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**Semi-Weekly Telegraph**  
**and the News**

ST. JOHN, N. B., FEBRUARY 12, 1913.

**"SOMETHING SINISTER BEHIND"**

The Congregational Union at Manchester recently discussed the question of labor unrest, and urged the members of the Christian Church to bring home to statesmen and citizens the necessity of "insuring to all capable the opportunity to engage in productive industry with its corresponding obligations," and "securing such a standard of remuneration under human conditions which shall enable life to be kept above the poverty line amid healthful surroundings."

Speaking to the recommendation, the Rev. Mr. Williams said:

"The intelligent workmen who are leading the new movement realized that, with all their struggles for better conditions, there was something sinister behind their efforts. The workers knew quite well that what we called modern civilization had become a sort of automatic machine which crushed the individual. Employers could not act by their employees as they would like. If they did it would mean their own industrial extinction. They had come to an economic condition which would crush the life that built it."

When men in opulent surroundings—large men with chains and seals and rings—discourse upon Imperialism, the Empire, the unparalleled results of modern progress, they banish from their sight the cost of progress, the helpless young, the helpless old, the maimed, the restless, and the dead who have been cast down by that something sinister behind, and crushed by the automatic machine which our modern civilization has become. The vision of those who had disquieted themselves in vain, the emblems of failure, poverty and mortality, would weaken the zeal of the man in pursuit of a corner in pork, and the other in accumulating much goods in stores; so the vision is vanished.

Nothing but dejection can overtake the man who meditates on the cost of modern civilization and progress. Even London, the city standing at the entering of the sea, the centre of the commerce of the world, with many things attesting a glacial era, is grim and sinister to the majority of its seven millions of humanity. "Do not send a philosopher to London," wrote Hume, "and for heaven's sake do not send a poet. The grim seriousness of all things, the colossal monotony, the engine-like activity, the moroseness, even of pleasure, the whole of this exaggerated London will break his heart." But Hume hated the English and could never look with other than eager envy upon evidences of their greatness and prosperity. His witness to the influence of London upon the peripatetic philosopher and sensitive poet may be discounted. Not so the witness of Mr. Masterman, who is high in the councils of the present government and one of the brightest minds in the younger generation of Liberals. He writes:

"London is the characteristic product of the city of the future. Here gather the unparalleled masses of the obscure. They are members of no trade unions. They are inspired by no faith in progress. They are forgotten, as it seems, alike of man and of God. Laboring populations, in which no one rises above the rank of the local population, outnumber the inhabitants of many great kingdoms. The dreariness of their lives does not depend on their poverty. They are accursed with specific life, of which no outsider knows or cares. But the tragedy resides in their acquiescence; the absence of eager revolt and protest; the listless toleration of intolerable things. They extend, under sunshine and darkness, an interminable acreage; shabby, impotent, grotesquely negligible. They inhibit open-mouthed any specious illusion, cheering for blood when full of meat, when needless clamorous for plunder. Few know of their existence; none realize its import. Populations of great colonies or European capitals could be torn from them without any appreciable diminution. Who would ever be conscious of change if, say, Wandsworth or Hoxton vanished with tomorrow's sunrise? A wave of human life has silently become part up into a muzzling congestion. There has been nothing like it before in the history of the world. Please God, after its destruction there shall be nothing like it again."

Such is the burden of London, weighing like a nightmare upon some of those who gaze forward to the coming years. The population is destined ever to extend, and within the present generation will probably reach ten millions. What will be the outlook of that next generation, ravaged by diseases of overcrowding in dwelling and areas, dull with the vacuity of their labor, and dead to the faith that once provided a tangible background to their most "insinuating sinister behind" leading us to an economic condition which would crush the life that built it? Is that sinister thing the power of privilege which robs the producers and neutralizes all their efforts, charging a monopoly price for the storehouse of nature, and securing an undue amount of the rewards of productive industry?

