

Monuments Halifax Herald Sept. 17/24

MONSTROSITIES TO "MARK" OUR HISTORIC SITES

FISH OF ONE AND
FLESH OF ANOTHER.

Work of Historic Sites and
Monuments Board is
Given Some
Scrutiny.

The Editor, The Herald.

SIR:—The Halifax Herald on the 30th ult., contained an extended notice of the activities of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board, which being official deserves a word of comment.

To prevent further decay of the old forts and to mark by appropriate monuments the sites of memorable deeds in Colonial history were no doubt the very commendable purposes of the board, purposes which if properly carried out, would be of immense educative value to the rising generation and greatly stimulate that patriotic sentiment that holds together a country, thousands of miles in extent from ocean to ocean, embracing many nationalities, speaking different tongues, with widely separated occupations, interests and aspirations.

The government in 1919 had before them the experiment of constituting an historic board at Quebec, for the purpose of erecting national monuments there. They appointed a committee of gentlemen of social position and education connected with Quebec to whom was entrusted the work of expending (to date) nearly a million of dollars. These gentlemen have transformed the ancient city and made it historically the great show place of the continent. To have avoided unjust discrimination against the Maritime Provinces—making flesh of one and fish of another—the government could have followed the precedent they established for Quebec, in which they recognized that local knowledge and skill were necessary in designing monuments to meet local conditions and aspirations. Utilizing local interest naturally stimulates local pride and emulation.

A STRONG ARRAY

THERE are twenty or more Maritime authors of county or other histories; there are also many historic writers contributing to the periodical press. Their work is not done on a commercial basis. In gathering and presenting to the public historic material, all of them make personal sacrifices, both of time and money. It would only have been just if the government had shown some appreciation of the public service they have rendered, by at least consulting them or a committee of them as to the character of monuments to be erected in their several localities. They are designed on one plan: two or three cart-loads of field stones piled up roughly into a pillar and cemented by mortar. None of the many memorials to the dead in the battle-fields of Europe; none of the graveyards of the country, contain anything so mean and so unworthy of the great Loyalist patriotism.

The report states that out of 800 sites considered, 126 have been considered of "national" importance, leading to the inevitable conclusion that this historic judiciary has passed judgment that provincial tax-payers are condemned to pay for 674 monuments or go without them. Before this decree becomes final, the competency of the tribunal might be investigated. Who of the board confesses to the historic training and erudition to separate national from provincial issues? Were they the same members who in their report have created a brand new fortress in the province of New Brunswick, namely "Fort St. Lawrence," and have attributed to it "fierce struggles" between the English and French? Such information (?) would be laughable, if not stamped with official authority from the department presided over by Hon. Charles Stewart.

Of the board originally constituted in 1919, one member was from St. Thomas, near Toronto, three from Ottawa and three from the Maritime Provinces. None of the first four had any more than a school boy's acquaintance with Maritime Province history and except in one case had never even visited them.

THE "QUALIFICATIONS"

SUCH were the qualifications of men who controlled the board to carry on work that required an

intimate and sympathetic knowledge of the subject. To make a grant—~~itself~~ a bagatelle—and to expend much of that amongst the hungry at Ottawa, left but a thin coating to be spread over this wide Dominion. If the government's aim was cheapness and therefore uncouthness, a burlesque on art or good taste, it has been admirably served.

The three from the Maritime Provinces were the Venerable Archdeacon Raymond, L. L. D., since dead, Sir Frederick Williams-Taylor, L. L. D., and W. C. Milner, L. L. D. These three resigned immediately on being appointed. The last tendered his resignation to the Premier, but it was not accepted. Whatever the motive of the Maritime section in resigning, they freed themselves from responsibility for the attempt to starve and belittle a most patriotic service. For instance, it was cheaper for the board to let the ancient barracks at Fort Edward, Windsor, go to decay, to give the winds and storms access to it, finally to be destroyed by fire, than to spend five hundred dollars to put it in thorough repair. A "mud" monument, such as is served out in the Maritime Provinces, in place of the Barracks, would cost perhaps twenty dollars. Behold the saving!

If literature was needed, supplementary to what had been published by Maritime Province authors, it would have been a grievous mistake to employ the latter to furnish it, because that much of the grant would have been diverted from the Ottawa hangers-on of the board. They had to be fed. While some thousands of their pamphlets, expensively printed, were sent to Fort Anne, Annapolis Royal, for distribution by the superintendent, Mr. Fortier, not one was sent out owing to its errors. Their ultimate destination is the furnace. The more of the grant expended in the Maritime Provinces, the less there is for distribution amongst the needful at Ottawa.

"A MONSTROSITY"

A BOULDER has been placed on the Market Square, St. John, N. B., to record the hardships and sufferings of the Loyalists. Their sufferings would be more poignant if they could in spirit see a work that the St. John Globe has called upon the city government to remove, and the president of the Natural History Society has publicly placarded it as a "monstrosity."

Fort Howe is on a high eminence overlooking the city. Ten years ago elaborate plans and estimates were made under federal supervision for changes and improvements that would make the spot worthy of its history and of the city below it. The war supervened and delayed it. Some months ago Messrs J. B. Harkins and C. J. Webster made proposals to the City Council to accept ownership of the fort lands, evidently for the purpose of saddling the city taxpayers with the cost of such improvements, while these people had already been taxed about \$10,000, their share of the Quebec historic monuments. Such a proposition could only be treated with contempt and the council decisively rejected it.

Subordinate employees have such a reputation, just or unjust, for successfully keeping under cover in their assaults on the Treasury, it is altogether unlikely that the Right Hon. Mackenzie King, has any knowledge as to the means adopted in this instance of prostituting public service to private and servile ends.

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