toronto Mail and Empire.)

The advocates of the separatist way thought they had a good thing when they used a letter written by Sir Charles Tupper before the Government had fully declared itself on the subject, urging that the Ministerial policy be endorsed by the Opposition. They will not circulate the views just expressed by Sir Charles with equal enthusiasm. Sir Charles, according to a statement made by his son, Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper, looks upon the course pursued by the Government as a great mistake. Instead of buying the old cruisers and the Bristol, it should have secured a fast Atlantic line, consisting of vessels capable of conversion to war purposes in case of trouble. Under that policy it would have given Canada the fastest Atlantic service and the Empire a fleet that could have kept the trade routes clear if war happened to break out.

(Charlottetown Guardian.)

Whether our representatives are or are not aware of the fact, the question of our representation in the Senate and of the appointment of a Judge have become painfully acute. Somebody is at fault, either those holding the patronage at their disposal or the Government or both. The question will not down. The studied silence of the Government organ in regard to these matters only accentuates the well-grounded impatience of the public.

(Kingston Standard.)

St. John, N. B., following the example of Windsor, Ont., is to have a plebiscite to determine whether or not the city shall be governed by commission instead of by aldermen as at present. In this connection it is interesting to note that while Kingston—a city of 20,000—has twenty-one aldermen, St. John, with almost three times the population has only seventeen aldermen. Are we over-governed? We think so, and most Kingstonians are beginning to think likewise.

(Toronto Star.)

A New York judge has just died from what was virtually suffocation. His physicians attribute his death to an unventilated court house in which he had to work day after day. In Canada, it is the members of Parliament at Ottawa who suffer from unventilated quarters.

(Toronto News.)

King George and Queen Mary are leading the movement for buying exclusively British goods. Why should not Canadians follow, as far as possible, so worthy an example instead of arranging the tariff so that more of our needs will be supplied from the United States?

(New York World.)

Since Prof. Castle, of Harvard, has managed to breed a guinea-pig with an extra toe and a white rat with a black head, President Lowell may yet succeed in developing a student without a college yell.

(Toronto Globe.)

The clearing away of Anarchists for the Coronation may divert some of them to Halifax and St. John. The labor test is the only safeguard.

(Chicago Record-Herald.)

Chief Steward proposes to establish a school in which women may be instructed how to alight from a street car. The chief is a sure enough optimist.

BOY SCOUTS NOT MILITARY

Speaker at Playground Institute Meeting Declares Movement Trains Boys to be All-Around Successful Men

Baltimore, Jan. 12.—Arthur A. Grey, of Waltham, Mass., speaking before the Playground Institute today, emphatically declared that the Boy Scout Movement was not military in any sense. It that its purpose was to train boys in all-around preparedness so that they might become successful men. He said: "What we are aiming at is the intellectual development of the faculties of the children in addition to the physical training they receive at school. This cannot be accomplished merely by games and play. Children will tire of games and their minds will be uninterested. They are craving for something more than the professional soldier, and it is to such examples as Captain John Smith, Father Damien, and Abraham Lincoln that we should look for our historic inspiration. It is not the doing of things that will teach true patriotism better than the doing every day of things that will help make us better citizens."

They are pledged on their honor to do a good turn to someone every day. The same idea applies to patriotism. A citizen's duty is to do a good turn to someone every day. This idea is found typified in the character of the frontiersman or pioneer. It is to such examples as Captain John Smith, Father Damien, and Abraham Lincoln that we should look for our historic inspiration. It is not the doing of things that will teach true patriotism better than the doing every day of things that will help make us better citizens."

MISSING CHAMBERLAIN LOCATED IN FLORIDA

St. Augustine, Fla., Jan. 13.—has, H. Hyde, the absent city chamberlain of New York, and a native of Nova Scotia, had rooms engaged at the Hotel Ponce de Leon for the half-past nine train yesterday, but he failed to arrive.

CHATHAM CHURCH MEETING.

Chatham, N. B., Jan. 12.—The annual congregational meeting of St. Andrew's church was held last evening in Church Hall and was well attended. Reports from various organizations connected with the church were read and found very satisfactory. The trustees' report showed receipts of \$2,320.20 and expenditures of \$2,782.21, leaving a balance on hand of \$28.05. The election of trustees resulted in the following members being chosen for the ensuing year: A. J. Logie, D. S. Saylor, H. B. McDonald, P. C. Johnson, D. P. MacLachlan, Jas. Nicol, A. H. Marquis, Frank Carruthers and H. W. Fleiger. J. D. K. MacNaughton and John A. Fowle were elected auditors. Prayers will meet next week and choose the treasurer and secretary.

OBITUARY.

Miss Gladys S. Ross. The death of Miss Gladys Sands Ross, eldest daughter of L. R. Ross, terminal agent of the Intercolonial Railway, took place yesterday morning at 11 o'clock. Miss Ross, who had just reached her 21st year, has been ill only a couple of months, her death being due to tuberculosis. Her loss will be mourned by a large circle of relatives with whom she was very popular, and her parents will receive most sincere sympathy in their sad bereavement. The funeral will take place on Sunday Afternoon at 2:30 o'clock from her parents' residence in the union depot.

Daw Vandine.

Fredericton, Jan. 12.—The death took place at his home on Brunswick street last evening of Daw Vandine, of the customs house staff. The deceased was in his 74th year, having been born in Sunbury county on Mar. 21st, 1837. Mr. Vandine came in this city several years ago and was for several years engaged in the harness making business with the late S. D. McPherson. He was later appointed to the police force and was sergeant of the force at the time of the famous Lee capture in 1882 when he was shot in the arm. He was appointed to the customs service almost 38 years ago and was succeeded by a widow and two sons, Ernest Vandine, of Toronto, and Robert B. Vandine, of this city. One brother, Robert Vandine, resides at Detroit.

Great Painting Here.

A rare treat is in store for art lovers in this city, in the opportunity which will be afforded on Tuesday next to see the original portrait of Sir Thomas More by Albrecht Durer. It will be remembered that the portrait after being lost sight of for 300 years, was discovered in Ontario by J. Purves Carter. Since then it was exhibited at the eucharist congress, and has been examined by a number of those well qualified to judge of the merits of the picture, and it has been universally hailed as one of the most important discoveries of the present age. The picture has been in the city some time, and while, there, Robert J. Wickenden, the New York artist, completed an etching of the famous picture. He arrived in the city today with a proof of the work, which is being done in New York, and the results of the engraving have been even better than he had expected. Mr. Carter also has with him the original and arrangements have been made to exhibit it in the Natural History Society's rooms on Tuesday next. From St. John it will be taken to New York for exhibition there.

Home From Europe.

J. K. Scammell, C. E., who returned home Thursday had a most satisfactory trip to Europe. Mr. Scammell's visit was for the purpose of inspecting the harbor works in the leading European countries. He visited,

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among other places, Liverpool, Belfast, Glasgow, Edinburgh, London, Antwerp, Rotterdam, Hamburg, and saw not only the docks but the big modern ship building plant of Messrs Harland and Wolff in Belfast. Returning via New York, Mr. Scammell inspected the latest docks there and is Baltimore.

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