In these days, dangerous in the clamors for business and speed and luxury, one needs to remind himself that increase of possessions, whether of property or power, does not ensure progress in satisfaction. Among the spoils of ancient Assyria was the blind bull of the god of today. This god of Nineveh had wings, but not to fly with; and eyes, but not to look up with; and ears, but not to hear with; and a great burden, and its crown was a great burden. The god may remain blind to the end and privilege will fight to the death to maintain its power. But even when privilege is removed, will all things then be "very good?"

**TAXES AND IMPROVEMENTS—THE COST OF PROGRESS**

The mere mention of taxation suggests to the average man the likelihood that somebody is going to come around once a year and take more money away from him than usual. In fact, taxation is so unpleasant a subject that it would be avoided if it were not for the fact that it is going to grow still more unpleasant unless we have a change in our method of raising municipal funds. Commissioner Schofield, the other day, drew attention to the fact that the assessment values in Calgary exceed those in St. John by about \$100,000,000. It may be inferred from this that if St. John were to assess land, buildings and all other visible property at their full valuation, the present tax rate would speedily come down, and we still should have all the revenue requisite for a civic expenditure greater than is required this year, or than will be required next.

But the weakness in the present system would still remain, in that the assessors are now required by law to tax income, personal property, and real estate in equal ratio; and, if they do so, while they might assess considerably more revenue than they get today, they would still be putting too heavy a tax upon improvements on the one hand, and on earned income on the other. It may be taken for granted that no change in assessment or taxation can be made without protest from somebody, and if the change is at all extensive the volume of protest will be large. But it is time we got that particular tooth pulled. What is required first is legislative authority to raise civic revenue in any manner decided upon by the citizens who pay the taxes. Having done that—and it should not be difficult—it would be in order for the city to put in force the exemption of improvements, beginning perhaps with a twenty-five per cent exemption, and making it total within, say, five years.

St. John has under consideration an extensive programme of changes and improvements. In a general way these would involve better streets, better schools, enlarged and more efficient provision for those who are helplessly ill or by some other reason prevented from earning a livelihood. A better lighting system is needed, a somewhat enlarged police force, and a greater expenditure for improved water supply and fire protection. There are many other lines of advance which are necessary, even though we may avoid them.

The moment these projected improvements are mentioned, the cry is bound to go up that the town will be ruined by taxation. The tax rate is already fairly high. It seems, then, that we must either be content with conditions as they exist, and these conditions will be even less satisfactory as population increases—or we must provide for a much larger revenue by revising our scheme of assessment and taxation in such a way that the raising of the requisite revenue will be simplified by arranging, as nearly as may be possible, that each citizen shall pay his proper portion of the common burden. It would be folly to predict, or to expect, that any improved system of taxation can be introduced without objection, or that it would prove satisfactory to everybody even though the justice in principle were conceded. Nevertheless, the plan under which the exemption of improvements would be proceeded with, and a greater part of the load would be transferred to land values, certainly gives reasonably promise of doing two important things: first, doing away with much injustice existing under the present scheme, and second, so increasing the civic revenue as to make reasonable provision for the forward steps St. John must make in the near future in point of civic betterment.

**CANADIAN EXPANSION**

Edward Porritt, who has written much on Canadian economic and political conditions, contributes an article in the current number of the North American Review, on "Canadian Expansion." He says that in the current year—that which began on September 1, 1912—the expectation is that two hundred million bushels of wheat will be graded by the government inspectors at Calgary and Winnipeg.

The great increase in the production of grain, is at the foundation of the wide spread prosperity in all the provinces of the Dominion, and it accounts for an activity in the railroad building in the western part of the Great Lakes that is without precedent in the history of any of the British overseas dominions. "This activity," he says, "will be better realized when it is recalled that in 1900 the only railway connecting Eastern Canada, the Great Lakes, and the Pacific Ocean, was the Canadian Pacific. Until the large immigration began in 1900 this road, with its single track and branch lines forking out north and south, met all the needs of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, as regards connection with the ports at the head of the Lakes, with Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and the Atlantic coast. This was the position in 1900; and it was 1904 before there was any movement for the construction of a second transcontinental railway."

