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THE BANKS AND THE WEST

LAST year the "Canadian Courier" ventured to comment in several issues upon the apparent contradiction in the policy of the banks with regard to Western Canada. It was pointed out that for some years the banks had indirectly fostered or assisted the real estate boom which distinguished the Western provinces. They did this by financing men whose business it was to deal entirely in real estate and also by themselves making purchases of corner lots in leading Western towns. Then suddenly the bank managers changed their policy and condemned the whole real estate situation in the West. They withdrew all support from those engaged in this business and ceased to buy any further real estate for themselves. The "Canadian Courier" was rather severely criticised at the time by the financial interests for taking such a harsh view of the conduct of the bank managers.

After some months the discussion has been revived. This time the banks are again criticised, but by entirely different critics. Strangely enough, too, the criticism appears in the *Montreal Gazette*, the journal which above all others, has most persistently been a defender of the banks and their policies. The persons who gave voice to the criticism reported in the *Gazette* were, Sir Thomas Shaughnessy and Mr. Whyte, two of the leading spirits in the Canadian Pacific Railway. Sir Thomas can not be accused of lacking sympathy with financial interests or with the financial magnates who control Canadian banking interests. His confirmation of the truth of the "Courier's" comments upon the banks' policy is fairly sufficient proof of its soundness.

The despatch which appears in the *Gazette* is sent from Saskatoon under date of October 18th. In an interview given at that time, the reporter makes Sir Thomas say: "The actions of the banks were drastic in an ultimate sense. It came without warning and with it came an intensely anxious time for practically everyone. Fortunately for his corporation, they had at that time, about a year ago, the huge sum of twenty million dollars on deposit, which fact saved the situation. He blamed the banks for the manner in which they encouraged speculation in lands and realty, and then, after having done so, it seemed hard to have them suddenly shut down on everyone. It would have been better had they shut down on negotiations a year before they did."

As if this were not sufficient, the reporter adds another telling paragraph. "At this point Mr. William Whyte cited an instance of a man in a Western city who could not get store credit for two hundred dollars, and yet one bank financed him to the extent of twenty thousand dollars on realty speculations."

There is really nothing important in this recital of facts, except to prove that the men who manage Canadian banks are not much wiser than the men who manage the railways, the factories, and the general commercial interests of the day. They have their faults as well as the rest of us, and seem to be much better at giving advice to other people than at restraining their own enthusiasm.

A WONDERFUL METHOD

ONTARIO, the banner province of the Dominion, has an excellent method for selecting fire-rangers. These government employees are sent each spring into the north to travel by trail and canoe and see that no incipient fire shall gain headway in Ontario's most valuable natural asset. They must guard timber to the value of many millions of dollars, and consequently they should be experts as well as physically perfect men.

And this is how they are selected. Each member of the Legislature, who is in good standing with the Cabinet or some member thereof, is given the opportunity of nominating two or more of these

fire-rangers and "no questions asked." What a sublime method! As a result, a traveller tells how the first rangers he met were a couple of students out for a lark, the next two old men of whom one was unable to move about, and the next two Methodist preachers. Another traveller tells of two rangers (they always go in pairs) who lived together all summer in Nipissing district and never spoke to each other because of a quarrel over their domestic arrangements.

Surely Sir James Whitney cannot know of these cases, or he would quickly inaugurate a reform. What Ontario really needs is a measure of Civil Service Reform which will take all such patronage out of the hands of cabinet ministers and members and place it in the jurisdiction of an independent commission of experts.

NEWFOUNDLAND ELECTIONS

CANADIANS may not see the humour of their own elections but they have certainly recognised that of the Newfoundland elections on Monday last. For forty years, the Newfoundland fishermen have been scared into voting for one or other of the parties by the "Canadian tax-gatherer" bogey. These simple-minded individuals are warned that if Newfoundland is carried into the Canadian Confederation, their boats, nets, cows, pigs and window-panes will be taxed to support the extravagant Canadian Government. To be accused of plotting for union with Canada is a sure cause for defeat at the polls. It reminds one of the Liberal appeal in the recent election, and a potent appeal at that, which called upon the people in the newer parts of the Dominion to vote for the Liberal Government if they desired to see a railway run to Hudson Bay and see the National Transcontinental completed.

There is, however, a real Canadian interest in this election, because the Labrador boundary is one of the chief topics of discussion. Quebec and Labrador are neighbours, Quebec being Canadian and Labrador being Newfoundland territory. The boundary has never been carefully defined, and in some cases timber limit grants overlap. Sir Robert Bond, the Premier, and Sir Edward Morris, the leader of the Opposition, each claim that he would be the best man to handle Newfoundland's side of the case before the Privy Council.

While this interest exists, the election of one party or the other is not likely to advance or retard confederation. Newfoundland is almost solidly against it, though its non-partisan and thinking people are quite well aware that union with Canada would be immensely beneficial. Some day a great leader will arise who shall perform a notable imperial service by dispelling the ignorance of the farmer and the fisherman and who shall arrange for terms of union which are mutually beneficial.

LAYMEN'S MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

THAT the Laymen's Missionary Movement has acquired considerable importance in Canada is beyond question. Under the leadership of Mr. J. Campbell White of New York it has spread through all the leading Canadian cities until a very large body of Christian laymen have become interested. The missionary zeal of all the Protestant churches has been stimulated and co-operation among Protestant bodies has been shown to be practicable. In the United States, the movement relates wholly to foreign missions; in Canada it has been made to cover both home and foreign missionary work. The addition of home missions was a concession to those who felt that Canada was in an exceptional position. The hundreds of new settlements in Northern and Western Canada have created a field for missionary work which demands greater contributions for home missions than at any other period in the history of this country. To provide new ministers and new churches will absorb millions of missionary offerings during the next decade. The Roman Catholic Church is providing adequately for its extension in these districts and