

# The St. John Standard

Published by The Standard, Limited, 82 Prince William street,  
St. John, N. B., Canada.

H. V. MACKINNON,  
Managing Editor.  
ALFRED E. MCGINLEY,  
Editor.

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$5.00  
By Mail ..... \$5.00  
Line Rate, over 5,000 @ ..... .02  
Line Rate, under 5,000 @ ..... .03  
Semi-Weekly by Mail ..... 1.00  
Invariably in advance.  
Classified, One Cent Per Word.

Phone Main 1910—Intercommunicating System.

ST. JOHN, N. B., MONDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1913.

## THE COST OF LIVING.

That the defeat of the Laurier government was, to a great extent, responsible for the increasing cost of living and the "period of hard times" which Canada has had to face, is the impression obscurely conveyed in an editorial in the Times of Saturday evening. The Times is inclined to oppose the Government's appointment of a departmental commission to enquire into the cost of living on the ground that the board of enquiry will make "such an investigation into the high cost of living as it may be directed to do."

Before dealing with this insinuation a little consideration must be given to the record of both political parties on this matter of the cost of living; what action they have taken to give relief to the people, and what their present attitude is in regard to it. It is easy enough to say, as the Times doubtless will say, that Sir Wilfrid Laurier is not on trial and consequently his past attitude toward questions of this sort will bear no relation to his present advocacy of improving conditions by reducing the tariff on food stuffs. In considering Sir Wilfrid's free food policy, however, one is first inclined to wonder if he is sincere, and secondly, if he is justified in the course he has taken.

For fifteen years Sir Wilfrid Laurier headed the Government of Canada, assuming office in 1896 and vacating it in 1911. Reference to statistics will show that the cost of living during Conservative rule reached its lowest point shortly before 1895 and the first notable increase came in 1897, one year after the Liberal Government assumed power. From 1897 to 1911, with the single exception of the year 1908, the cost of living increased more than forty per cent, a far larger proportion than it has increased since, and yet we do not find that Sir Wilfrid Laurier, or the Government of which he was the leader, was at all concerned about it. It was not until he was hurried from power that the country glimpsed one symptom of his great interest in the cause of the working man and the problems all working men must meet. If Sir Wilfrid remained untroubled in his position as head of the Government of Canada from 1897 to 1911 during which time he saw the cost of living increase forty-two per cent, why now should he be so greatly concerned regarding the proportion of increase which has come upon us in two years?

Mr. R. H. Coats, B. A., F. S. S., editor of the Labor Gazette, and one of the members of the commission which will investigate the cost of living, has just published a report on wholesale prices in Canada for the year 1912 in which statistics appear which throw light on some of the remarkable statements made by the Liberal leader. Official statisticians have traced the course of prices in 272 articles of daily consumption in Canada from 1890 to 1912. Taking the average price as 100, we find that in 1890 the price was 110, and had fallen almost to 92 in 1896, the year Sir Wilfrid came into power. From 1897 until 1911 it rose as follows: 1897, 92; 1898, 96; 1899, 99; 1900, 108; 1901, 107; 1902, 109; 1903, 111; 1904, 112; 1905, 114; 1906, 121; 1907, 126; 1908, 121; 1909, 122; 1910, 125; 1911, 134.

It is thus seen that from 92, when the Liberal Government came into power in 1896, the wholesale price in Canada had risen to 134 in the year Sir Wilfrid was defeated, or forty-two per cent. Did Sir Wilfrid at any time previous to his advocacy of the reciprocity pact take steps to give the people a remedy for what, even then, was becoming a burden? The Times, as well as anyone, knows that he did not. During his whole term of office no proposition of the sort was ever voiced by him.

Now we come to the reciprocity question and in this connection it might be more convincing for the papers which now point to Sir Wilfrid's policy as the panacea for the high cost of living and intimate that we might have secured lower foodstuffs if we had adopted the reciprocity agreement, to read the speeches of Liberal speakers delivered in that campaign. It will be seen, that in addressing audiences of farmers and producers the orators were careful to point out that reciprocity would give them higher prices for their produce, while the tune was changed for urban audiences who were told that the pact would give them cheaper foodstuffs. If the Times can explain how Sir Wilfrid would get better prices for the seller and lower prices for the consumer out of one and the same measure it will indeed confer a service.