Nearly twenty thousand men were at work on railway construction in the western provinces during the whole of the year of 1912. The three great railway companies were competing for men; and work on each of the transcontinental lines was limited only by the ability of the contractors to secure men and to obtain rails, structural steel and other materials. The pressure on the existing lines, all through the year, was greater than ever before in the history of the prairie provinces; and the conviction in the West is that just as soon as the Grand Trunk Pacific and the C. N. R. are completed from coast to coast these companies will be compelled to follow the example of the Canadian Pacific and commence at once to double track their lines from the foot-hills of the Rocky Mountains to the Great Lakes. On double tracking and branch lines, the C. P. R. last year laid more than 800 miles of rails. The whole country is interested in this prosperity of the grain-growing provinces. Mr. Porritt says: "It is this prosperity of the grain-growing provinces, also, that keeps the iron and steel plants and the woolen mills of far-distant Nova Scotia employed. Halifax and Sydney, the principal ports of Nova Scotia, both profit from it. From Sydney during navigation season rails and other products of the local steel mills are shipped to Port Arthur and Port William for distribution to the prairie provinces; and Halifax in the winter months, when the St. Lawrence is closed by ice, gets a large share of the immigration business and of the import trade of the West. The cotton mills in the neighborhood of St. John, and the shoe factories of Fredericton, prosper when the prairie provinces are prospering; and from December to April St. John is the only Canadian port from which grain is shipped to Great Britain."

The total wheat imports of Great Britain for 1907 were about 240,000,000 bushels. Canada produced last year considerably more than four-fifths of the total amount of wheat imported into Great Britain. But the amount of Canadian wheat that found its way into the British market that year was only slightly in excess of twenty millions. Britain secures only about a third of her wheat supply from the Colonies. Her sources of supply vary from year to year, and no particular source can be depended upon individually. Free Trade cannot guarantee harvests at home or abroad, but what it does do is to place at Britain's disposal the best harvests of the world available in any year. On the success and expansion of wheat-growing in the West depend the industrial and commercial prosperity of the older provinces. The wisdom of statesmen lies in the direction of securing the largest freedom of trade, and the best possible transportation facilities, so that Canadian wheat may be unhindered in seeking the markets of the world and Canadian merchants unchecked and unhindered in disposing of wheat and importing whatever goods and produce they may desire, in exchange.

Whether a country is rich or poor, it will be benefited by the largest possible freedom of trade with its neighbors. In either case the result is to give its citizens so many more chances to trade. If they cannot profit by them they will not trade; if they can, then they, and through them their country, will be richer for their having so many more chances to trade. No country is either so rich or so poor that it is not to its advantage to have its citizens better off than they are.

It is the supreme folly for Canada, under present conditions, with the enormous influx of wheat-growers into the West, and the great increase in production, to continue to restrict and hamper trade in natural products.

**THE NAVAL DEBATE**

The debate on Canadian contribution to Imperial naval defence is prolonged at Ottawa, and there are indications that the Liberals will offer extended and determined resistance to the government programme on the sound ground that it would be likely to commit Canada to an indefinite period of contribution. The true line of advance in Canadian participation, not only in the expense of building ships of war, but also in manning and maintaining them, thus enabling Canada to place its manhood at the disposal of the Empire in time of trouble, as a real member of the family should do. The Conservative position has been noticeably weak through its failure to satisfy the country that there is any "emergency" in the ordinary acceptance of the term, or that if we begin to contribute money now we shall not be asked to continue that unsatisfactorily policy throughout long years during which we should have established shipyards of our own and trained crews for the ships.

An incident in the debate of yesterday was the speech of Colonel H. H. McLean of Queens-Sunbury, which probably gave considerable satisfaction to the government forces. Colonel McLean was not in line with his party when the Laurier naval policy was launched three years ago, and today he is still farther out of line with the Liberal programme. The Colonel emphasizes the German scare, which he regards more seriously than most people, and while he desires to see certain cruisers and torpedo craft constructed in Canada, he argues that we cannot build battleship cruisers. That is a discouraging sort of doctrine, and it is not likely to be popular in this country. Had we started three years ago we should now be launching the ships. Indeed Dr. Pugsley's convincing speech on that very point—the building of warships of all classes in this country—has not been answered effectively by any speaker up to the present day.

