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JOHN RUSSELL, JR., Mgr.  
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**Semi-Weekly Telegraph**  
ST. JOHN, N. B., MARCH 21, 1908.

**THE DAILY TELEGRAPH**  
**THE SEMI-WEEKLY TELEGRAPH**  
**THE EVENING TIMES**  
New Brunswick's Independent  
newspapers.  
These newspapers advocate:  
British connection  
Honesty in public life  
Measures for the material  
progress and moral advance-  
ment of our great Dominion  
No graft!  
No deals!  
"The Thistle, Shamrock, Rose entwined,  
The Maple Leaf forever."

**EXPENSIVE**

The people of this country learn in 1908  
that in 1906 they paid \$343,000 to reor-  
ganize the bookkeeping system on the In-  
tercolonial, and some \$78,000 for similar  
improvement in the accounting of the De-  
partment of Marine and Fisheries. They  
know now what they paid, but not what  
they got for the money. There are  
several moving reasons why the people  
of this country did not know until 1908  
what great sums they were spending so  
quickly in 1906. We may suppose one of  
these reasons to be the fact that if the  
government had taken the people into its  
confidence and had said bluntly that it  
was proposed to spend half-a-million in  
search of bookkeeping betterment, the  
public would have made angry and excited  
objection.

Improvement in government department  
bookkeeping, the Ottawa debates  
this year have proved abundantly, is very  
necessary. But it comes exceedingly high.  
And, while Hon. Meers, Graham and  
Brodeur give assurance that in their op-  
inion the money was well spent it is all too  
probable that, when the mass of Canadians  
balance the words of the ministers  
against the now revealed cost of the ex-  
periment, the exercise will leave them un-  
convinced if not somewhat shocked and  
resentful.

Canadians, in this decade at least, are  
not over-forgive in the matter of expendi-  
ture which promises proportionate return.  
They hear without blinking of vast ap-  
propriations for making Canada grow rap-  
idly, for opening up the country, for  
driving roads into the depths of our nat-  
ural resources. But this improvement in  
bookkeeping evades definite measurement.  
The old systems may have been—were,  
doubtless—exceedingly bad, albeit the  
government thought them good enough  
for ten years, but when the people are  
told that half a million of their money has been  
lavished in improvement they will be dis-  
posed to ask for convincing evidence that  
the goods were delivered. In place of this  
convincing evidence they will receive as-  
sertion merely.

If the bookkeeping improvement in Mr.  
Emmerson's department cost \$343,000 and  
in Mr. Brodeur's \$78,000, what has it, or  
will it, or might it not cost in Dr. Puge-  
ley's department? Or, suppose the Federal  
elections come along next November, what  
might be the proportions of the sum  
spent in 1908 in "bookkeeping improve-  
ment" and conceded from the people until  
the votes were counted?

So far as our Ottawa despatches indi-  
cate, or as public observation goes, the  
\$343,000 spent to improve the I. C. R.  
bookkeeping has not yet produced even a  
promise that the deficit shall not reap-  
pear every time the general elections come  
along. Neither does it appear that the  
improvement has been drastic enough to  
interfere with the manufacture of a sur-  
plus by the old expedient of charging  
everything in sight to capital account.

Clearly, the people who pay the bills,  
and who are just discovering with what  
costly and feverish haste they have been  
spending money for improvements of the  
sort here under discussion, will now in-  
sist upon having a whole lot of informa-  
tion. The enlightenment will be whole-  
some if it does no more than prepare the  
public for the other shocks which the  
government has in store.

**THE PUBLIC AND THE COUNCIL**

A leading business man suggests to The  
Telegraph that a meeting of citizens  
should be called as soon as possible for  
the purpose of discussing civic affairs, and  
at this meeting, or a representative com-  
mittee of its selection, should nominate  
candidates for the Council.  
The suggestion is a good one, always  
provided there are enough men of weight  
and influence in the community ready to

assist in giving popular opinion a working  
lead. Such a meeting would concentrate  
public attention upon civic issues and  
would help to make more general the re-  
alization that the civic outlook is pre-  
sented in anything but encouraging  
As the case stands nearly all of the  
present aldermen will seek re-election,  
whereas a large proportion of them can-  
not fairly be regarded as worthy of an-  
other term. Thus far the new men who  
are spoken of as likely to become candi-  
dates, with a few exceptions, do not  
constitute a promising array from  
which to select men to give the  
city progressive and sharply business-  
like government. In some cases they have  
had experience which has not been of an  
impressive quality. In other cases the  
public is at a loss to know why they are  
even mentioned in connection with City  
Hall.

