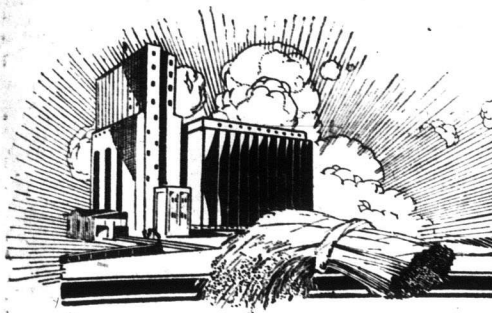




EDITORIAL



GOVERNMENT BY COMMISSION

By the time this goes to press, the matter to which it refers will have been settled beyond recall, but it is well that every journal in the West should be on record when such vital issues are at stake.

After the decision of the Railway Board it will be agreed by most people that direct government by Parliament is better than indirect government by Commissions. This last ruling on rates seems to the ordinary mind to be altogether indefensible, but, of course, the ordinary mind cannot be expected to have the same clarity of vision and the same good judgment as the minds of Commissioners. One has to envy the transcendent abilities of men who can in a few brief days decide upon a course of action that means more to the Canadian people than the settlement of the tariff problem, or the raising of all the ordinary revenues of the country. If it were not known how thoroughly capable and unprejudiced these men are, and how independent they are of all influences exerted by Parliament or Corporations, one might think they had made up their minds in advance, and had listened to the counsel from the West only as a matter of form. That, however, is an absurd supposition. Anyway, who would expect Western advocates to succeed in any case in opposition to the trained intelligence of the counsel for the railroads? These men are so accustomed to winning cases, when it comes to a contest between vested privilege and public rights, that it would be quite unorthodox, and even bad form, to refuse them all that they ask. Yet the ordinary citizen of the West is incensed, and he is fully persuaded that the Government of Manitoba and the Boards of Trade of Winnipeg and Toronto, have good reason for making an appeal to the Cabinet.

Among the things hard to understand are these: Why there should be a Commission to grant relief to a rich corporation when it says there is trouble ahead, and none to grant relief to a poor citizen when trouble actually faces him; and why there should be an increase in rates for two roads when only one requires the increase to meet its necessities. It is surely better for Canada by direct taxation to raise the amount necessary to keep the National Road going, than to raise three times the amount by indirect taxation—two-thirds of which amount will without question go to a road that does not require help. As we see it, taxation is always taxation, whether it is direct or indirect. From the point of the Government, of course, one understands how the ruling of the Commission is better than direct taxation. A minister of railways does not like to face a big deficit. Was it this thought which prompted the minister to indulge in those foolish utterances a few days ago?

There is in the West, of course, another objection to the ruling. The distribution of the levy is open to serious criticism. The West now pays, it is understood, eighteen per cent higher rate than the East. Why should the discrimination be continued? If the rates have to be revised, why should the revision not be equitable? Is it another instance of eastern lordship? Why did the Commission not come to the West to get the western point of view? The dissatisfaction which exists is not without cause, and it will do more to create disunion than anything that has occurred for a long time. More than that it will have the effect of doing away not only with this Commission, but with others created to relieve Parliament from the necessity of making decisions.

There was another decision, this time local, which is quite as unpopular as that of the Railway Board. It was the decision of the Municipal Commissioner for Manitoba, when he gave his ruling as to fares on the street cars in Winnipeg. Once again it was a victory for the corporation, only in this case the ruling had the effect of annulling a contract entered into by the city and the street car company. That is the thing which causes chief offence. The people are a unit in saying that if one man is to impose taxation at will, they prefer a czar of their own choice to a Commissioner who is named by the government. Apart altogether from the necessities of the railway company it is clear that the way to settle the difficulty was not by arbitrarily cancelling the original contract. That is not just, and we hope the courts will prove this ruling to be beyond the powers of the Commissioner illegal. The street car company made good money—great money—during the prosperous years. The shareholders are, man for man, better able to bear loss than the general public. In any case, there should have been consultation between the two parties to the original contract, and a new understanding arrived at in that way. A utilities commissioner was surely never intended to have such authority as that exercised in this case. It may be that a seven cent fare is reasonable; the point is that it should never have been imposed in this way.

There is another side to it, of course. Increase in fares will reach a limit. It is possible the limit is now exceeded. If a rate is too high people will travel to and from business in some other way. Can it be that the street car system has had its day, and that we are ready to move on?

PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND CHARACTER

In a recent discussion of public schools in the United States and their relation to religion, a clergyman said, "We are bringing up all over this broad land a lusty set of young pagans, who, sooner or later, they or their children will make havoc of our institutions."

It is a broad statement. If it is true the fact is of the greatest importance, for the public schools surely justify themselves if they do not build character as well as impart knowledge. The charge was made as an argument in favor of the introduction of distinctly religious instruction in the public schools.

But is it true? The "Outlook" of New York city has attempted to answer the question, not arbitrarily, but by asking the opinion of nineteen college presidents, the heads of institutions of learning in the North and in the South, the East and the West. Their replies are based upon a study of the students in their own colleges, part of whom are graduates of public schools, part graduates of private or sectarian schools where religion is taught.

Not one of the nineteen college presidents finds that the moral influence of the public school is inferior to that of the best private schools. All say, on the contrary, that the public school pupils enter life with as high moral conceptions and as much religion as their companions from the private schools; but several of the presidents do notice a decided difference between the product of different public schools and different private schools—a difference which is always traceable to the character and personal influence of the teacher.

The result of the interesting inquiry is a splendid tribute to the public schools. The popular faith in them is not without justification. But two other conclusions should not be overlooked; the tremendous influence of good teachers, that is, teachers of strong and beautiful personal character, and the influence in morals and religion, of the home. If there are no religious influences in the home, nothing which the schools can teach will supply the lack; and if there is religion there, the pupils in the public schools will do very well without special religious instruction.

THE FRUITS OF LABOR

There is no way of production without labor. Whether it be agriculture, fishing, mining, lumbering, or the manufacture of finished articles from raw products, there is need for men to use their hands and brains. They must invent and discover; they must combine their ingenuity and their physical powers; and, above all, they must persevere in face of opposition and difficulty. All things come to those who work. And it is becoming to men to work here and now, for they have all eternity to rest after the trouble and toil are over. The first thing for any people to learn then is the necessity and dignity of labor. It is the means whereby man saves his own soul, to say nothing of production itself. The great peoples of the world have been working people, the great souls in any nation are those who incessantly labor. Nothing is more becoming to us as a people than that we should give ourselves up to the task of production. When the output is sufficient for our needs and the needs of the world there is no necessity for staying our hands. We can learn from the small boy. When he makes a toy he is not satisfied till he has adorned it with paint or with some device. So if by uniting our forces we can produce all that is necessary we can educate ourselves to give everything an artistic finish. That is the great need of our production to-day. We are a commonplace people because we produce commonplace articles. When we give up our souls to artistic production we raise ourselves from the plane of artizanship to the plane of the artist. The time may come when six hours a day will be all that is needed to produce rough material. It will always take longer than that for men to produce the best of which they are capable. So it is becoming for us to settle down to work, each in his own appointed place. Hand labor, head labor, and, hardest of all, heart labor. Yea, have we known what it meant: "He sweat as it were great drops of blood?" Through the giving of all he has, a man gets for himself all that is possible—his full development, his complete self-realization. The key to greatness for individuals and nations is good whole-souled work.