

THE EDMONTON BULLETIN

(SEMI-WEEKLY.)

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Manager.

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THE VOTE IS THE THING THAT COUNTS.

A Government whose return is considered certain suffers invariably in an election through the confidence of the public that they will be returned. And the stronger and more general the public that they will be returned, the more they are liable to suffer from this cause. Private business must be attended to on election day as on every other, and the busy man is tempted to think that when his side is practically certain of winning there will be no danger in his remaining away from the polls and no particular reason why he should lose the time to vote. The return of the Government has never been doubted by the public generally since the campaign opened—nor long before it for that matter. The conviction that they will go back to power has grown with the progress of the campaign. This means that on Monday candidates supporting the Government are more than ordinarily likely to lose votes through the confidence of their friends and supporters that they will be elected. This is the only apparent danger of the Government not sweeping the Province on Monday by a splendid majority.

It is the business of every elector favorable to the Government to do what he can to prevent this confidence becoming over-confidence. First he should poll his own vote, and second, he should do what he can to get like-minded voters to go to the polls also. An election is not over till the polls are closed, and it is the contents of the ballot boxes, not the mental approval or disapproval of the public that makes or unseats a Government. However great a voter's sympathy with the Government, cause it counts for nothing in the practical result unless he puts it in the box in the form of a ballot properly marked. The supporter of the Government who is tempted on Monday to remain from the polls because he thinks the cause is sure to win whether he goes or not should remember that a large number of electors are likely to figure the same way, and that if enough of them figure that way the Government is lost. The only way to make victory certain is to vote, and certainly the nearest of all reasons for neglecting to do what one can to make it certain is the belief that it is certain.

WHY THE GOVERNMENT IS ASSAILED.

The hostility of the C. P. R. to the Rutherford Government is easily understood. While the Government has in no way curbed the activities of the company by infringement on any of its legitimate rights or interference with any proper interest, they have insisted that the public, too, have rights which should be asserted, and that where these rights had been trampled on by the C. P. R., regardless of law or with the consent of the law-makers the C. P. R. must stand the consequences.

It was not considered fair by the Government that the exemption from taxation given the company in its charter should be construed as exempting them from paying taxes on branches built under other charters and in some cases by subsidiary companies under different names. This was regarded as an infringement on the rights of the people to the extent of thousands of dollars for every year the lines were untaxed, and on this principle a measure was passed and enforced bringing them under the jurisdiction of the tax collector and making them contribute to the common funds in just proportion.

Neither was it considered fair to the public that the lands of the company should remain free of taxes for all time. The land holdings of the company are enormous and scattered throughout the Province from the boundary to the Athabasca river. Scarcely a school district or local improvement district in the Province does not feel the burden thrown upon it by the exemption of these lands from taxation—exemption which by legal quibbles the company extended into twice the period parliament intended it to last. Steps were accordingly taken to carry a test case to the privy council insisting that the contention of the company was unsound and that the holdings of the company should be taxable from the expiry of the twenty year period after the land was really given to them. Action was made, too, against the C. & E. company and a decision secured which makes their lands taxable by school and local improvement districts forthwith.

The Compensation Act affected the

C. P. R. to a larger degree than any other interest in the country, for the reason that they are the largest employers of labor in the Province. Against this measure the company have filed no open objections so far as known, but taken with the other regulations imposed on them it no doubt aided in winning for the Government their distinguished and decided disapprobation.

The company is in the coal mining business, too, and the eight hour bank-to-bank law put a limit to the length of day which it may work employees in this department.

The Sabbath Observance Act has been enforced, even against the C. P. R. Formerly the corporation had operated its system and ran its trains regardless of Sunday, law or no law. Either the law had to be held up or this had to be stopped. It was stopped, not, however, without action in the courts.

To cap the climax the Government has had the hardihood to take measures for securing the construction of new railway lines in the Province. Worse, these lines are not to be built by the C. P. R.—not because the C. P. R. could not secure the same assistance as the other companies, but because the C. P. R. does not need and will not accept the assistance. Still worse, these projected lines are to tap and traverse the portion of the Province which the company heretofore has been graciously pleased to consider its own peculiar and exclusive preserve. This was intolerable.