The cure for this situation is to be  
found in aroused public interest, and in  
nothing else. If public interest be aroused,  
if Federal politics be forgotten for the  
moment for the good of the city, and if  
solid and able men can be induced to  
offer for the Council, a great work can  
be done for St. John at the polls. If pub-  
lic interest cannot be aroused we are going  
to have a Council no better, if not worse  
than, the present one—a Council in which  
even the few men of ability it contains  
will not unite and work courageously and  
unselfishly for the taxpayers. A few of the  
present aldermen might with reason ask  
for another term. Some of the remainder  
apparently have personal aims to serve in  
civil life, and some have not even that  
excuse for their existence as public repre-  
sentatives.

Failing concerted public action the new  
aldermen will not present a higher average  
than now exists. But, if the taxpayers  
should really become interested, as for  
example the taxpayers of the province be-  
came interested a few weeks ago, a strong  
Council would be elected. If a meeting is  
to be held some care should be exercised  
to secure the presence of a large number  
of taxpayers, not necessarily heavy tax-  
payers alone but men representative of all  
classes who have given attention enough  
to civic matters to realize fully the neces-  
sity existing today for a competent  
demanding civic reform and prepared  
to work for it.

**LIBERALS AND SOCIALISTS**

The New York Post believes the British  
government, while losing Socialist sup-  
porters, has really gained in effective  
fighting strength by its stand against the  
unemployed bill. Its analysis of the situa-  
tion is interesting, but it is necessary to  
remember that the Post, as an avowed  
enemy of British tariff reform, is perhaps  
disposed to take a more sanguine view of  
the "Bannerman-Aquith outlook than the  
fact warrant.

"The rejection of the Unemployed  
Workmen's bill by the British House of  
Commons will bring to the Liberal party  
mingle advantage and disadvantage,"  
says the Post. "The firm stand taken by  
Mr. Aquith and Mr. John Burns against a  
measure of avowedly socialist character  
is generally characterized as the first  
important step towards a rupture be-  
tween the Liberals and the Laborites.  
Naturally, the defection of so large an  
element in the House of Commons is a  
disadvantage to any government that  
wishes to remain in power; and the Lib-  
eral government is only human. On the  
other hand, by coming out definitely  
against hot-haste progress toward So-  
cialism, the cabinet has succeeded in  
freeing itself from a good deal of the am-  
biguity that has surrounded its intentions  
ever since it came into power with a top-  
heavy majority that has kept the govern-  
ment hesitating between policy and policy.  
By so much as definiteness of aim is a  
gain, the Liberal party has gained by yes-  
terday's vote. The majority may not be  
so fleshy now, but is more athletic; and  
a fighting government with a slim ma-  
jority may, on the whole, live as long as  
a government blundering along under the  
staggering weight of its votes. That a  
crisis is imminent, we do not believe. The  
vote yesterday showed that on all sides  
except the Labor side there was recogni-  
tion that the introduction of so radical  
a bill was premature. Only 116 members  
voted for it. They comprised the fifty-  
odd Laborites, twenty or so Irish Nation-  
alists, and over thirty Liberals who were  
actuated by electoral motives. The Con-  
servatives declared against the bill, and  
most of the Nationalists abstained. Hence  
we cannot conceive a combination of Con-  
servatives, Laborites, and Irish Nation-  
alists for the overthrow of the present  
government on the issue that was pre-  
sented yesterday."

**MAKE A THOROUGH JOB OF IT**

St. John would not now be examining  
its schools and other public buildings if  
the Common Council had done its duty.  
A few years ago—immediately after the  
great theatre horror in Chicago—a com-  
mittee composed of Chief Clark and Kerr  
and Director Wisely made a careful in-  
spection of a great many buildings. They  
found many to be highly dangerous. Of  
these they gave a list, together with such  
alterations and improvements as they  
deemed essential to ensure a reasonable de-  
gree of public safety. In a few instances  
the owners of the unsafe buildings com-  
plied with some or all of the recommenda-  
tions made, though in some cases the cost  
was considerable.

