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ST. JOHN, N. B., TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1911.

UNTIMELY CRITICISM.

An estimate of the Borden Government and a summary of the work of the session, which the Times gleefully reprints from the Toronto Globe, would seem to indicate that the leading Liberal organ, like its venerable chief-tain of the white plume, has not yet recovered from the shock of the general election. Sir Wilfrid in the House was peevish and morose. The sunny smile was hidden by the dark clouds of defeat. The Globe is equally pessimistic. It has failed to discover that the Government has any policy worthy of the name. In fact, if the Globe is to be believed, after the estimates were passed the time of Mr. Borden and his colleagues was entirely taken up in repelling "the attack of a vigorous and well marshalled Opposition," which performed mighty deeds of derring do in exposing "the inherent weakness in the composition of the coalition Cabinet."

It is convenient for the Globe to forget the sad depictions in the ranks of this vigorous and well marshalled Opposition and to overlook the leaders who fell by the wayside. The vacant chair to the left of the Leader of the Opposition bore silent testimony not only to the loss of one but to the absence of many Liberal stalwarts swept away in the avalanche of September 21st. The Liberal party have ceased to be a power in the land. As their attitude in the House clearly showed, they are fractious and in a bad humor. The Globe, struggling with adversity, naturally tries to make the best of it.

We are told that the only real accomplishment was "the putting through in toto of the Liberal estimates of last session for the balance of the fiscal year." It would be hard to imagine even of the Globe to define any other course open to the Government. With five-twelfths of the estimates for the year already voted and the public services held up for want of funds, the needs of the country demanded that the remaining seven-twelfths should be made available as soon as possible. No credit is coming to the late Administration on that score.

The fevered demand of the Opposition for a declaration of policy by the Government at a moment's notice on practically every important question of the day is voiced by the Globe when it complains of "the present inability" to evolve any united or harmonious policy on the vital "issues of the tariff, the navy, the civil service reform," and other matters in which the country is now most interested.

Not only was this demand unreasonable but it is entirely at variance with the practice of the Liberals themselves. A complete answer to the charge was given by Mr. Foster during the debate on the address, when he reminded Sir Wilfrid that for eighteen years he and other gentlemen with him had declared protection was a curse and a bane. They preached that doctrine for eighteen years, they were ready to take office on that issue at any time during that period. They came into office in 1896. They passed one whole session of Parliament, they passed a second session of Parliament, and yet they didn't declare their policy on the tariff until 1907. "And yet, today," continued Mr. Foster, "they want us in a moment of time, after a month or thereabouts, to formulate a policy with reference to the naval defence of the Empire. My right hon. friend knows that will not go down with the country because it is not a just request. Here are sixteen or seventeen men, gathered as indifferently and indiscriminately as my right hon. friend may choose to term it, and yet men who I believe have honest purpose in their hearts and an honest will to work. They come to the responsibilities of departments entirely new to them, to the administration of affairs of great complexity and of great difficulty, and yet they envisage policies which are of the greatest importance and none more so than as to the relations and the manner of defence that shall exist between us and the other parts of the Empire. And yet my right hon. friend requests us after being in office one month, with all the disturbing influences which prevent thought and study almost entirely, to modulate and formulate our policy. We will modulate it and we will formulate it and we will present it to this country, and we will defend it before this country, but we do not intend as my leader said, to hurry ourselves and spoil what otherwise may be a good thing. And that is a position which is perfectly fair and which the country will clearly endorse."

On the tariff question, according to the Globe, the only answer to the demands of the West has been the promise of a tariff commission. It is the same answer which Sir Wilfrid Laurier gave the West last year when he pledged himself to appoint a commission before any change in the tariff took place. That pledge was broken almost as soon as it was made, and the country was invited against its will to accept reciprocity. There will be no repetition of Sir Wilfrid's broken promises. Not only the West but the people of Canada in general are well satisfied that when Mr. Borden makes a solemn pledge he keeps it. "At the same time," adds the Globe, referring to the Government, "its first act has been to play into the hands of the lumber combine of the West at the expense of the farmer and the homesteader." This is rank hypocrisy as the Globe well knows. It is to the credit of the Government that one of its first acts was to stop the smuggling of dutiable lumber from the United States, a process which the late Government winked at. The story of "the Canadian planter" and the successful efforts of the United States manufacturers to pass dutiable lumber in free was fully ventilated in Parliament this session. The fact that the discovery of the fraud has not increased the price of lumber is a complete answer to the Globe's argument.

