

The Toronto World

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A LEGISLATIVE GUARANTEE.

Do the people of Ontario know what the Commes Act means financially to the franchiseholding corporations of the province. It means a legislative guarantee of every dollar invested in these enterprises. The province of Ontario in effect gives a bond providing against the depreciation of investments made by franchise holding corporations. True, the bond is given at the expense of the municipalities which are held up by these corporations, but its effect is nevertheless the protection of private capital against loss.

Take the case of the Town of Perth, which unsuccessfully applied to the legislature for power to take over the Perth Electric Company. A rival company invoked the Commes Act to prevent the municipality from buying an electric lighting plant which only indirectly competes with the protesting company. Now the question is before the courts. If the courts decide that the case comes within the scope of the Commes Act, the town must remain at the mercy of the Perth Electric Light and Power Company. The latter gives a poor service today. It may reduce its service to a point where it will be practically no service at all. The municipality is helpless. It must buy out the private company, together with waterworks, which it does not want, and which the company finds it unprofitable to carry before it can begin the work of lighting the streets.

These facts show the security that the private company really enjoys under the wing of the Commes Act. Unlike other capital, its investment undergoes no risk. It draws its dividends from the people, and its capital remains unimpaired. It does not fear competition. If it desires to go out of business all it has to do is to give a wretched service. The only remedy at the hands of the municipality is to buy out the business and establish a plant of its own. Is there any spirit of equity in such an arrangement?

This seems to be the situation in the Town of Perth today. The Perth Electric Light and Power Company is not giving a satisfactory service. But it plays the part of the dog in the manger, and, protected by the Commes Act, it refuses to allow the municipality to supplant inefficiency with efficiency. An act which was introduced in the guise of a beneficent effort to protect private property from "confiscation" has become a weapon in the hands of franchise holding corporations by which they are enabled to hold municipalities at their mercy. New conditions now arise, more modern lighting plants may be invented, a municipality may outgrow the capacity of the company that serves it. These possibilities do not worry the companies. They may have gone into business with their eyes shut, and their career may have been one of steady mismanagement. The Commes Act protects them by practically guaranteeing them every dollar of their investment.

Until the Commes Act is repealed the cause of municipal ownership can make no progress. Promoters of the bill assured the legislature and the people that it would assist the cause of municipal ownership. On this argument they were considerable support. It is now apparent that the Commes Act, far from assisting the cause of municipal ownership, is almost an insurmountable obstacle. The repeal of the act cannot too soon be made an issue in the legislature.

REPRESENTATION OF THE WEST.

It is reported that the immigrant arrivals into Western Canada last year were 128,364. This, on our present basis of representation, would mean five new members, or one more than the total representation of the territories in the present house. Adding Canadians who have moved from the older provinces to the west, the claim for representation would be larger still. By the redistribution of last year, the representation of the territories was increased to ten. In three years since the census the immigration has been about a quarter of a million, which would entitle the territories to twenty instead of ten. At the same rate the further increase by immigration alone, in the seven years before the next census would be nearly a million, so that toward the end of the decade the territories would be entitled to fifty or sixty members instead of ten.

Should this rapid increase continue there will be a demand for some new arrangement for the representation of the territories and perhaps of Manitoba. A feasible plan would be to make an enumeration and a redistribution of that part of Canada every five years instead of ten. The centre of political power is moving westward rapidly. At present it is in Eastern Ontario, the representation of Quebec and the eastern provinces being nearly equal to that of Ontario and all west. It will not be long before it will be located in Western Ontario.

CORRUPTION AND THE FRANCHISE

N. W. Rowell, K.C., thinks that the

franchise in Dominion and provincial elections is too low, and that some political evils may be traced to this cause. It is doubtful whether the raising or the lowering of property or income qualifications for the franchise has much to do with corruption. During the last rule of Sir John A. Macdonald, the Globe was convinced that politics were honeycombed with corruption, and for the greater part of this time the franchise was much more restricted than it is today.

