

The St. John Standard

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ST. JOHN, N. B., THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1920.

MR. ASQUITH'S ELECTION.

Political prophets in Britain predicted that Mr. Asquith would be returned by a majority of over 1,000, but his election by a majority of 2,800 over the Labor candidate is hardly surprising. The ex-Premier made an extraordinary fight, and his family were in the campaign with him. His candidature had the public endorsement of so prominent a Unionist as Lord Robert Cecil, and was supported by influential Unionist organs, which took the view that the return to parliamentary life of a man of Mr. Asquith's outstanding talents and large experience was more important than an endorsement of Coalition Government. Mr. MacKean, the Coalition-Unionist, had a sort of left-handed official endorsement from the Government, but few prominent Coalitionists went out of their way to help him, and from the outset his candidature was not regarded seriously.

No ex-Prime Minister of Britain within living memory has had to fight his way back to the House of Commons at a by-election as Mr. Asquith has done. Mr. Balfour, after his defeat in the general election of 1906, faced a by-election, but his election for the seat in the City of London was in no sense a fight. Mr. Asquith was making a fight for his political life, and the irony of the situation was that his most redoubtable opponent was the nominee of a party that was not long ago in working alliance with Mr. Asquith and his supporters. The ex-Premier employed to the utmost his great eloquence and all the arts of an old campaigner, and his brilliant wife and daughter made a tremendous effort to rally the votes of the women. In the course of his long series of speeches he canvassed every question before the public, domestic, Imperial and foreign, and built up a new platform for the Liberal Party, much in advance of its pre-war position. He declared in favor of giving an Irish Parliament control of Excise and Customs duties, advocated home rule legislation for Scotland, England and Wales, and changes in the Imperial system, providing for more frequent consultations with the Overseas Dominion. He advocated drastic revisions of the Peace Treaty designed to give Germany breathing space for economic recovery, proclaimed his unalterable devotion to free trade and opposition to the protectionist tendencies of the Government, and declared for advanced labor legislation, and giving labor a voice in the control of industry. Great interest was revealed in the contest, and the vote was much greater than in the general election, 30,212 votes being polled out of a total register of 38,597. The result was: Asquith (Lib.) 14,694; Biggar (Labor) 11,840; MacKean (Co-Unionist) 3,778.

In the general election of December, 1918, the vote was: Sir John McCallum (Lib.) 7,542; J. M. Biggar (Labor) 7,436; John Taylor (Nat. Dem.) 7,201. Mr. Asquith's victory is probably more of a personal triumph than an indication of the revival of Liberalism. But it will probably have the effect of heading off for the time being at any rate any plans that Lloyd George may have had of uniting moderate Liberals and Unionists in opposition to the growing power of Labor.

Mr. Asquith, with his great personal prestige, and with, too, strong Unionist support, did not prevent the Labor candidate securing a very considerable increase in his vote. In the general election Mr. Biggar ran as a candidate of the Co-operative Societies on a moderate platform. In the by-election he stood on an advanced Socialist platform, demanding nationalization of mines, railways, land and most big industries. And in addition to men like Henderson and Thomas he had radical Socialists, like Philip Snowden and Ramsay MacDonald, speaking for him. His candidature probably was not helped by the two latter speakers, for moderate labor men still resent their attitude to the war, though some of the things they said during the war were said by Mr. Asquith at Paisley. In face of such opposition and with such a handicap, Mr. Biggar's vote would indicate that the Labor Party is going strong, with a good prospect of becoming a more important factor in British politics than Mr. Asquith and his party.

A REVOLUTIONARY PRINCIPLE. In view of the fact that the city has a majority of votes in the County Council, it is rather surprising that the City Council should solemnly condemn a bill which the County Council adopted and ordered sent to the Legislature. On motion of Councillor O'Brien, the County Council approved the submission to the Legislature of a bill which would give the County authorities power to expropriate private property for industrial sites. Councillor O'Brien was mainly concerned to have the bill apply to the Parish of Lancaster, where he believes fine factory sites are available along the line of the C. P. R.; but the bill as drafted would give the county authorities power to expropriate

property within the limits of the City of St. John. On motion of Commissioner Fisher, the City Council placed itself in opposition to the bill on the ground that it would give the County more power than the City, which can only expropriate property for public purposes—not to provide sites for private enterprises.