The people of Canada at this stage are not concerned looking for "a very brilliant record for the party that saved the Empire" on September 21st, a record which the Times fails to see in endorsing the unfair and untimely criticisms of the Globe. The people who gave a verdict in favor of the upbuilding and development of this great country within the Empire on September 21 are content to wait for results, believing that Mr. Borden will fully justify the vote of confidence he then received.

THE GOVERNMENT'S NAVAL POLICY.

An announcement more glaring than accurate appears in the Telegraph to the effect that there will be no plebiscite on the naval question. Mr. Pelletier, according to the Telegraph, stated at the banquet tendered him at Quebec that there is no need of a plebiscite, as the Cabinet is agreed on its policy. The despatch on which these conclusions are based cannot fairly be given any such interpretation. The statement of the Postmaster General as reported by the Canadian Press and printed in the Telegraph is as follows:

"Referring to the naval question, Hon. Mr. Pelletier

said that Mr. Borden's announcement had been made loyally and frankly to the House to the effect that Laurier's naval policy had been abandoned. They would have to keep the Klob and Rainbow, as the former Government had purchased them, but that the ten other vessels would not be constructed. There was no necessity of having a plebiscite to decide the question, as all the Cabinet agreed to abandon the policy of the Laurier Cabinet on that point."

There can be no question as to the meaning of that statement. Mr. Borden announced in Parliament that the Laurier naval policy had been abandoned, that the late Government's proposals involved an expenditure of nearly \$55,000,000 in the next ten years, and that before such a navy could be completed it would be obsolete. "There is only one thing to be done," said the Prime Minister, "and that is to stop such a wasteful expenditure, and we propose to do it." Mr. Pelletier told the people of Quebec no more and no less. "On that point," he said there was no necessity of having a plebiscite, as all the Cabinet agreed to abandon the policy of the Laurier Government. He might have gone even further. The people of Canada by their votes in the general election unreservedly condemned the naval policy of the late Administration as wrong in principle. They realized that a disunited navy as a fighting force would be absolutely useless when completed. They need no opportunity to express their views on that point.

As to the future, concerning which the Opposition profess to feel much anxiety, there is every reason why the people should be consulted and Mr. Borden has clearly enunciated the course he intends to pursue. Replying to Sir Wilfrid Laurier during the debate on the address, he said: "The whole (naval) policy must be reconsidered, and we shall reconsider it, and in so grave and important a departure, affecting for all time to come the relations of this Dominion to the rest of the Empire, it is infinitely better to be right than to be in a hurry. The question of permanent co-operation between this Dominion and the rest of the Empire ought to be threshed out and debated before the people and they should be given an opportunity of pronouncing upon it. I say, further, that we shall take pains to ascertain in the meantime what are the conditions that confront us, and hon. gentlemen on this side of the House, without exception, will be prepared to do their duty as representatives of the people of the Dominion and as citizens of this great Empire."

INDIA'S TEEMING MILLIONS.

While the huge estimates of the population of China, which used to pass current, are no longer accepted as reliable, it is a noteworthy fact, says the Manitoba Free Press, that the revised figures of the census of India exceed those of the provisional estimate, and bring the total, with Burma included, up to the enormous aggregate of 216,915,846. This number, which is nearly forty-five times the population of Canada, and considerably more than three times that of the United States, is impressive in itself, and nothing short of portentous when compared with the 296,166,029 of ten years ago.

The increase of nearly 21,000,000 in the ten years would in itself make a populous nation. It is three times the population of the Netherlands, or of Sweden, and eight times the population of Norway or Denmark. It surpasses the population of Spain by several million. During the same period the United States increased from 75,000,000 to 89,000,000, a gain of but 15,000,000 while the Dominion census of the present showed an increase of 1,711,554 over the census of 1901. Yet this is a new continent, with much land not yet in use, while in India population presses steadily upon the means of subsistence.

This is the most formidable problem of British rule in India, and a problem largely due to the very excellence of British government, which has checked the wars, plagues and famines by which the population was in former times prevented from increasing as it is increasing now.

Current Comment

(Vancouver Sun.)

A government should never be allowed to grow old; it should be chloroformed when it gets to the sinful age, when it can't be good if it tries. Ten years may diminish the party spirit and multiply the independent vote so that if Mr. Borden's Government at the age of ten, is not as good a government as it shows promise of being now, the men without a party may turn it out.

(Literary Digest.)

Once, after exposing the ridiculous blunders of the editor of certain old plays, James Russell Lowell concluded with the remark: "In point of fact, we must apply to this gentleman the name of the first king of Sparta." No one remembered, of course, what this was, but when they looked it up they found it was Eurymachus.