If Sir Wilfrid is correct in his statements that the cost of living can be lessened by tariff reduction, then the United States should now be reaping the benefit from the Underwood tariff changes. This is not the case but instead, what do we find? The New York Sun, a paper which approved Sir Wilfrid's reciprocity campaign, is not inclined to believe he has struck the right note in his present effort. The Sun says:

"In the untoward conditions in Canada, despite the propitious tariff law in the United States, Laurier sees the opportunity of his party, and mightily sounds the slogan of revision downward. But it so happens that the States are also depressed, that production is restricted, and there are more idle men in the big cities than it is pleasant to think of, while the cost of living goes up instead of down. Conservatives in Canada have only to point to prices in the United States under the low or tariff to refute Sir Wilfrid Laurier."

The New York Evening Post just as clearly sees the fallacy of the Laurier argument. After showing how ridiculous it is for the leader of the Canadian opposition to connect the price of food in Canada with either the American or the Canadian tariff, it says:

"Now he has added to his category of reasons the existence of combines. His revised charge is that the tariff fosters such combines, which have presumably sprung into existence since August. The truth of the matter is signified by the Liberals' prompt dropping, as a campaign document, of the British commission's report on the cost of living throughout the world—a petard with which they may themselves be hoist. A phenomenon so widespread is not explained by the simple formula of a local tariff."

In consideration of the facts it can be clearly seen, first, that Sir Wilfrid showed no disposition to move to reduce the cost of living when he was in power, and secondly, that even if sincere now he has not hit upon the solution of the problem. His whole attitude is nothing more than that of the opportunist who hopes to turn to the benefit of his political party, the condition which, history teaches, has come to all new countries at some time or other in their development and that will not be remedied until something is done to populate the farms of the country. So long as the young men leave the farms, where they are producers of food, and flock to the cities where they become consumers of food, thus increasing the demand at the expense of the supply, just so long will Canada have to face the problem of the high cost of living.

As far as the Government can do anything, it has shown its willingness to act. It has appointed a board of experts who will collect evidence as to causes, and from this evidence suggest a remedy. In case of sickness a physician first must study the symptoms and pronounce on the nature of the disease before he can prescribe the curative. That is exactly the case with the condition in Canada. Before a remedy can be prescribed there must be knowledge as to the complaint, and it is to secure this knowledge that the Government has decided to hold a departmental enquiry. Despite the ravings of the Liberal press, it is just such an idea as will commend itself to all men of common sense whose minds are broad enough to regard the Government's action without party bias. Its reasonableness is what makes it so objectionable to machine papers of the Times' class.

## LORDS AND COMMONS.

If the contention of William Joynton Hicks, a Unionist member of the Parliament of Great Britain, that there is a flaw in the Parliament Act, should prove to be correct, it looks as if there will result a tangle in the Mother of Parliaments. Mr. Hicks claims that if the House of Lords do not desire to pass the Home Rule bill, or any other measure of which they do not approve, all they have to do is adjourn consideration of that bill from month to month. By this expedient they could never reach the obnoxious legislation. Should the Peers of Great Britain adopt trade union tactics and by the process of adjournment bring into operation what practically would be a legislative strike, the resulting spectacle would be strange indeed.

It is hardly comprehensible that, with the careful scrutiny to which the Parliament Bill was subjected before its passage, such an obvious loophole, by which the House of Lords could escape the limitation of power the act intended, could get through. Mr. Hicks is an eminent authority on the Parliamentary acts of Britain and is quite outspoken in his contention that for all practical purposes the Parliament Act does not limit the power of the House of Lords any more than it had never been passed.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier had half a dozen conflicting policies on the naval question and it will be most surprising if he does not show the same bold and consistent front on the question of "free food."