Colonel McLean says the question is not about an emergency, but rather as to Canada's duty. If that be the case it is necessary to remember that, if there is no emergency, Canada's obvious duty, to the Empire and to herself, is to inaugurate at once a permanent policy, not an emergency policy, of participation in naval defence. If the British Empire is to continue a vast programme of ever-increasing preparation for Armageddon—as we trust it is not—then Canada must follow. Australia in preparing to create a great fleet of its own, for clearly, the great Dominions overseas will not be satisfied forever to contribute immense and constantly increasing amounts with the idea that Great Britain shall turn their treasure into ships without any real prospect of adequate shipbuilding industries being created in the outlying portion of the King's dominions. That way trouble lies. Canada should start right. If Mr. Borden has his way she will start wrong.

The emergency argument has been overworked, and in overworking it the Conservatives have made the cardinal mistake of insisting upon Canada's inferiority, in resources and workmanship, in intelligence, in constructive ability, in the patriotic spirit necessary to make the sacrifices involved by training Canadians to man the ships built in this country. If the Empire is to be defended by all the sons of the Empire, the question of Imperial defence must be placed on a higher plane than that of mere money contribution. Carried to its logical conclusion the Conservative policy of today is destructive of the very forces and tendencies necessary to keep the Empire together and make it an irresistible unit in peace or in war.

**WILL AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN SECURE?**

His followers are now advising Mr. Bonar Law that the best of reform be jettisoned along with the food taxes. No leader or party could be in a surer plight. Many countries, for imposing the food taxes had been advanced during the last few years, and the result is, as Sir John Simon said in an able speech at Rochdale, that the captain finds himself locked in his cabin by a mutinous crew. He resolutely nailed the flag of food taxes to the mast, and within three weeks of his last practice in the activity, when he declared that he was not the man to haul down the flag, he performed that distasteful task.

Mr. Austen Chamberlain has made his own dissent from the new policy perfectly clear. He referred a few days ago to his leaders—Mr. Balfour and Lord Lansdowne—either by a slip or with deliberate intention to affront Mr. Bonar Law. He declined to abandon any of his convictions, and thought the policy of food taxes "the most natural, the most courageous, and the most right," and refused to take any share in the responsibility for the decision to which a majority of the party had come. He would still support his political leaders, and co-operate with his political friends, but he looked on this new policy with misgivings, and feared that the change might not only be a calamity for his party but a misfortune for the Empire. Mr. Chamberlain is an able man than Mr. Law, and no small part of the present difficulty of the party are due to the fact that he was passed over by Mr. Balfour. He resigned, but his tariff reform contention does not commend itself to the mass of the party, and as his father did ten years ago, the son today is apparently preparing to detach himself from the main body of Unionists to march ahead over the difficult and uncertain territory.

The pioneer goes forward, hoping that later he may be followed by the main army. He has secured the blessing of his nominal leaders, who remain insecurely at headquarters surrounded by the faithful. Mr. Chamberlain has not yet begun his pilgrimage. He flatters at the outset of the wilderness, fearing that after all he may be nothing more than a sort of scapegoat for the sins of his faithless confederates, who have forsaken his "faithful" under protest.

Mr. Law finds himself back in the rut in which Mr. Balfour was landed by the older Chamberlain ten years ago. It is impossible to conceive what new political duplicity will be devised by that party and their leaders. In the meantime it might be well for them to ponder Mr. Fielding's statement that the wiles and tricks by which they would commandeer the Colonies to take part in their domestic warfare, is calculated to destroy that respect for, and confidence in, British statesmanship, without which it is certain the Imperial idea will never be realized.