The fact that the city fathers let the bill go through a body in which they had a controlling voice and on their return to the bracing atmosphere of City Hall decided to oppose it is perhaps no great matter—only another example of the agility with which Commission Form of Government exercises the prerogative which is supposed to be the special property of the sex with little voting experience. But the bill itself is important; if adopted it will be a radical departure in public policy—a striking invasion of the heretofore sacrosanct rights of private property. Before the war it would probably have received scant consideration in the Legislature or any other public body. But the war, which abrogated a man's right even in his own person when a common interest demanded, has doubtless done something to promote a new conception of the relations of public and private rights. If a community can consent a man's body to fight in a foreign war, it is not a far cry to expropriating a man's land to set up a business to fight foreign trade. The County Council's bill is significant as an evidence of a growth of a community sense which is not worried by the traditional sacredness with which legal fictions have invested private property rights in land. Capacity for visualizing community interests is perhaps not compatible with the legally correct position that a private landlord is entitled to take advantage of the necessities of a business enterprise whose development may spread benefits over a community.

Nevertheless the County Council bill may well present a portentous aspect to old-fashioned landlords, especially as across the Western Ocean the British Labor Party is noisily demanding the nationalization of all lands, and everything else in sight, including the ships that sail the seas.

INCOME TAXATION.

The Toronto Mail and Empire says municipal income tax exemption should be at least \$2,000 in the case of householders and \$1,000 in the case of unmarried persons. The income assessment of Toronto for 1920 is estimated at \$42,000,000, and the total assessment at \$540,000,000; that is the income assessment was less than 7 per cent of the total. In St. John last year the income assessment was \$14,957,850, and the total assessment was \$46,000,000; making the income assessment 32 per cent of the total. The Toronto general tax rate was 29.6 mills and the school rate 7.9 mills. The St. John tax rate, general and schools, was 26.3.

The Toronto Mail and Empire says that the increase in exemption of \$300 per individual which it advocates would reduce the income assessment about \$25,000,000, or about 4 per cent of the total. In Toronto tax exemptions on incomes are already high, the tax paid by the average wage earner being insignificant. In St. John the exemptions are \$400 where the total income does not exceed \$1,000, and \$200 where the income exceeds \$1,000 but does not exceed \$1,500.

IN LONDON TOWN.

Canadian Gazette: It was a pleasure to see Sir Robert Borden, looking much his old self again, in the gallery of the House of Lords at Tuesday's ceremony, and again in the Commons, a deeply interested listener to Mr. Lloyd George's spirited defence of Coalition Government. His desire for privacy while visiting this country is being properly respected. Acting under medical advice, he will take no part in official or public ceremonies, and will soon seek rest and change of scene in one of the Southern health resorts of the United States. Canadian politics are moving into new and perhaps strange developments, with the farmer as the rising factor both East and West. In this country, as in Australia, it is the town-folk and the labor element which dominates; Canada may show the world that the man of the plough, or rather the tractor, has also conspicuous qualities of political leadership.

The Montreal Manufacturers' Association proposed to persuade Canadian tourists to spend their summer vacation seeing Canada. If all the Montrealers who go to Old Orchard Beach and other resorts in Maine are coming to the Maritime Provinces this summer the Commercial Club has need to get busy and build that new hotel.

WHAT THEY SAY

A Pearl of Price. (Calgary Herald.) Pearl of price may fall from a

schoolboy's lips. Among the latest "howlers" collected by the university correspondent is this: "In the United States of America, people are put to death by execution."

An Expert. (Kingston Whig.) If the Allies are to continue sending notes to Holland regarding the extradition of ex-Kaiser Wilhelm, they had better call in the aid of President Wilson. His long experience in that line would be very valuable.

Pertinent Advice. (Kingston Whig.) Commissioner Murdoch, of the Board of Commerce, after a thorough investigation, says that the mail order bargains in reality cost the consumers more in the end. Here is an official reason for doing your shopping at home.

Makers of Mischief. (Toronto Star.) In its latest issue Collier's Weekly states that many communications have reached it from Canada "indicating growing bad feeling among many Canadians toward the United States."

