

Toilers Final Fight For Liberty

F.P.U. Fight Now Against Bowings, Whose Word Is No Longer Their Bond, History of Trickery and Dishonor Exposed. Munn and Eric Bowring Responsible

Russian Serfs Are Better Treated

"ONE man, a supplying merchant, who knows little it may be about anything, excepting pounds, shillings, and pence, will direct the actions of thousands. In many instances, not one of his dealers will dare to exercise his own judgment, upon matters that deeply concern his own welfare. There is not and cannot be, a more baneful-soul-enslaving, despotic influence, exerted in any country than the system of supplying on credit, which pervades this country.

"I have seen men waiting, watching and scrutinizing the motions and features of their supplying merchants or his agent, that they might find him in a good humour, then hat in hand, present themselves to ask for a barrel of flour, a few pounds of butter, or a few gallons of molasses. Even the former serfs and slaves of Russia were more to be envied than some of the poor down trodden fishermen of Newfoundland, who are thus compelled to humble themselves before their fellow man.

"The former are better clothed, better fed, and have less to do than he, who it may be has a family, more or less numerous, to provide for, and who after toiling and sweating, and enduring the hardest bitings, of wind and weather, finds that all his voyage, will not pay his account, and lay in his winter's stock of provisions."—REV. PHILIP TOCQUE.

TO every thoughtful man who can spare time to sit down and think seriously and to go over in his mind all the problems that surround the position of Newfoundland, it must be all too apparent that there is a something wrong.

Here he sees a country that has for two hundred years been producing wealth from a source that has often been compared to the silver mines of Peru or Mexico, and the comparison too is favorable to Newfoundland. We have an inexhaustible store of wealth in our fisheries, whereas mines in time become exhausted.

Wealth untold has been brought to our shores, and is still being gathered from the stormy sea, by our hardy sons. But what are they the better for it. Where are the evidences of that wealth? Do we find it in the hamlets or towns and villages of the fishermen. If you do you will find its evidence in

"Courtly mansion that rears its head To shame the meanness of the humble shed."

You will find it all in one or two houses in the town, and these houses are not the abodes of the fishermen, but of their lords and masters.

You will not find any evidence of the vast wealth that the poor fisherman has earned and brought to the feet of his owner, or pays into the greedy maw of his Country's treasury, in the appearance of the town.

There you will see but pathetic testimony to that longing which is in every human heart for some of the refinements that civilization is supposed to bear.

Generation after generation of fishermen has labored and borne the toil and privation of the day.

Generation after generation has heaped up its store of wealth on the counters of the merchant princes, or poured its stream of gold into the public treasury, and yet, to all outward appearances, as far as public utilities go we are in a barbaric state of rudeness, that fair-shrieks of misery, poverty and want.

There is no place, the abode of white men, English, Irish and Scotch, that presents such a spectacle to the eyes of the world, after its two hundred years of settlement as does this poor-rich Country of ours.

Even St. John's the capital city of our little Island Home, is in a deplorable state of backwardness.

There are mining towns in the West, that are only of yesterday, and comparable to mushrooms that spring up of a night, that have more evidence of twentieth century civilization about them, with their broad and well laid out streets, and their comfortable dwellings and fine

hotels. In the town of Cochrane, in Northern Ontario, is an hotel that would do credit to any city in the East. Yet that town is but of yesterday.

We speak of these things merely to emphasize our remarks relative to our backward condition in this Country. Our backwardness is not because we have not the natural production and natural sources of wealth, that go to provide those appendages of civilization, but the wealth we have produced has been wrongly apportioned between the employer and employed, between the men who buy the fish and other products and the men whose labor brought the fish to market.

From the very dawn of our short history there has been a contention between the fisherman and the merchant, and the merchant because he had the power for good or evil that wealth always lends, had the fisherman under heel.

The spirit of the people was well nigh broken, but the spark of life that long subdued is being again rekindled, and hope and buoyancy are again lifting up the masses of the long downtrodden and wronged.

The merchant class were becoming more human and disposed to give a fair deal, and the beacon light of a high hope shone out across the waters. That light has been dimmed by the conduct of the Bowring firm. But the light though dimmed lives yet, and when this struggle is over will shine more brightly than ever.

Let not the fisherman be disturbed. This last big kick against the curb put on the domineering class, may be lightly regarded.

It is but in a way a sort of reflex action, the last spasmodic kick of a dying tyranny.

Their attempt to foist Kean upon us is an act of contempt for the people that does not credit to its perpetrators. It savors of an age of tyranny long since dead, and brings disgrace upon the men who have committed in the twentieth century an act that belongs to another epoch.

It is a folly too, for the Bowings have yet to learn that such a foul slap in the face is not going to be suffered meekly by the men of to day, however it might have been borne by our forebears.

We publish to-day in this series some words from the writings of that astute and scholarly gentleman, Reverend Philip Tocque. Mr. Tocque was a pretty clear sighted man, and saw the evils of a system that we are endeavouring to crush out. His plain and convincing language bears out the most emphatic way the leading idea of the subject of this article.

BOWINGS BRAVERY MEANS EGOTISM AND COWARDICE
LET THE PEOPLE JUDGE

"GREAT is the voice of the People"—Vox Populi Vox Dei—"The voice of the People is the voice of God." What puny man is it, or what coterie is it, or what circle is it, who will hope to succeed when the great trumpet call of population demands redress?

