

The Brain Browsers' Guide

Winnipeg, Wednesday, May 24th, 1916

PARLIAMENT HAS PROROGUED

There will be a very general feeling of relief that Parliament has prorogued and that for a few months at least there will be no more raids on the public treasury by deserving political workers or railway promoters. Neither will the country suffer very much by the cessation of the political squabbles that have taken place, very largely for party purposes, and with very little sincere effort towards purification of public life. It must be apparent to every reading and thinking person that political morality in Canada has sunk pretty low. There is some satisfaction in this situation because it holds the promise that there can hardly be anything worse in the future and that there is a likelihood of improvement. The chief aim of the party in power in Canada, whether it be the Liberal party or the Conservative party, since 1879, has been to keep themselves in power and to do as much for their political friends as possible, with very little regard for the public welfare. Graft, patronage and corruption have been uncovered to a shocking extent under both regimes and each party when in power has done its best to protect its own grafters and has only permitted an investigation when practically forced by public opinion, and even when an investigation has taken place and the grafters have been uncovered, punishment is very seldom meted out to the wrongdoers according to their deserts. The two party system in Canada has been the curse of our public life. It has developed largely into a game of grab, and public welfare has become a minor consideration. If there were any real difference between the two parties and each were honestly striving for the best, there might be some excuse for the present party system. But taking the records of the two parties while in office from 1879 to the present time, it is pretty difficult for any individual to find out the difference. Both parties have allowed the manufacturers to make the tariff laws, the bankers to make the banking laws, the railway magnates the railway laws, and special privilege has been catered to by both of them. Even during the stress of the great war which is straining the resources of Canada, there is very little cessation in the party strife and certainly no improvement in the general administration of the affairs of the country.

The greatest lack in the present system is of independent members of Parliament who can and will stand up for the rights of the people at all times against both parties. The hope for such a necessary independent movement seems to lie at present in Western Canada. This western country has been bled for many years by special interests who have secured the necessary legislation from both political parties. The representation of the West now is sufficient, however, to command recognition if there were united effort on the part of all Western members. This hope will never come to fruition until the Western people stop regarding themselves as members of either the Liberal or the Conservative party. They should rather regard themselves as free and independent citizens of Canada, determined to elect only such men as will represent the true interests of the country and not be merely pawns in the political game. The old idea that a man should be a Grit or a Tory because his father was a Grit or a Tory dies very hard, but it must die before we can get any appreciable advancement and improvement in the standards of our public life. When that time comes and our members one and all go to Parliament representing only the true interests of the people who send them there, there will not be such a sigh of relief go up every time Parliament prorogues.

THE MASSACRE OF VERDUN

How long will it be before the German people awake to the fact that the best of their manhood is being driven to inevitable death in the attack on Verdun for the benefit of the Kaiser and his war lords? It is authoritatively stated that more than 300,000 German soldiers have been killed in the battle of Verdun. The German Crown Prince is in charge of the operations in that part of the war area and it was his fond hope to win undying fame by leading the victorious German army into Paris. During the first few days of the attack on Verdun some doubt was expressed as to whether General Joffre would be able to hold the line, but that doubt rapidly disappeared and to any but the war maddened brains of the German war lords it must have been apparent that the Crown Prince was doomed to defeat. Nevertheless he has continued bringing up reinforcements of the flower of the German army and deliberately driven them to slaughter against the heroic defenders of French soil. If any opportunity was afforded to the German people for an expression of their opinion, surely they would demand that no more of their soldiers be sacrificed in this war which is being waged simply for the glorification of a small number of their war lords. It will soon begin to dawn upon the minds of the German people, if indeed it has not already, that their soldiers' lives are being thrown away in a hopeless attempt to gratify the ambition of the Kaiser and his war lords to dominate the whole world. What will happen to the Kaiser and the Crown Prince and the other apostles of German "Kultur" when the German people awake and realize the true situation, when they come to know beyond the shadow of a doubt that none of the allied nations are seeking to seize any of their territory and had no intention or desire of curbing their industrial development? Surely they will wreak dire vengeance upon those who have caused them such a sacrifice. Already signs are not wanting of internal disturbance in Germany, but these so far have been put down by the iron hand of the military authorities. When the disaffection strikes the army, however, it will be more difficult to handle and that disaffection will certainly be felt as the German armies are forced backwards, which they surely will be in the very near future. If the settlement is brought about by the German people taking the matter into their own hands and dealing with their lordly betrayers it will be the most satisfactory settlement that can be made and it will be a striking object lesson for all time to come to autocratic rulers that they can no longer throw away the lives of their people to suit their own whims and fancies.

