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AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER.

AN editorial announcement in last Saturday's issue of the *Toronto Mail* has given rise to a greater amount of comment and discussion than any recent product of Canadian journalism. In this city, more especially, the discussion in political and journalistic circles has been well-nigh incessant. When the nature of the announcement is borne in mind, it is not at all to be wondered at that a keen and widespread interest should have been aroused in the public mind. It would have been strange, indeed, had the case been otherwise, for, to the bulk of the community, the information conveyed must have been not only altogether unexpected but positively startling. It was announced, in the clearest and most explicit terms of which language is capable, that the *Mail* has freed itself from the fetters which have bound it in the past: that it has ceased to be the mouthpiece of any political party or faction, and that it will henceforward be in the fullest and widest sense an independent organ of public opinion, "serving neither party, and criticizing both with the freedom born of a complete deliverance from party ties."

As most readers of these columns are aware, the *Mail* took a halting and unassured step in the direction of independence several months ago, when it repudiated certain planks in the Liberal Conservative platform, and adopted one or two planks which were not supposed to be generally acceptable to the present Government at Ottawa. But this proceeding did not count for much, and certainly did not find many ardent sympathizers. There was a widespread suspicion that the *Mail* was not sincere, as, notwithstanding certain utterances savouring of independence, the prevailing tone of the paper continued to be that of a party organ. The latest pronouncement, however, is susceptible of no misunderstanding. The language employed is as direct and unmistakable as language very well can be. It is at once dignified and emphatic, and the journal responsible for it stands clearly committed to a judicial and independent course so long as it continues to be carried on under its present auspices. After such a declaration as it has given to the world, a return to party subservience would surely be the precursor to its extinction. Assuredly it could never again hope that its professions should be received with respect.

The *Mail* was established between fourteen and fifteen years since as the official organ of the Liberal Conservative party in Canada. The commonly-received belief has been that it was originally in large measure founded, and that it has all along been in some measure supported, by party funds.

Until within the last few months it has uniformly been the outspoken advocate of party, and the unswerving defender of the policy of Sir John Macdonald and his colleagues. Anything like independent action has never been looked for at its hands, and nothing in the shape of opposition to the Liberal Conservative policy has ever been regarded as either probable or possible. It is proverbially said that the unexpected always happens, and there can be no question that the old saw has in this instance received an unqualified confirmation.

Assuming the *Mail* to be in serious earnest—an assumption fully borne out by its course during the three or four days which have elapsed since its portentous announcement—its new departure is a most hopeful and encouraging sign. Rabid and unreasoning partisanship has long been the curse of Canadian journalism, and the greatest drawback to political and intellectual progress in this country. "Party government," to quote the *Mail's* own article, "has been simply a contest of factions, each side fighting for its own hand, and both agreeing to shirk those great moral and political questions which must be settled if the prosperity of the country is to endure. Our representatives are not free agents in the Legislature, but accept from the caucus an imperative mandate to support one side or the other; and the sacrifice of the public interests to the party's welfare is the frequent and inevitable consequence." These words have the right ring about them, and will find an echo in the heart of every Canadian to whom his country's interests are dearer than those of his party. The number of Canadians of this way of thinking is much larger than is commonly supposed. The number, moreover, is increasing day by day. That the *Mail's* departure will give an impetus to the open profession of such opinions is as certain as daylight. Several journals controlled by writers of zeal and intelligence have led the way in this direction; but most of them have been hampered by pecuniary and other considerations which have prevented them from obtaining that circulation and influence which under more favourable circumstances they would almost certainly have acquired. But the *Mail* is emphatically a moulder of opinion, and one of the very foremost of Canadian newspapers. Its change of base is most significant, and, unless we fail to read the signs of the times aright, it foreshadows other and even more momentous changes at no distant day.

It seems to us that never in the history of our country was there a more conspicuous opening for a daily newspaper which dares to speak forth the words of truth and soberness without fear or favour. The journal which will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth on various public questions has an assured future before it. The subjects calling aloud for honest consideration are many, and are moreover of such importance that their consideration cannot much longer be deferred. Our national finances are in a condition which may well give rise to grave solicitude. Reforms of a radical character are imperatively demanded in the Civil Service. Various phases of the religious question are forcing themselves upon public attention. The