None of these measures was conceived in hostility to the C. P. R. It was a proposal to discriminate against that company in favor of its competitors. None infringes any legal or moral right or interest of the company or imposes unjust or undue hardship on them in any way, shape or form. The company is not being persecuted, nor is its usefulness hampered as an agency in the general development. It is merely being prevented from continuing the persecution and discrimination it has so liberally shown toward the public. The place the C. P. R. has occupied and the work it has done in opening up and developing the West is absolutely unquestioned and unquestionable as that in performing this public service the company has considered solely its own interest and welfare, and that where this conflicted with the rights or interests of the public has been neither hindered nor prevented from its purpose by that consideration.

But the C. P. R. has not been used to such treatment. Under the former condition of things it ran its own affairs as it pleased, and where these interfered with the public affairs, it paid no taxes, built roads when and where it pleased, exerted its influence to make one town and break another, provided cars to haul coal from its own mines and denied them to other mines, collected from the traffic all the traffic would bear, gave such service as it saw fit, and generally conducted itself with an scrupulous disregard of every and all interests beyond or outside its own. That it was worse than other railway monopolies it cries do not claim; simply that it was a monopoly and that being a monopoly it did as such creatures invariably do.

Against this disregard of the public the Government has set its hand resolutely, with a large measure of success already and a still larger measure in the assured future. That the hostility of the company is aroused need excite no wonderment. It has been so long undisturbed in the dream that it was master of all it surveyed that the awakening is jarring to it. Just how angry it is at the interference with its efforts to capture a political party in the Legislature—the domination of a convention, the shaping of a platform, the deposition of a leader to make room for one of its own officials. The Government has asserted the public interests and rights; hence the C. P. R. is on the war path. It is for the public to say which party they will join.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

Absolute unanimity of opinion upon the acts of any Government is not to be expected. The intelligence and varying interests of the electorate lead to divergence of views upon almost every question of public policy. The party system encourages rather than deters conflict, which is sometimes actuated by a selfish and egotistical purpose to promote the interests of the state, while on the other hand it is sometimes inspired by pettishness, fault-finding and narrow partisanship, designed solely to embarrass the Government. It was not to be expected that the Rutherford Government, which is now so appealing to the electors, would please the hypercritical doctrinaires of the opposing political party which competed for popular recognition in the general elections of 1905. The memory of their defeat which makes them moderate the views of some of the Opposition party leaders. It can be truthfully asserted, however, that apart from them the

actions of the Rutherford Government meets with very general approval. Certainly opposition to the Government cannot be found in the criticism of the legislation brought down in any one of the four sessions of the first legislature. Though the Opposition numbered but two in the House it can not be denied that they had all the opportunities that are secured to minorities by British parliamentary procedure. John Pym and John Hampden were but two members of the British House of Commons, but they were able through the privilege guaranteed to every member of parliament to rouse public opinion in the country and to induce other members to denounce the arbitrary measures of the Government of that day. Today members of parliament enjoy wider privileges. If there had been anything essential to the legislation of the present Government both Mr. Herbert and Mr. Robertson had stayed and privilege on their side to stay legislation and educate public opinion against it. Yet scarcely a measure was laid on the table during the four sessions but received favorable criticism from the Opposition. Invariably the principles of Government bills were endorsed and seldom was serious fault found with the measures in detail. So far as criticism of the Government is a feature of the campaign it is limited to a very small number of issues in the tremendous volume of business transacted during the four sessions, and on such items the criticism is less of the ends sought than of the means employed to attain them. Opposition candidates in a remarkably large number of cases disguise themselves as independents. Opposition has raised no issue, instead of being borne all at once. It would be unjust to load down the pioneer with the full cost of developing the Province. Let posterity bear its share. The administration of the liquor license department, a subject that is a storm-center of party conflict in other provinces, has raised no hostile criticism. The administration of this branch has been widely commended and praised. The reason has been that the law was impartially and courageously enforced. There has been effective co-operation between the Government and the license commissioners. The Government has been eager to bring a system that will exclude partisan considerations in dealing with the liquor traffic, and is confident that this can be successfully accomplished. No serious extension of the liquor trade has been permitted and the Government has shown signal courage in disciplining those who have been negligent of the regulations. In the management of elections the Government has been without criticism. The fact that not a protest has ever been filed against the return of any member of the Alberta Legislature proves this. The Government has been fairly dealt with regardless of its political complexion. In the second session the leader of the Opposition essayed to show that his constituency was not fairly treated. He never ventured such a statement again. It transpired that the minister of public works had been distributing the works most unjustly required. On the whole the legislative and administrative record of the Government has the strong approval of the public, to the obliteration of party lines in a remarkable number of constituencies.