## Diary of Events

### THE PASSING DAY

#### WINTER BEGINS TODAY.

Hail, King Winter, hail!  
Also snow, sleet, rain, blizzards, storms, gales, tempests, bitter cold, and other assorted varieties of weather. In addition to hail, may be expected during the Winter which officially begins today. It is true that many sections of the North American continent have already been given some excellent imitations of Winter, but those were but samples, and nothing compared to what may be expected during the next few months.

This is the shortest day of the year, in the matter of time, and also the "shortest" financially for those who have followed the advice frequently set forth in these columns to do their Christmas shopping early. Today will be one minute shorter than yesterday, and the minutes that for us in the north are south of the equator, and Rio and Buenos Ayres and Cape Town are now basking in sunshine or hoisting umbrellas as protection against the sun. The winter solstice, which marks the beginning of Winter in the northern hemisphere, is the Summer solstice in the southern hemisphere. The sun is now at its lowest point in the sky, and the days are the shortest. The winter solstice, which marks the beginning of Winter in the northern hemisphere, is the Summer solstice in the southern hemisphere. The sun is now at its lowest point in the sky, and the days are the shortest.

Walter H. Sampson, a New York astrologer, points out that "at the Vernal equinox, 1913, the planet Saturn, always held to be a malefic influence, was exactly settling at Dayton, Ohio, and that his position in the sky for this ingress at Omaha was Winter solstice, this planet will set at the East, and that when interpreted according to the rules laid down by the ancients the figure is somewhat threatening in regard to its promise for the Winter season in the eastern part of the continent. He continues that it "portends a severe and stormy Winter, much more so than for many years, with considerable attendant ill-health and suffering, since the general aspect of the heavens at this time is disorderly and afflicted." This prophet of evil concludes: "We should, according to the warnings of the old astrologers, look out for an exceptionally severe weather during the months to come."

Scores of other prophets have indulged in predictions that the Winter of 1913-1914 will be exceptionally long and severe. Those who base their theories on the actions of wild beasts and birds are especially firm in the conviction that the Winter will be a "rather old sock-dogger." Many who have studied the ways of the furred and feathered creatures of the wild declare that the animals and birds have an instinctive foreknowledge of the coming of a severe Winter, and that the "signs" afforded by those four-footed and winged creatures point conclusively to an exceptionally severe weather during the months to come.

## THE HUMAN PROCESSION

### LORD ALVERSTONE SEVENTY-ONE TODAY

Sir Richard Everard Webster, first Baron Alverstone, who retired from office as Lord Chief Justice of England, will today celebrate his seventy-first birthday. The venerable jurist has been granted an annuity of \$20,000 for life. In relinquishing the ermine to Sir Rufus Isaacs, Lord Alverstone established a precedent as being the first Lord Chief Justice in England's history to resign the office.

Richard Everard Webster was born on Dec. 22, 1842. At Cambridge he won high honors in law, and as an athlete, and he could cover a mile in very near to record time. His rise in the profession of law was not rapid, but it was thorough. He achieved prominence in one year, entering parliament in 1885, and within the twelve months becoming Attorney-General of England, and a Knight Bachelor. He was a thinker rather than an orator, and his lack of eloquence, all the more pronounced because an Attorney-General, was frequently pitted against men who had kissed the Blarney Stone, led to the application by his political enemies of the title "Sir Wretched" Webster. He was Attorney-General from 1885 until 1900, except for a period of three years, and in 1900 good fortune again visited upon him a triple honor. Early in that year he was given the lucrative position of Master of the Rolls, and before the year was out he was made Chief Justice, at a salary of \$40,000 a year, and was created a lord.

Lord Alverstone's ability as a jurist has been criticized by political opponents, and as zealously defended by his friends, but his honesty, his sincerity and his adherence to his high conception of justice have never been questioned.