The public demands and the power to secure is theirs; the public inquires, and the search light of publicity tells to them the truth—the public will have a thing done and it is done. The public looks to the welfare of its weaker brother—and their protection is his refuge. The public will decide the right, and it is right, for the voice of the People is the voice of God.

There is no use in one or two or fifty or a hundred men declaring that a case is as they would have it be, when the great public says "it is wrong, or unjust, or cruel." The axe that a man or a body of men has to grind must be flung aside, and the purpose of its attainment abandoned when the People declare against it.

Power, and wealth and influence and title and the tools of oppression are of no avail to stop the voice of the mighty people when they "we will" or "we will not."

This is the position the public stand in to-day. They are the Judges of Coaker, of Bowring and of Kean. The situation has been made plain to them, every detail of the incident has been placed before them, as it would be placed before a Jury. There has been no hiding of matter, no tampering with facts, no designing insinuation, no disfiguring of a case that bears the significance of horrible truth. Everything has been laid before the general public, in a plain unvarnished fashion, and we ask them to Judge.

We have said that Capt. Abram Kean is not to go to the sealishery this season, and we have shown in the plainest manner why we make that statement.

We have stated facts and figures, which go to prove that this man has been guilty of gross negligence,—gross and horrible in the utmost meaning of the word, because sacred and human life has had to pay for it.

If Capt. Abram Kean had through his neglect lost a billion dollars, or a hundred ships, or ten thousand loads of fat, this contention which we are now waging would trouble us not at all, but Kean by his blundering and neglect in allowing those seamen to leave his ship, has been

guilty of the loss of something far more precious than the wealth of a million worlds.

Do Messrs. Bowring and Munn really understand the enormity of this question? Have they for a single moment given serious consideration to what a human life, a living, breathing, active life of man means? Do they grasp the consequences of the horrible negligence of their employee Kean?

Can they picture for one moment those dying, perishing, crazed creatures of God, throwing their bodies down to die?

Do they realize the terror, and dismay and sorrow and death which cast themselves over the thousands of homes in Newfoundland, when the fatal news went like a voice of destruction throughout the land "Kean has blundered, and our fathers, our sons and our brothers are dead?"

Do they understand this picture—a real one, a sad and tearful one?

Surely the Messrs. Bowring Bros. and Mr. J. S. Munn do not for one moment deny that Capt. Kean did not make a terrible mistake when he allowed those men to leave his ship under the weather circumstances that then existed?

How can any man, or any body of men, excuse Capt. Kean in this matter.

We read of cases every day where captains forfeit their certificates because of mistakes which have carried with them none of the frightful consequences which marked the 1914 sealishery.

Facing this question or "braving" it out as the Bowring people are doing, are not points of courage here, nor is their egotism, or apparent hardihood, a feature to be applauded.

The really brave man is the really merciful and considerate man, and the man who will admit a fault or error is the man who shows the most exalted courage

As already pointed out, this is not a case of Coaker vs. Bowring or Capt. Kean, it is the preservation of human life against chances of Kean's again blundering.

Leave Coaker out of the question altogether, and does the case present a less guilty or unpardonable aspect? Are the facts less obvious, or the awful features of the situation less distinct?

All this must be most distinct and plain to the public view. The straightforward man must admit the justice of the cause, irrespective of political thoughts, irrespective of personal feelings, irrespective of personal enmity or good feeling,—cause for protestation still exists, and false, and heartless is that man who would say that our contention is wrong.

(To be continued from day to-day).

Mr. R. Hibbs
F.P.U. Kelligrews

Asks How Can a Once Honored Firm Descend to Insulting and Ignoring the People

(Editor Mail and Advocate)

Dear Sir,—Great indignation is expressed on all sides over the outrageous manner in which the once honoured firm of Bowring Bros. are handling the Kean case.

"Whom the gods' wish to destroy they first make mad." We trust those notable words are not applicable to that famous house which forms one of the strongest landmarks in our commercial history.

Can a firm that owes its present prosperity and greatness to the Toilers of this Country, and whose hitherto mutual and reciprocal transactions as between dealer and supplier have been the fundamental basis upon which their business was built and constructed?

Can this firm we ask descend all at once to the process of ignoring, insulting and flaunting the opinion of those thousands who have placed them in the position to own a sealing fleet to-day?

Ignoring and Insulting the People

And all this for what? Simply to uphold the action of the costliest blunderer in this unfortunate Country.

And I venture to predict that if Bowring Bros. are so indiscreet as to insist on adding insult to disaster by this latest move, then they will be butting up against a dangerous problem, namely, the outraged public opinion of ninety per cent. of this Country.

Council Established

May Providence otherwise direct this. I have to report that a Council of the F.P.U. was established at Topsail on Tuesday, 10th inst., and the following are the officers elected.

Chairman, Reginald Hibbs.
Deputy Chairman, John Dawe.
Secretary, John M. Butler.
Treasurer, Alec Squires.
Door Guard, Ed. Smith.

We may look forward to good results from this Council, as its members are composed of the right material and know where their future interest lies.

R. HIBBS.

Kelligrews, Feb. 18, 1915.

[We welcome Topsail Council to our ranks and compliment them on their decision to enroll themselves among the Toilers who are endeavouring to uplift Terra Nova.—Editor.]

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