**WHO PAYS THE TAXES? AND WHO SHOULD?**

Who pays the taxes? Who ought to pay most—the man who benefits most? Let us see. In protesting against a tax of one per cent per annum on all increases in land values in New York, the head of the local department of the Title, Guarantees and Trust Company explained his position in these words:

"The principle underlying all taxation is the principle of equality. Yet if Government or Legislature imposes an extra tax upon the owner of unimproved property because, for uncertain reasons, it advanced in value, that man is being subjected to double taxation. If the land value increase is natural, the unearned increment tax is hardly more proper. It is another form of the land value tax, as against improvements and thereby places a greater burden on land than on improvements."

St. John, which is considering taxation reform, may be interested in the answer made to this opponent of the land tax by the financial editor of Saturday Night, Toronto. He says, in part:

"Land values manifestly increase simply because location becomes more desirable. And location becomes more desirable simply because it is made so by expenditure upon street improvement, etc., and also because of the other facts which need not be dealt with at the moment, that population increases and the quantity of land is fixed."

"Now, civic improvement or betterment adds its value to location; and location adds its value to the quantity of land. So why on earth should not the ground be charged with all the cost of the civic betterment? On the admission of the above paragraph, 'the principle underlying all taxation is the principle of equality'—although I may say that there is no taxation on the face of this earth, yet in which the principle is even approximated in practice. At any rate, the interview admits that equality should underlie it. On that basis, who should pay the cost of civic improvement but he who receives the monetary benefit therefrom? Just weigh that question one moment. It is in no way involved. It is exceedingly simple, as the wayfaring man, though a fool, might easily answer it. Every acre when he charges John Smith for the sugar John Smith gets and every newboy when he demands payment from the man who purchases a paper from him, answers it. Every entry made by an accountant in his journal or ledger answers it. Every man, woman, and child faces the question in some form a dozen times a day."

"When you can show me a single instance where civic improvements of any nature have been made without the value of anything whatever save land, I will show you a case where not land but something else should bear the cost of the improvement. The other hand, where you show me a single instance of a civic improvement leading to an increase in the value of land, or to maintain it at a value below what it would have been without that improvement, I will show you an improvement which should never have been made and which actually is not an improvement at all. That if it improves the land, it makes it more valuable—the very test of the word 'civic improvement.'"

The financial editor of Saturday Night proceeds to show that as civic improvements are to the land what house improvements are to the house, they are a logical charge against the land, just as house improvements are a charge against the house. Further:

"And it makes all the difference in the world which way the charge or tax is levied. The tenant, of course, pays the bill, but he is not the master of the house and civic improvement; and the owner always assumes responsibility for the payment of the bill for house improvement. In the same way, the taxpayer for the civic improvement, it is otherwise. Instead of the municipality assessing the entire cost of this civic betterment, it is the owner of the great proportion falling on the house and on products of industry generally, all of which rests eventually on consumers. The burden of civic improvements, because consumers are mainly tenants. So that the tenant not only pays the owner increased rent because of civic improvements, but he provides the bulk of the material to pay the bill for the civic improvement. Land-owning becomes a special privilege under such conditions, inasmuch as the land owner is enabled to draw revenue out of the improvements he is not paying for. This privilege naturally expresses itself in the value of the land. The price advances; and this advance or increase, and the benefit brought about by the efforts of the owner but by the civic services paid for mainly by the tenant, is known as 'unearned increment.' That is, it is an accession which naturally goes to the owner although it is 'unearned' by him."

To these observations the Saturday Night writer adds a prediction, based, doubtless, upon the advance of taxation reform in the Canadian West. The New York opponent of the land tax, he says, "seems actually to be laboring under the impression that the ground owner is an unearned portion of the bill for the civic improvements which have given their value to his ground and for which he is necessarily drawing revenue from his tenant. In a very few years hence, it will be asked to pay it will be the whole cost and anything short of that falls of the 'unearned' portion of the bill for the civic improvements which have given their value to his ground and for which he is necessarily drawing revenue from his tenant. 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