

The Standard



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SAINT JOHN, TUESDAY MORNING, FEB. 21, 1911.

WHO WANTS A COMMISSION?

Any unconsidered trifles that can be used to help along the scheme to place St. John under Commission rule are eagerly sought after by its advocates now-a-days, and it is therefore not surprising that the "Times" quotes with approval an extract from the Toronto World which contains the following:—"Port Arthur has been wrestling with the problem of government by Commission. The 'Trades and Labor' Council has endorsed the plan for a three-man commission which the people sanctioned by vote. A bill is to be submitted to the Legislature embodying the wishes of the Port Arthur citizens. Just what fate is in store for it need not be anticipated in detail." In the light of history it is to be hoped for the peace of mind of the citizens of Port Arthur that the fate in store for this bill to sanction a three-man commission will be a swift and sudden death at the hands of the Legislature.

Friends of Commission rule for St. John date back to the year 1900 and point to the city of Galveston as the originator of the Commission plan, and in so doing, we readily acquit them of any intention to deceive. The information regarding Commission government contained in the pamphlet issued by the Advertising Committee of the Board of Trade, before the Common Council were asked to sanction a plebiscite, was superficial and one-sided at the best. Pains-taking investigation, in which The Standard is playing a modest part, has since added considerably to the store of general knowledge, and, not always, to the scheme's advantage, and the end is not yet.

The approval with which the Times receives the news that Port Arthur has voted for a three-man commission, reminds us of the experience of another city. It is not likely in this particular instance that the friends of Commission rule will receive any glowing accounts of how the plan worked out. The citizens prefer not to talk about it. After fifteen years of painful experience they buried their commission and, by all accounts, would have cheerfully performed a like service on the commissioners. The story is not without a moral in these days when good government and commission are supposed to go hand in hand.

In the year 1888 the citizens of Sacramento, California, became obsessed with the idea that their form of government was too antiquated. They yearned for "business methods" and some bright minds in the community hit upon the plan of a three-man commission. The scheme was adopted and we cannot do better than allow Hon. Clinton L. White, a resident of Sacramento at the time, to relate in his own words the unhappy details.

"The first commissioner," says Mr. White, "was ex-officio mayor of the city, the second commissioner was ex-officio superintendent of the streets, and the third was ex-officio superintendent of city water works. While any two of them could override the third, even in his own department, in almost every instance the board soon came to an understanding that each man was to be let alone in the management of the department assigned to him. This resulted in there being in fact no tribunal supervisory power over the executive of a particular department."

"The management of the street department, the small amount of work accomplished with funds provided for the purpose, and the number of employees doing only a nominal amount of work, but drawing full pay from the city, were at times something simply scandalous. The management of the water works system was frequently almost as bad, and these things were not checked by a disinterested tribunal."

For fifteen years, until 1903, the people of Sacramento endured the Commission plan, then they rebelled and elected fifteen free-holders to frame a new charter. When the free-holders met," says Mr. White, "they were of the unanimous opinion that we should separate the legislative from the executive department. Accordingly we framed the present charter and under it we certainly have had a municipal government very much superior to our old Commission system."

Mr. White's summary of the reasons why the commission failed to give effective service is worth noting. The point he makes is as applicable to five men as to three. "Many objections," he concludes, "may be urged against the Commission form of city government because of the trades which are made between the members of the commission. 'You support my measure' and 'I will support yours.' 'You scratch my back and I will scratch yours.' 'You appoint my friend as a member of the police force and I will vote for you' as a member of the fire department."

The foregoing is no fairy tale invented by The Standard to "kill the commission." It is the actual experience of a city which tried the system of combining the legislative and executive powers in one set of individuals and discovered to its cost after fifteen years' experience that in practice it was a complete failure. It will of course be urged by the advocates of commission that all the alleged modern improvements such as the initiative, the referendum, and the right of recall were not in operation. Opinions differ widely as to the advantages of these supposed safeguards, the recall has proved so cumbersome as to be practically a dead letter. But, be that as it may, the principle which underlies all commission rule remains the same. The system may work well for a time, new brooms proverbially sweep clean, but the opportunity it affords for deals, combines and private understandings is self-evident.

"We will elect the best men," say the advocates of Commission. Has St. John ever elected her best men? Public spirit will be aroused. Look at what

has happened in commission cities," is the probable answer. Again, we might reply, Look at the conditions in pre-commission cities. It was a matter of self preservation with them in most cases. The present form of government in St. John has not brought the city to the verge of bankruptcy. Boss rule and its attendant evils are non-existent. Reforms in the system we may need, but neither morally nor financially is there cause for complaint.