But the fear which led to the investiga-  
tion subsided, and the aldermen, who had  
been surprised by the length of the list of  
dangerous buildings and influenced by  
some of the owners, lacked courage enough  
to enforce even the existing laws relative  
to public safety. The inspector of build-  
ings was instructed to carry out the work  
outlined by the inspectors, but he prompt-  
ly reported that in many cases there was  
no legal authority to back him up. The  
aldermen talked about securing additional  
legislation—such legislation as would en-  
able them to make all the buildings safe  
even if the process involved prosecuting

recalcitrant owners. The matter ended in  
talk. The aldermen had no zeal in a mat-  
ter which promised to arouse the hostility  
of a few individuals but which clearly re-  
quired definite and sustained action in the  
public interest. They did not apply for  
the requisite legislation.  
The schools, of course, should have been  
there-thoroughly safe at that time. Now  
there have been catastrophes in other  
cities, and the renewed activity here, due  
to re-awakened fear, reminds us of the  
work which was begun but left unfinished  
after "the Chicago horror. In Montreal,  
where an agitation similar to that in St.  
John is in progress, a prominent citizen  
has made strenuous objection to half-way  
measures. In the course of an interview he  
said:

"This fire drill that the commissioners  
are so fond of relying on—what good is it  
going to be when the halls are full of  
smoke? It is simply marching the child-  
ren out of the school rooms in regular for-  
mation. It is done in large schools all  
England as part of the regular day's work,  
and nobody dreams of calling it a 'fire  
drill' there, or relying on it to take the  
place of fire-exits when there is a fire.  
"So long as the law leaves the inspector  
a wide discretion in this matter it is not  
to be expected that he will enforce a strict  
policy of fire-exits when there is a fire.  
The law we need is one that will de-  
clare it absolutely illegal to keep a school  
open unless it has a balcony running round  
every floor wherever there is an outside  
wall, with a door-level door leading to it  
from every class room, and with a certain  
number of stairways from one floor to an-  
other of a certain width and height of  
step. Then we shall be safe."

So far at least as the schools are con-  
cerned we must suppose that the alder-  
men and the school trustees will now  
abandon half-way plans and make a thor-  
ough job. The aldermen should no longer  
delay in reference to the legislation needed  
to give the building inspector power to en-  
force necessary alterations and precautions  
in connection with all other buildings  
which are used by the public, particularly  
hotels, churches, and places of amusement.  
Thus far the city has been satisfied with  
the fact that St. John would continue to  
be lucky in these matters. It is about  
time to proceed to business, even if the  
aldermen have to lose a few votes here and  
there because a few of their fellow citizens  
are more anxious to avoid expense than to  
take responsible precautions against dis-  
aster. The public safety is somewhat more  
important than the pockets of the owners  
or the comfort of the aldermen.

**THE FEDERAL ELECTIONS**

Speculation as to the date at which Sir  
Wilfrid Laurier will appeal to the country  
continues to occupy much space in the  
newspapers of several provinces. The  
opinion most frequently expressed, per-  
haps, is that the elections will be brought  
on several or eight months hence if Sir  
West has a good crop and has resumed its  
pace of expansion. The Victoria Colonist,  
however, argues that Sir Wilfrid Laurier  
will not go to the people until he can offer  
them a large constructive programme to  
divert attention from the revelations of  
the present session. This theory appears  
to find some confirmation in Hon. Mr.  
Fielding's budget speech. He fore-  
promised a more cautious scale of expendi-  
ture. With the Colonist's suggestion in  
mind we might infer from the budget that  
there will be another session at the close  
of which the government would go in for  
expansion and ask the country to endorse  
its proposals. The Colonist says in part:

"Another report, which is of greater in-  
terest generally, is that the government  
will face the electorate with an extensive  
railway policy. It is to embrace the ac-  
quisition of lines in the Maritime Provinces  
as feeders of the Intercolonial, and a  
great addition to the railway mileage of  
the West. There have been some very  
prominent declarations in favor of the  
Georgian Bay Canal recently, which seem  
to make it possible that this project may  
be included in any transportation pro-  
gramme upon which the government may  
decide. If the All-Red scheme can be  
made to materialize so as to synchronize  
with the adoption of a policy as above  
outlined, the government would undoubt-  
edly have a very attractive case to lay  
before the electorate, and one that would  
obscure the issues arising out of mal-  
administration of public affairs. Experience  
justifies the opinion that Sir Wilfrid  
Laurier will not bring on the issue that  
until he is prepared to face the issue that  
the building of the railway is the great  
of the people, and as the greatest of  
all Canadian problems at the present time  
is that of transportation, there will be no  
occasion for surprise if he asks parliament-  
ary sanction, or popular endorsement, for  
such policy as above suggested. Whether  
he will bring down measures and obtain  
their passage before appealing to the  
people, or will declare his policy and ask  
the people to return him to power in  
order that he may carry it out, the people  
responsible for the rumors referred to do  
not profess to say. We think it may be  
safely assumed that transportation will  
play a large part in the Dominion elections,  
whenever they are brought on."