In Great Britain the widening of the franchise has not been attended by an increase in corruption. The general belief at least is that there has been an improvement in that respect since the days when the franchise was very restricted. Very likely all the dreams of those who worked toward the goal of manhood suffrage have not been realized; but on the whole it will be found that corruption does not depend on the extent of a man's worldly possessions. We must consider not only what a man has, but what he desires. If he has the instinct of greed, he will gratify it whether he is rich or poor; the richer he is the greater will be his desire.

The political evils of Canada are not caused by a fringe of electors whose poverty would lead them to accept a bribe, but by the vast majority of those who are corrupt. The corruption begins at the top. It begins in the desire to grab the public resources for private gain, and to obtain the aid of ministers and legislators for the purpose. It has been fostered by the extraordinary growth of corporate and capitalist interests in modern times. These agencies supply the funds for corrupting, not only the poor two-dollar voters, but the men who must be tempted with larger bribes. If we had only to deal with a few leaders and men on the verge of pauperism, the cure for political evil would be easy.

MEANS OF MORPHOLOGY.

There is more or less interest for Canadians in the investigation at Washington into the methods of the Mormon church. The Northwest Territories are being settled by large numbers of the "Latter Day Saints," as the adherents of the polygamous doctrine term themselves. Five hundred families are at present en route to farms near Calgary, as made known by the church for the "faithful." It is inevitable that the Mormons transplant here the system they have held so tenaciously in the Western States in the face of bitter persecution and legal ban. Therefore the revelations indicating the present existence of plural marriage among the followers of Brigham Young being brought out thru the trial of Senator Smoot, are of special significance to the people of the Dominion. Can polygamy be practiced in Canada under the guise of a religious rite? Strict laws in the States and vigorous enforcement have been resisted successfully by this sect for three generations. Canada is confronted with this question.

Since 1890, when the United States government, under the Edmunds act, began to prosecute all Mormons practicing polygamy and declaring the violators barred from civil rights, the Church of Mormon is popularly supposed to have abandoned the plural marriage. There were known to be exceptions, but the doctrine was generally supposed to have been stamped out. President Woodruff of the church at that time issued a proclamation announcing that the principle had been abandoned. But polygamy was the cardinal principle of the church, and the rule it had flourished in the wilderness and had transformed the barren mountains and dry plains of Utah into fertile farms and profitable mining sections. A division of the United States army in 1898 was marched against the City of Salt Lake, as Salt Lake City was known. The display of force was deemed necessary by the arrogant conduct of Brigham Young and his zealous churchmen.

With this defiant attitude thru so many years, the revelations at Washington should not come as a shock to the desert element of society. Here is presented the spectacle of high officials of the church calmly admitting that they have received visits from angels, "messages direct from God" commanding polygamy and confessing that they encourage plural marriages as a sacred sacrament. Reed Smoot, one of the twelve apostles that govern the church, was elected United States senator. So-called apostles composed largely of women, testified his election on the ground that he was a polygamist and could not occupy a seat in that body. Evidence is now being taken on both sides of this question. Two years ago Congressman Roberts of Utah was unseated on this objection, the discovery being made only after he had been sworn in. He was living in Washington with two of his Mormon wives during the investigation.

But it is with the evidence of President Jos. Smith, the highest official of the church, that most interest centres. He declared deliberately that he had frequently been visited with divine inspirations from God directing the details of his household and the church. No angels had come to him, however, as in the case of his uncle, Joseph Smith, the founder of the church. He subscribed to the standard authority of Mormonism in relation to the revelation commanding polygamy, as was known to the first president by "an angel in black." He positively asserted that he still believed in polygamy.

Imagine an intelligent man in the year 1904 not being ashamed to make such a statement! He says he believes in polygamy as a divine institution. Polygamy is an invasion of brotherhood, a degradation of woman, and a curse to the future of the system is that the women accept the practice as a religious rite.