Ask the man on the street what he thinks of Commission rule, and he will reply, in nine cases out of ten, that he hasn't given it a second thought. The men to whom Commission appeals are members of the Board of Trade and merchants on King street. Perchance their consciences remind them that all these years they have failed in their duty in not giving their brains and their experience in active service for the city, and in remedying the faults which exist. In a commission they see a way of permanent escape. They cannot reasonably afford to give all their time to the city's business, which is demanded of commissioners, so they can continue to give none of their time with an easy conscience. It lets them out. The agitation for a Commission today reminds us of nothing so much as the pictures in the comic supplement "Let George do it!"

TIME TO WAKE UP.

Evidences multiply that the solid business sense of Canada is absolutely opposed to the Taft-Fielding compact. There are no more representative business bodies to be found than the Boards of Trade of Montreal and Toronto. In these cities centre the great banking and financial interests of Canada along the lines of transport, industrial investment, inter-provincial and foreign trade, and all these are represented on the Boards of Trade. Their members feel the pulse of business in Canada and understand its conditions and its needs. They are connected with the great financial and industrial activities abroad, and have accurate knowledge of the effects of such a scheme upon Canada's larger business and financial interests.

The Board of Trade of Montreal passed some days ago a most vigorous protest against the proposed legislation. Next came the Toronto Board with its resolution equally explicit, moved by one of the ablest financiers in Canada and a life-long Liberal, Sir Edmund Walker, and which deprecates in the strongest terms the step now proposed to be taken. The resolution was carried by a vote of 202 to 13. Now we have the strong statement of protest on the part of eighteen of Toronto's most prominent Liberals, all substantial and influential financiers, merchants or manufacturers. After presenting weighty and cogent reasons in opposition to the agreement, they make this notable declaration:—

"Believing, as we do, that Canadian Nationality is now threatened with a more serious blow than any it has hitherto met with and that all Canadians, who place the interests of Canada before those of any party or section or individuals therein, should at this crisis state their views openly and fearlessly, we, who have hitherto supported the Liberal party in Canada, subscribe to this statement."

Not a single Board of Trade in Canada has spoken in favor of the agreement, and hundreds have protested against it. Why does the Government persist in the face of such a strong and unanimous sentiment of the business interests of the country? The Legislature of British Columbia, with one dissenting voice, has just passed a resolution of condemnation which undoubtedly voices the sentiment of that great province. Where from Pacific to Atlantic is there one great business interest which is favorable to the pact?

And yet in face of all this two weak elderly men seem able to bind this country hand and foot and deliver it over to the tender mercy of the United States, first for exploitation, and then for keeps. They arrogate to themselves superior knowledge and clearer judgment in business matters than all the business men whose interests they are playing with. Who pray is Hon. W. S. Fielding and what resources of knowledge or experience has he which would rank him above all these? He ran a party newspaper, he managed a provincial government by methods which are well known in Nova Scotia, he led a campaign for the repeal and dismemberment of Confederation in 1886, he stumped the country over and over again for free trade, he fought in 1891 unrestricted reciprocity with the United States, and for discrimination against Great Britain, he repudiated his free trade principles in 1896, and bartered his life-long convictions for salary and patronage considerations, and he so far forgot what was due to his position and his honor as a minister of the Crown as to take gifts from the beneficiaries of the Government upon which he is at present living. That, in brief, is his record. Neither in point of business ability nor experience, nor in a nice sense of public honor, do his claims for superiority rank high.

And who is Hon. William Patterson? The question answers itself. When everybody has to ask the question, and nobody knows how to answer it, it is fair proof that he is no great authority on wide reaching matters of business and transport. And yet these two men actually shut out all Canada from consultation and counsel, and of themselves ratify a hard and fast compact, and ask all Canada to take it without the altering of a line. Backed by thirteen other ordinary men, they hold the Parliament in their hands, laugh at all protests, and defy the country. They compel their protest followers in the House by the menace of dissolution, the promise of office, and the power of patronage. They close the mouths of corporations by their dispensation or withholding of franchises, subsidies and Government favors, they frighten manufacturers by the fear of possible tariff changes which can make or break their industries, and they are willing to thus arbitrarily carry out their pact with the United States, and trust to generous assistance later to debauch and bedevil the electorate as they have done before.