(Montreal Star.)

Public opinion would go very far to justify the new Government in taking a new census, provided they took it in the proper fashion by counting the people all in one day and making sure they missed none of them. It would be worth a considerable expenditure of money to be able to report a million more people in Canada.

(Philadelphia Public Ledger.)

Of course it was all right for the English militant suffragettes to throw stones through the windows of English shopkeepers, but when their leader, Mrs. Pankhurst, was interrupted by outcries in the New York streets, this was in the words of Mrs. Blatch, a "disgraceful demonstration" of "outrageous rowdiness."

(Woodstock Sentinel-Review.)

When the electors are ready to demand that all contributions to campaign funds shall be published they will be published. And when the electors come to realize the importance of such a proposal they will not be slow in making and backing up the demand.

(Simcoe Reformer.)

When you mention the Duke of Connaught please put the accent on the first syllable.—Hamilton Herald. This won't entirely fill the bill. If you want to learn the correct pronunciation of the Duke's title, get some good Connaught man to teach you. It can't be acquired from printed words.

(Chicago Tribune.)

When Mr. Gompers has recovered from his shock of painful surprise and finds himself with a few moments of leisure on his hands, perhaps he will summon his stenographer and dictate a brief, perfunctory letter of apology to Detective Burns.

(Montreal Herald.)

The duke told Hamilton that it was a clean city. We took for some pretty compliments from the duke when he gets to Montreal, but we hardly hope to land that one just yet.

(London Free Press.)

In 1896 hundreds of good citizens who happened to be Conservative civil servants were dismissed from office with almost brutal indifference. Sir Wilfrid was the autocrat then; he is the critic today.

A SPIRITED DISCUSSION ON CHURCH UNION PLAN

Judge Forbes and B. Frank Baird Heard in Eloquent Addresses in St. Shen's School Room, Last Evening—Debate Informal Rather than Controversial.

The question of church union was debated before a goodly audience in the schoolroom of St. Stephen's church, last evening, the principal speakers being Judge Forbes, who supported the proposal and Rev. J. K. Baird, of Woodstock, who upheld the negative.

Rev. Gordon Dickie introducing the speakers, pointed out the discussion did not intend to stir controversy, but merely to throw additional light upon a question which would shortly be placed before the hands and feet of the members of the church.

Judge Forbes dealt with experience of the sentiment also people of the churches on the question of union. He pointed out the ecumenical aspect of the union, Rev. Frank Baird attacked the idea of union, citing cases of other denominations who had done it. At the close of the debate a short discussion on the merits and demerits of the proposal was held.

After a brief opening by Rev. Gordon Dickie, who introduced the speakers, the matter of church union was discussed. Judge Forbes opened with the statement that up to first consideration, the matter of church union seemed to be an impossibility. "On later consideration, however," said he, "and after hearing the views of many eminent theologians have decided that this is an age of union."

Judge Forbes then proceeded to outline the history of the movement. "The union," he said, "is entirely Presbyterian, with the approval that the removal of members from pulpits where their services were not needed would be greatly facilitated. Under the union plan every minister would have a church and every church a minister."

He pointed out that the union plan would preserve the forms and privileges of the church, but would not expect it to be possible, "cries of hear, hear," but we do expect it in such places as Woodstock.

An overwhelming majority of the western churches are in favor of union. On occasions where the idea has been largely due to the mistaken idea that the project would be submitted to the congregation.

In reply to the question that the Bible is not mentioned in the new constitution, Judge Forbes read a statement showing that it was implied.

Continuing the speaker said: "In the Dominion of Canada we have about 600,000 foreigners. If we are going to save these people from sin we must increase the present hopelessly insufficient number of missionaries. In St. John several ministers preach to very small congregations. We spend money of colleges which turn out a comparatively small number of graduates. Are we justified in maintaining these institutions separate when joint ones would be equally efficient? The same applies to the various committees and managing boards of the separate churches."

"My friend will say this is a mercenary question. I can see fifty congregations we can at free and send their ministers to the west. There must be many more such in the Dominion. Now is the day and this is the hour. One hundred and ten languages are spoken in Canada and only thirty are preached to, and yet you raise questions of theology. Theology has sent more men to the stake than any other similar technicality."

"As Jesus prayed for his children might be one, I believe the day will come when they are truly so."

Judge Forbes closed with a brief tribute to Rev. Baird's ability.

Rev. Mr. Baird's Reply. First, he said, he had discussed first the question of the union movement, showing that in 1899, while the Presbyterian Assembly had appointed a commission to study the question, the Methodist Assembly had appointed a commission to study the question.

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