In spite of this revolting practice, Lake City, the capital of the State of Utah, and the seat of Mormonism, is one of the most progressive commercial centres in the western hemisphere. It has a population of 100,000, half a dozen great railroads centring there, and controls the jobbing business of a territory of four states. In spite of this blight on the morals of the community, Salt Lake is one of the fairest cities in the States. The residences are magnificent, the business blocks are from three to ten stories high and the percentage of illiteracy and crime is smaller than in many of the great cities of the east. In all other

respects it is a model city. The advocates of Mormonism are in control, and they manifest a genius for business and government in extraordinary contrast to their views of family relations from the view of the Gentile. It is the calm judgment of these people that their religion is of divine origin and they resent any effort to men to interfere with God's work, as they term their church. Here is a condition that is a sociological puzzle, almost sufficient to make men distrust that quality known as "human judgment."

THE GRAND TRUNK PACIFIC BAR-GAIN RATIFIED.

The Grand Trunk Pacific bargain, with the amendments published some days ago, has been accepted by the Grand Trunk shareholders. The acceptance was probably a foregone conclusion. The government some weeks ago was negotiating with Mr. Hays and with the heads of the company in London, and the same time it was an unsettled question whether there would be another session of parliament before the election. When it was announced that there would be a session, that was tantamount to an announcement that the government and the Grand Trunk shareholders had come to terms; because the government would have to come to the parliament with the whole matter thrown open, and all the work to be done over again, or with a declaration that the scheme had failed. The plan then would have been to go to the country declaring that the terms exacted by the government were too hard for the company.

When the government came to terms with Mr. Hays and Sir Charles Wilson, it virtually came to terms with the Grand Trunk Railway Company, and there was little likelihood that the shareholders would refuse to ratify the agreement. There is just as little likelihood that the government majority in parliament will refuse to ratify it. It will, however, be thoroughly discussed. The public feeling in favor of government ownership and control is strong and growing, and unless public feeling asserts itself very emphatically against the measure, the strength of party cohesion will carry it thru.

PROHIBITION AND POLITICS.

The reports of the government caucus held yesterday do not agree in all respects, but two things seem clear. The Liberal members are divided on the question. The premier is inclined to go further in the direction of prohibition than come of his colleagues and followers. He has a prohibition record behind him, which he would like to strengthen. It might pay him to be defeated in a provincial election, rather than bear the reproach of betraying, or even disappointing, his prohibitionist friends.

But Mr. Ross' colleagues and followers are not all in this position, and it is not surprising that they are more cautious about tackling the liquor question. The prohibition element of the Liberal party is strong, but so is the liquor element. Up to this time the liquor element have managed to steer a middle course between the temperance lodge and the saloon, and the making of a choice is a painful duty. "How happy could I be with either, were I other day's champion."

The chances are somewhat against the heroic policy being adopted. It would mean that all the old political metal would be thrown into the prohibition melting-pot; and even if a Liberal victory emerged from the pot, some of the weaker vessels might have a narrow escape. The liquor element is a difficult to the melting process. All the resources of delay—petitions, referendums, litigation, etc.—seem to be exhausted, and we may now behold the politician in the agony of making a choice.

It would be all up with the plucky little Japs if Russia could roll on them. And now the heroes of Port Arthur and Vladivostok are both bottled up in Russia will soon be quoting her accounts by the case.

A really live paper would have remarked long ago that some of the reports from the seat of war are instances of Yalu journalism.

The wonders that the Laurier government performs almost incline The Globe to the belief that the whole ministerial outfit is made of radium.

Joseph Smith, head of the Mormon Church, has 42 children. An interesting study would be a photograph of Mr. Smith with his children on his knees.

The Japanese fleet that bombarded Vladivostok was covered with ice. Evidently the admiral had not the nerve to remove the ice with an iron hand.

Admiral Alekseyev reports that the land batteries did not reply to the Japanese bombardment of Vladivostok. It is much better to treat such rude conduct with contempt.

Just when we are trying to foster kindly relations with our French-Canadian brethren, The Ottawa Free Press rudely remarks that there was an adinkum in Mr. Brodeur's address.

A MASTICATING WOODER.

Pennang Gazette: "It is with flattering penmanship that you about the prospective condition of your damsel offspring. Your son must have a past a secret passion has been firing in my daughter."

