

CRITICISMS OF THE CLUBBING SYSTEM.

VIEWS OF CITY, TOWN, AND COUNTRY PUBLISHERS ON THIS QUESTION.

PRINTER AND PUBLISHER being anxious to obtain the candid views of publishers on the clubbing system will be glad to hear from its readers in short letters. The following are presented as the first instalment of opinions upon the subject :

TRIED ON A LIMITED SCALE.

By D. McGillicuddy, Huron Signal.

You have asked me to give my opinion of clubbing, from a country publisher's, not a policeman's standpoint. Well, here it is :

I take very little stock in it. I have fifty or a hundred of my subscribers who, when they are paying for *The Signal* at New Years, ask me to get a city weekly for them, which I do, retaining enough of the agent's commission to pay for my time and postage, and giving the remainder of the commission, if there be any, to the old subscriber, just to show that I am not working a skin game on him, and have no hard feelings.

Any of my subscribers can get me to order any newspaper on earth, in connection with *The Signal*, on condition that I do not lose anything, even a 3c. postage stamp, by the deal. That's what I'm here for—for the good that I can do, as the years go rolling by, so to speak.

Every year, I get a raft of circulars from the cities with offers to club their sheets with mine, and telling me what a pile of fat there is in it for me, if I will act as their canvassing, collecting and advertising agent in this locality ; and every year I make a note of their offers, taking the rates of the papers that I know some of my subscribers will ask for, and attend to my own affairs, and let the fellows in the city attend to theirs.

I have tried chromo business, the bonus edition, the almanac, the calendar, and one or two other fakes that I would not like to name—as my friends of the press association would think I was "easy" for being caught with them—and I find that the best way to work up a list is to give one's attention towards making his own paper a "news" paper, and let other fellows run their own shows to suit themselves.

I don't do much business in clubbing with other papers, and don't think it pays anyone to do it to any great extent. "Them's my sentymints," and I've nailed them to the office towel.

A TOWN DAILY PUBLISHER'S OPINION.

By Andrew Pattullo, M.P.P.

I have always been opposed to clubbing with city papers. I have been thinking, of course, specially of the interests of country weeklies ; but I question very much if, looking at the interests of the big city weeklies, circulation got at the low price of their clubbing rates is worth having. The ordinary weekly edition of the big city dailies is, to a great extent, the rival of the larger local or provincial weeklies, and, when the latter club with the former and boom such clubbing rates, they merely work for the interests of others, and not their own. I see only one advantage to country weeklies in clubbing with other papers—it does enable us to get our subscription lists on to something like, if not entirely, a cash basis. This is a considerable gain. But what is the use of discussing the question

unless local publishers can agree to act together, which they never can? When one local publisher runs clubbing rates, his rivals must follow suit, or suffer. We held out for years against clubbing, for a time with the co-operation of our neighbors ; but at length we were forced to yield. Last year we ran low clubbing rates with half a dozen outside papers. It did not increase our circulation to any appreciable extent, but probably kept up the circulation in our district of these city papers. We would much rather stand on our own bottom—but necessity, which is another name for senseless and illegitimate competition, has no law.

A CITY PUBLISHER'S VIEW.

By P. D. Ross *Ottawa Journal*.

Being the publisher of a paper in a city of moderate size, and not, as yet, professing to turn out an article which I can feel could gain much outside of my local territory, I don't believe it worth while to bother about clubbing. It is true there are local weeklies in my territory with which the clubbing system might be tried, but so long as the territory is compact, we can work it by direct inducements or by canvassing, and if we give a club rate to the local publisher, he very possibly rakes in a good many of our former direct subscribers.

Our semi-weekly has clubbed sometimes with a farm paper. That cannot lose us anything to speak of ; it may be advantageous to circulation, though we cannot say that results have ever been striking ; and we are philanthropic enough to believe that it is worth our while to facilitate farming reading for our farmers. This feeling is just strong enough to induce us to use a farm paper at times when we wouldn't trouble with any other.

AN OPINION FROM THE WEEKLY STANDPOINT.

By Mr. Thompson, of *The Thorold Post*.

You ask for my views on the question of clubbing with contemporaries. Frankly, I cannot say that I have formulated any very extended or very fixed views on the subject. Some years ago I dabbled considerably with the plan, trying it from year to year, sometimes getting up quite a list, and, again, trying to push one or two. But I never could see that it had any appreciable effect, beneficial or otherwise. In short, the experiment, or experiments, were disappointingly barren of results that would aid to conclude for or against.

I suppose that means it was not satisfactory as to its booming qualities. At all events, I gave it up. The few names I had to forward were not new names for my own list, but my own sure subscribers, who simply got their city papers a little cheaper, and I did the transmitting for them. If it was a real benefit to a considerable number, even that way, it would be a sort of satisfaction. But I can only think that, for papers of the rank of *The Post*—that is, practically, the rural papers—it is not worth while.

As to the effects of the system in those cases the clubbers talk about, where one country paper sent them so many hundred names, etc., of course, I cannot speak, never having "been there." But I have always thought that, to have a rural paper