## FIRST THINGS

### PHILADELPHIA JOURNALISM

The first newspaper published in Philadelphia was the American Weekly Mercury, which issued its first number 134 years ago today, Dec. 22, 1719. It was the third newspaper in the American colonies, its two predecessors having been published in Boston. The publication was "printed and sold by Andrew Bradford, at the Bible, in the Second street, and John Copson, in the High street." Bradford, like the founder of the Boston News-Letter and the Boston Gazette, was a postmaster. His father, William Bradford, had established the first printing office in America outside of New England. The postmaster-editor had his troubles with the authorities, and was warned, on pain of imprisonment and the confiscation of his printing plant, never to publish anything about the political affairs of the colonies. The reprinting and warning followed the publication of an article which had been explained by a journeyman printer without his knowledge. Bradford had other disputes with the powers that ruled Philadelphia, and on one occasion was committed to prison, but was released. He continued the publication of the Mercury until his death in 1745, when the paper was continued by his widow, the first woman editor in America. The second Philadelphia paper, the Universal Instructor in all the Arts and Sciences and Pennsylvania Gazette, was founded in 1738, and taken over by Benjamin Franklin the following year.

## IN LIGHTER VEIN

### Apprehension.

The housewife, smit with sudden fear,  
Stops mixing mince-pie stuff  
And murmurs in excited tone,  
"What if the Turkey's tough?"

Mystery of Mysteries.  
She pounds a Ramingwood all day,  
And Tangeos half the night,  
And still her little cheeks are red,  
Her pretty eyes are bright.

Athletic.  
Mr. Newrich (reading a newspaper headline)—"Japanese Turn Agnostics."  
Mrs. Newrich—"Isn't it wonderful what those Japanese acrobats can do!"—Buffalo Express.

Excellent Reason.  
(Sydney Bulletin.)  
Small Girl—"Mum says you will call for the rent Friday instead of Thursday!"  
Rent Collector—"Why Friday?"  
Girl—"Cause we're leaving Thursday."

The Retort Courteous.  
Candid Hostess (on seeing her nephew's fiancée for the first time)—  
"I never should have known you from your photograph. Reggie told me you were so pretty."  
Reggie's fiancée—"No, I'm not pretty, so I have to try and be nice, and it's such a bore. Have you ever tried?"—Punch.

It Was Well Named.  
A rather illiterate man had to perform a certain part in the initiation of a candidate for admission to the lodge. He read the lines very laboriously, as well as incorrectly.  
"What do you call that?" asked a member of another.  
"I call it ritual murder," was the reply.

### The Famous Name of Ingersoll.

(M. A. P.)  
A book story with an American smack about it comes from New York. "Perhaps you are familiar with the works of Ingersoll," says a book salesman to a caller.  
"Sure I am," replies the caller. Mr. Goldberg, the Jeweller; "and it's a very good vatch for der money."

Correct.  
Teacher—"Now children, can you tell me what are the national flowers of England?"  
Class—"Roses."  
Teacher—"And France?"  
Class—"Lilies."  
Teacher—"And Spain?"  
(Silence for a minute—then small voice at back of the schoolroom)—  
"Bullrushes, m'am."—Life.

Men's Troubles.  
(New York Tribune.)  
A crabbed old misogynist said to Ethel Barrymore at a dinner in Bar Harbor:  
"Woman! Feminism! Suffrage! Bah! Why, there isn't a woman alive who wouldn't rather be beautiful than intelligent."

"That's because," said Miss Barrymore, calmly, "so many mean men are stupid while so few are blind."

Evidence.  
"Where have you been, my dear?"  
"Walking in the park, mother."  
"And with whom?"  
"No one."  
"No one?"  
"No one," continued the mother relentlessly, "you will please be so kind as to explain why you have returned with a walking-stick instead of an umbrella."

## Useful Gifts in Footwear

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Boys' Skating Boots,	1.75 to 3.25
Ladies' Patent, Cloth Top, Button Boots,	3.00 to 5.00
Ladies' Fine Calf, Button Laced, Double Soled Boots,	3.99 to 6.00
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Ladies' Boudoir or Felt Slippers,	50c to 2.00
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Girls' Skating Boots,	2.00 to 3.00

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