So begins the letter of a love-stricken Baku. The writer continues: "My daughter, like a marble statue, has been wrecked on the rocks of love. As to my daughter, I have recently rejected her from the Rangoon College, and I am now masticating."

CHAMBERLAIN'S NEW MANNERISM.

London Chronicle: The mannerisms of great men are always a subject of interest. Mr. Chamberlain is no exception. He is now in the habit of putting on a new one, consisting in his turning his cheek slightly when he is interrupted. He is now in the habit of putting on a new one, consisting in his turning his cheek slightly when he is interrupted. He is now in the habit of putting on a new one, consisting in his turning his cheek slightly when he is interrupted.

NORTH SQUADRON HIDDEN BY RUSSIAN AUTHORITIES

It is Thought That the Japs Are Preparing for Big Fight in Japan Sea.

St. Petersburg, March 8.—The whereabouts of Captain Reizenstein's Vladivostok squadron is carefully guarded by the military authorities, but there is a strong impression here that when the seven Japanese warships appeared off the harbor Sunday and yesterday the Russian squadron was operating with the Russian land force near the mouth of the Tumen River. It is the Russian view outside and the Japanese definitely ascertained that fact, a big sea fight is probably imminent, as it is considered certain that in that case the Japanese fleet will lie on and off Vladivostok to prevent the Russians from leaving the harbor. The Russian fleet is in the open sea. All the harbors along the coast in which the Russians might seek refuge are frozen, and the squadron must eventually be forced to return to Vladivostok for coal. Also the Japanese squadron is superior in numbers and guns, consisting of a battleship and four armored cruisers, two of which are equipped with 12-inch guns. The four armored cruisers under Captain Reizenstein are the Rurik, Gromoboy, and Bogatyr, are among the finest vessels in the Russian navy, constructed by the Russian shipyards. The Japanese fleet, on the other hand, consists of a battleship, the Mikasa, and three armored cruisers, the Asama, the Takasago, and the Matsushima. The Japanese fleet is superior in numbers and guns, consisting of a battleship and four armored cruisers, two of which are equipped with 12-inch guns. The four armored cruisers under Captain Reizenstein are the Rurik, Gromoboy, and Bogatyr, are among the finest vessels in the Russian navy, constructed by the Russian shipyards.

A naval service organ here urges lengthily that the present Japanese naval disposition, a movement on a large scale in the Sea of Japan, and the paper accounts for all the Japanese ships except the battleships Mikasa and Shikishima, the armored cruisers Asama and Takasago, and the torpedo cruiser Takasago as being in the harbor.

WARSHIPS HEMMED IN.

Grounds For Belief That Russian Cruisers Are in Harbor.

London, March 8.—Revised version of the bombardment of Vladivostok, the Russian fleet, was done by the shells, but leave several mysteries unexplained. One is the constitution of the attacking squadron. It probably includes a portion of the Port Arthur fleet with reserve ships added. Another unsettled matter is the question whether it is in Vladivostok or in the open sea. It is probably in the harbor, and the Russian officials are striving to conceal the fact. Naval experts consider it impossible that the Russian fleet could have been hemmed in by the Japanese fleet, and the Russian fleet is probably in the harbor, and the Russian officials are striving to conceal the fact.

A renewal of the bombardment is reported by the Japanese, and the Russian fleet is probably in the harbor, and the Russian officials are striving to conceal the fact.

It is not yet clear that a land campaign has been seriously undertaken in the Korean peninsula, but the Russian fleet is probably in the harbor, and the Russian officials are striving to conceal the fact.

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AN HONEST REPROBATE.

New York World: The testimony of Joseph Smith, the Mormon president, has left the country gasping in mingled awe and admiration—grasp at the man's cynical defiance of the world's moralities that most of us hold dear, and admiration for the superb courage of his defiant defiance of the world's moralities that most of us hold dear, and admiration for the superb courage of his defiant defiance of the world's moralities that most of us hold dear.

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BIG BIRE AT COLLINGWOOD.

Long's Store Destroyed, Causing a Loss of \$100,000.