IRRIGATION DISPUTE SETTLED

It will cause very general satisfaction throughout the rural communities of Alberta to know that the long-standing dispute between the C.P.R. and the farmers in the irrigation block east of Calgary has at last been satisfactorily settled. This matter has agitated that section of the West for a number of years and has created a great deal of animosity on the part of the farmers towards the railway corporation. The chief grievance seemed to be that a portion of the land in the irrigation district on which irrigation charges were regularly made was claimed by the farmers not to be suitable for irrigation purposes. At any rate whatever the difficulties it is stated that thru mutual compromise the matter is no longer in dispute. Credit for this amicable settlement is due largely to the good work of H. W. Wood, president of the U.F.A., and F. M.

Black, president of the Board of Trade, Calgary, who have worked hard to bring about an agreement between the two parties in the conflict. It is also creditable both to the C.P.R. and the farmers that they were able to adjust the matter and make mutual concessions instead of carrying on the warfare which was undoubtedly injurious to both of them and held in it the possibility of serious disturbance in the agricultural community. The settlement illustrates the value of getting together and getting the other man's point of view. We believe that there are other problems in the West that can and will be settled in the same way.

MANITOBA'S POLITICAL GARDEN

The following interesting item appeared in The Winnipeg Tribune last week:

"Plans are being formulated for the construction of a roof garden on the south wing of the new Parliament Buildings, from which may be supplied daily cut and plant flowers for Government House and for all government offices. The idea originates with the Deputy Minister of Public Works, who is an amateur horticulturist. The plan has been informally discussed by the ministry and has 'taken on.'"

This certainly sounds like a very attractive scheme. Instead of confining it, however, to only one part of the roof we would suggest that the whole roof of the new Parliament Buildings might be devoted to agricultural pursuits. It might be turned to good use in various ways. The cabinet ministers being confined to their offices and having little opportunity for exercise would be greatly benefitted by taking early morning exercise on the roof farm. It would be an inspiring sight to see Premier Norris and his colleagues in overalls, armed with hoes and spades, doing agricultural duty on the roof of the Parliament Buildings between six and seven o'clock in the morning. Undoubtedly it would improve their health, give them greater vigor and make their minds clearer for the very important work which they have to do. How much more they would appreciate a choice bouquet in their office, or a nice bunch of vegetables to take home under their arm at noon, if they had been produced partly at least by their own labor. Part of the farm might be laid off for grazing where the Minister of Agriculture might keep a few of those cows of his until he is able to place them on the farms where they are most needed. It would also afford an opportunity for exercise and recreation in milking, which is regarded by all authorities as a most wholesome and uplifting form of recreation. Between periods the civil servants might be divided up into teams or groups and each one of them "do their bit" in keeping the farm up to its maximum of beauty and production. It would undoubtedly also raise the standard of efficiency among the civil servants.

In case none of these ideas should meet with the approval of the minister, it has been suggested that the whole of the roof of the new Parliament Buildings might be devoted to a prison farm where the inmates would be confined to political offenders exclusively. Working on a farm at that elevation they would be in a rarified atmosphere which would certainly have a stimulating effect, and the manual labor in the open air would be one of the best curatives possible for their disease. Having them close at hand also would be an object lesson not without its beneficial influence upon politicians at work in the chambers beneath the roof. No doubt many other ideas could be developed if the government were to offer sufficient inducement, and the gardens on the new buildings might become a very valuable asset to the province.