There are election possibilities hitherto undreamed of in the coffers of the trusts and corporations and the annexationists across the line for such not over scrupulous politicians as Mr. Fielding and Sir Wilfrid Laurier. What the one has done in Nova Scotia and the other in Quebec, can, they think, be duplicated in the notorious Pacaud and Mercier transactions proves that they would not shrink in either their application or appropriation of the resources of civilization. The question is will the public sentiment of Canada permit this outrage upon responsible government, and this betrayal of Canadian interests? It is surely time for thoughtful loyal Canadians to wake up.

Current Comment

(Judge's Library.)
The opera was Trovatore.
"Tho' I no more may hold thee,
Yet is thy name a spell"
sang the basso to the prima donna. And it was.
Her name was Sophronia Czechoslovakies.

(Calgary Herald.)
The Duchess of Connaught is not going to spend all her time in Ottawa. Which will give some of the sports down there more time to leave their dress suits in care of their uncle.

RECIPROCITY SAME
OLD INVITATION
Correspondent Effectively
Answers Argument of
Dredgers Organ on Proposed
Tariff Agreement.

To the Editor of The Standard:
Sir,—Your contemporary The Telegraph, holds that protection is not a sound economic principle. "That the theory of protection to infant industries was the only one advocated by Hamilton and Clay, and later by Sir John A. Macdonald, to wit:—that some one could be hired to undertake the business in question, and his wages would be in the form of a tax, which the state would enable him to collect from the people who used the commodity he produced."

Neither Hamilton, Clay nor Macdonald ever taught such a doctrine as above quoted. The United States have at present a protective duty on hay imported from New Brunswick of \$4 a ton, and on potatoes of 25c. per bushel. Will the Telegraph please explain who has been paying those duties? Is the "Yank" or the "Bluenose"? If the citizens of Massachusetts paid those duties, how comes it those boasts of the Liberal press about what the Fielding and Patterson agreement has done for the New Brunswick farmer?

"Now, when the effort is made to throw down a few sections of a tariff wall, that should never have been built, will the Telegraph please explain how the Dominion Government is going to be continued without a tariff? Where does it expect to get the funds necessary?"

There are two ways for a government to assist infant industries: One is by a duty on imports—this has worked wonders in the United States; the other is to take cash out of the public treasury and pay it out to a steamboat company for carrying the mails, etc., or to an iron or steel manufacturing company by way of bonus. As for instance, the establishment at the Soo, and at Sydney, C. B.

As to which of these is a better way there is a difference of opinion. One thing is certain, the "bonus" paid at Sydney comes entirely out of the people of Canada, whereas the "Protective" bonus comes largely, if not entirely out of the foreigner!

The Telegraph says, "Sir John Macdonald favored reciprocity." What are the facts? In 1870 he inaugurated the National Policy, and in 1891-92 when Sir Wilfrid and Mr. Fielding were going about the country advocating reciprocity, Macdonald spent the closing years of his life in opposing it. The Telegraph should have some little regard for the truth.

The Telegraph resurrects the story of the "four blind men and the elephant," and insinuates that those blind men represent the Conservative party of Canada. But what about the Liberals? Let any disinterested person read the history of the United States since 1775 and note their aims and aspirations regarding Canada, and read carefully the Taft-Knox-Fielding-Patterson agreement and say if it is not a replica of the old invitation:

"Won't you walk into my parlor, says the Spider to the Fly," etc.

Won't you sign this document, says the elephant to those blind Liberals? If you can't sign, please make your X mark.

\$856.78 FOR CAMPBELLTON.

The chairman of the Campbellton relief committee reports the following cash received from Jan. 21st to Feb. 18th inclusive:

Collection per R. H. Anderson, St. John's, Nfld.,	\$702.40
Rev. E. A. McCurdy, per Rev. T. P. Drumm,	15.75
Rev. A. S. Reid, Rockburn, P.Q., per Rev. T. P. Drumm,	10.00
M. P. P. Granville, N. S. per postmaster,	1.00
Miss Blanche Kelly, Hartland, N. B.,	10.00
Readers of the Witness, Montreal, Que.,	117.63
	\$856.78

BELLEISLE CREEK.

Belleisle Creek, Feb. 16.—Snow-shoeing parties are very popular at present.

Mrs. Crealock has been spending a few days with her parents Mr. and Mrs. J. Northrop.

Mrs. Mabel Redstone and her daughter Vera was at Norton on Thursday last.

Mrs. Bradley has returned to St. John.

The weather has been very severe during the past week, but the sleighing has been excellent.

The L.O.G.T. are preparing for a concert.

Rev. H. S. Young and wife spent Thursday at Upper Springfield.

We wish to thank the public heartily for the most prosperous year in our history.

We will begin our 44th year, Tuesday, January 3rd.

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