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The Government. Permanent public works, such as large steel bridges, sites for buildings are heretofore to be charged to capital account. By this means a larger sum than ever will be released for roads, small bridges, and repairs without curtailing the expenditures on other services such as education, agriculture and the administration of justice.

Though a few temporarily enlivened Opposition papers may seek to delude the people by attempting to show a deficit by including expenditure on capital with ordinary expenditure, the attempt will be abortive, for every school section and every municipality in the province must and has resorted to the same device of finance. It is absurd to assert, as one or two Opposition journals do, that the people of Alberta should pay for the total cost of the provincial telephone system in any one year, more than the city of Edmonton should pay for installing the street car service in one year. Yet that is what is done when the \$1,380,000 that has been spent on telephones to date is charged against the revenue of 1908. If it is right to charge this to any one year, it is just as right to add the revenues for the term of years that the telephones will stand the use of service. The Government's financial policy in this respect is in harmony with public opinion and general practice. In Alberta development is rapid, and it is in the eastern provinces, consequently there is required a larger yearly expenditure for public works in this province in proportion to the population than was required in the early years of the older provinces. Hence it is just that the charges should be distributed over a number of years, instead of being borne all at once. It would be unjust to load down the pioneer with the full cost of developing the Province. Let posterity bear its share. The administration of the liquor license department, a subject that is a storm-center of party conflict in other provinces, has raised no hostile criticism. The administration of this branch has been widely commended and praised. The reason has been that the law was impartially and courageously enforced. There has been effective co-operation between the Government and the license commissioners. The Government has been eager to bring a system that will exclude partisan considerations in dealing with the liquor traffic, and is confident that this can be successfully accomplished. No serious extension of the liquor trade has been permitted and the Government has shown signal courage in disciplining those who have been negligent of the regulations. In the management of elections the Government has been without criticism. The fact that not a protest has ever been filed against the return of any member of the Alberta Legislature proves this. The Government has been fairly dealt with regardless of its political complexion. In the second session the leader of the Opposition essayed to show that his constituency was not fairly treated. He never ventured such a statement again. It transpired that the minister of public works had been distributing the works most unjustly required. On the whole the legislative and administrative record of the Government has the strong approval of the public, to the obliteration of party lines in a remarkable number of constituencies.

ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY.

The making of laws is important but not more so than the execution of the laws made. It is desirable that laws be on the statute books providing for the peace, order and good government of the Province, but the Province will have neither peace, order nor good government unless the laws are carried into effect. The legislative function of the Government is the basis for its administrative action, but it is in the quality of the administration rather than in the quality of the legislation that good government or bad government consists. Better laws to have had laws administered in the public interest that the best of laws otherwise administered or not administered at all. Legislation reflects a Government's policy, but its administration speaks its real usefulness to the public. The laws disclose the ends, but the ends can be attained only if the laws are supplemented by vigorous and impartial enforcement. The legislation embodies policy but policy not carried into works is dead.

The Rutherford Government may fairly claim that what they have preached in law they have exemplified in practice. The policy which has been outlined in the legislation enacted at their suggestion has been the chart by which they have steered their administration. In Manitoba the amount of public business has been in thorough accord with the principles embodied in the measures proposed to the legisla-

ture. Laws have been passed not to cure-alls in themselves but as the authority and means by which the Government in action could attain the desired results. Nothing is more important than an unenforced statute. It arouses neither the terror, the admiration nor the serious concern of any body. It is useless alike to restrain wrong-doers and to promote the public good. This it can do and does only when the principle or plan embodied in it is given effectiveness by being made the motive and end of government machinery.

The department of agriculture has been given broad opportunity for usefulness by the legislation establishing the department and by the annual provision of funds for carrying on its work. It has met the opportunity by steady and resolute endeavor to advance the interests of the farmers and stockmen of the Province by whatever means seemed most available and most likely to accomplish the end. Of a total expenditure of six and three-quarter million dollars during the past three years and a half, more than a million has been entrusted to this department for direct use in advancing the farming interests. The money has been well spent. Farmers' institutes, breeders' associations, agricultural fairs and stock shows have been aided by grants. Bounties have been paid for the destruction of wolves. War has been carried on effectively against noxious weeds. The conditions of the farming interests. The money has been well spent. 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