Mr. Fielding's speech, reviewed in the  
light of these suggestions, could scarcely be  
regarded as making an election probable  
before another session. The Colonist says  
further:

"It is said that the government is exhibit-  
ing no desire to dispose of the business  
before Parliament and is quite content to  
afford the opposition every facility for  
ventilating its views on all questions con-  
nected with the administration without  
giving them many facilities for acquiring  
information. If the House is kept occu-  
pied all summer long with the discussion  
of administrative scandals, and then after  
a short session, in which an aggressive  
transportation policy is brought down, the  
elections are held, the public will be in no  
mood to listen to a rehash of what is be-  
lieved served up this year. \* \* \* The term  
of the present government does not ex-  
pire until April, 1910. So that there is  
plenty of time for two sessions after this  
one, provided the season is very short, but  
under no circumstances is it likely that  
there will be more than one. Such are

some of the rumors in circulation, and  
what foundation in fact there may be for  
them we do not profess to know. We do  
feel pretty sure, however, that Sir Wilfrid  
Laurier is too astute a politician to go to  
the people with no other issues than those  
which have arisen out of the last and  
present sessions of Parliament. Conserva-  
tives, in making their plans for the future,  
must remember that it is in the deal, and he  
is no novice in the art of stacking the  
cards."

Observant politicians probably will de-  
cline to draw any very definite conclusions  
as to the date of the elections either from  
the Colonist's speculation or Mr. Field-  
ing's speech of yesterday. Nor will the  
estimates convince them. They will wait  
to see what the remaining weeks of the  
session develop, how the administration  
fairs at the hands of its active and re-  
sourceful critics, what, if anything, the  
government has to propose about the fast  
steamers, the Georgian Bay canal and  
other projects bearing upon transporta-  
tion. Beyond these questions the crops  
are of great importance as a factor influ-  
encing election dates. Governments usually  
believe general prosperity to be a most  
powerful ally, little as they usually have  
to do with bringing it about.

**THE WATER SUPPLY AND INSURANCE**

Chief among the city's aims in extend-  
ing the water supply system to Loch Lo-  
mond was reduction of the fire insurance  
rates to a low level by ensuring adequate  
protection. A bountiful supply of pure  
water and an adequate gravity pressure  
were sought, and promised. Virtually we  
have had today. But the work is not yet  
completed along the lines originally laid  
down, and as matters stand a mistake  
policy at City Hall would prevent the city  
from securing the low insurance rates  
promised upon the completion of the sys-  
tem as originally outlined. The aldermen  
have it in their power today to give St.  
John the required insurance reduction, or  
to postpone that reduction indefinitely.  
Their course, therefore, will be watched  
summatively attentively by the public.

At present but one main aim is in use.  
Logic and common sense demand the  
use of two mains. It is proposed this  
spring to subject the second main to a pressure  
much greater than it would be called upon  
to resist in the ordinary course of use  
thereafter, and, after demonstrating that  
it will stand the extraordinary pressure,  
to make use of both mains continuously.  
The city would then have the supply and  
pressure it set out to secure, and the in-  
surance men would be bound by their  
specific promise to make the reduction. A  
satisfactory test of the whole system  
should be possible in the early summer,  
if this programme is followed. And it  
should be followed.

The short way to the low insurance rate  
is to continue the sensible arrangement  
made by the aldermen when they decided  
that Engineer Barbour or Mr. Hunter  
should remain in charge of the Loch Lo-  
mond extension until it was finally ac-  
cepted as satisfactory. The present doubt  
about retaining Mr. Hunter should not  
be allowed to prevent the city from making  
use of the long process, although it is  
not to be directly into complications which  
should not be permitted to arise, or to re-  
appear. Already there is talk that the  
fact that one of the 24-inch mains will  
have to be replaced entirely, and that it  
is necessary it would be better to  
abandon both of the twenty-fours and put  
down one thirty-six. To this talk there  
are two answers. One is that the cost of  
any such operation is absolutely prohibi-  
tive at present. The other is that the  
operation will be a long process, and that  
the city should not be subjected to a pressure  
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the replacement of the 24-inch main. It  
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