Perhaps some of these letters are written by persons who are nettled by the claim that the United States won the war all of its own bat; or by the injurious exchange rate on Canadian money; or by the talk in the Senate at Washington against admitting Canada to a place in the League of Nations, although no objection is made to the admission of Cuba, Panama, Haiti, and San Domingo. Perhaps Canada expected a very different attitude from her great neighbor after the war, and some persons may have written letters expressing their feelings not wisely, but too well.

But the Star, too, has of late been receiving marked copies of papers from various parts of the United States containing irritating references to Canada and Great Britain. No doubt other Canadian newspapers have been receiving similar marked copies. Perhaps it would be well for sensible journals in both Canada and the United States to suspect the possibility of a motive and purpose in this sort of thing on the part of agencies friendly to neither country—enemies to both—but anxious to promote misunderstanding and discord between them.

A BIT OF VERSE

CLEARING THE FRONT. (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.) Our throats they were parched and hot, But Lord! if they'd heard the cheer, Irish and Welsh and Scot, Coldstream and Grenadier— Two brigades of a motive and purpose in this sort of thing on the part of agencies friendly to neither country—enemies to both—but anxious to promote misunderstanding and discord between them.

"Five yards left extend!" I passed from rank to rank. And line after line with never a bend, And a touch of the London swank, A trifle of swank and dash, Cool as a home parade, Twinkle, glitter and flash, Flinching never a shade, With the shrapnel right in their face, Doing their Hyde Park stunt, Swinging along at an easy pace, Arms at the trail, eyes front.

Man! it was great to see! Man! it was great to do! It's a cot and a hospital ward for me, But I'll tell them in Blighty wherever I be How the Guards came through.

A BIT OF FUN

Delayed Application. An insurance man tells this one: "Not long ago yours rushed into one of our offices a very excited woman; so excited in fact, that she was out of breath and could speak only with difficulty." "What's the trouble?" asked one of the clerks. "I want a policy at once—at once," exclaimed the woman, when she had recovered sufficiently to articulate. "Our home is on fire."

In the Gallery. "Why do you compare my marksmanship with lightning?" "Because," replied the instructor, "it never hits twice in the same place."

Out of Season. Waiter—What was your order, sir?

Benny's Note Book

BY LEE PAPE

CANDY. Candy can be either sucked, chewed or allowed to melt and run down, depending on what kind it is. The most exciting is the kind that melts and runs down, such as chookit creams, but the best wearing kind is the kind you can suck, such as sour balls. Some fellows can make a sour ball last a hour just by not working it too hard, and they also get grate pleasure in taking it out every once in a while to see how much smeltier it is and if its color has changed any. The saddest moment of a sour ball is when it gets so little it can't do anything else but disappear.

The most exciting candy to bite in half is assorted chocklits, on account of you never know what they're stuffed with till you bite and look, and then if you're disappointed you can exchange the other half with somebody that's got a other that you like and they don't. When people eat assorted chocklits holes without caring what they're stuffed with, it's a sine they're getting old and careless. The 2 most exciting things to find inside of assorted chocklits is loose jooco and cherries.

The stingiest kind of candy to eat is all day suckers, because you can suck one rite in front of somebody's face on account of knowing they have too much pride to ask you for any of it. The politest thing to say when you're eating a all day sucker is, Im sorry I started to suck this or I would offer you some.

If you are eating a peppermint stick and anybody asks you for a bite, the safest way is to hold your thumb so they can't bite off too big of a piece without biting your thumb and giving you a chance to get mad and change your mind about giving them a bite in the first place, all depending on weather you are a quicker jerker than what they are a biter.

The most exciting place to eat candy is in school on account of the danger of having it took away from you forever. Before the high cost of living went up you used to be able to buy enough candy for a sent to last awhile, but now if you haven't got at least 2 cents you mite as well not have any.

I'm sorry to say I have forgotten it. Diner—I gave it so long ago I don't remember, but I'll change it, for it would be out of fashion now, anyway.

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Short, But Sharp. "Why aren't you speaking to Mrs. Gadder?" "We had words."

"Yes—one apiece. She called me 'upstart' and I called her 'cat.'"

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