The St. John Standard

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ST. JOHN, N. B., THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1919.

ASSESSMENT.

The esteemed Globe is seeking solace in its misrepresentation of St John's assessment system and attempts to derive comfort from what it erroneously believes is the conversion of The Standard. Yet in its interpretation of the attitude of this paper the Globe is just as distinctly in error as in its distorted presentation of this year's assessment, for The Standard has not been converted to a mistaken idea.

The Globe has definitely stated time and again that owners of real estate in St. John are suffering because of largely increased real estate valuations made under the present Assessment Act. The Globe is in error and as this contention forms the basis of its whole argument it necessarily follows that that argument is wrong in its entirety. Real estate valuations in St. John for the present year amount to $1,781,000 more than in 1918. In the 1919 total there is included C. P. R. property, the material equipment of the New Brunswick Telephone Company, the real estate holdings of the Masonic Order, the Knights of Columbus, the Knights of Pythias and other organizations of a similar nature. These properties together represent a valution of approximately two and one-half millions, and as the total increase in real estate valuation is, as stated, only one and three-quarter millions it is apparent that on the balance of the real estate in St. John—that previously subjected to assessment—there has been no decided increase in valuation, but on the contrary a reduction. In any revaluation of properties there are bound to be changes and it has naturally occurred that certain properties have been somewhat increased in valuation for assessment purposes while others have been reduced, but the general trend of the whole thing has been towards reduction.

Along with this feature must be reckoned the condition that certain classes of persons, owners of real estate, have in previous years been exempt to a certain figure, but that under the present Act this exemption has been reduced. Consequently they are asked to pay more than formerly from the incomes derived from such properties as they possess, not because of higher valuation but because of the cancellation of exemption. Yet the number so affected is comparatively small.

Under the old law the Board of Assessors blindly guessed at the incomes enjoyed by those whose names were on the list. It was a notorious fact that ninety per cent. of the people in St. John escaped fair taxation on their incomes. In years gone by men whose living expenses must have amounted to ten thousand dollars per year were assessed on twenty-five hundred, but under the new plan incomes must be correctly stated, under penalty. No penalties have been imposed and the assumption is that incomes have been so stated. Whether this is so or not may well remain a matter of doubt, but at all events the assessors have been practically able to double the income tax for the present year, adding approximately seven millions to last year's list.

Had we continued under the old law of assessment with respect to personal property this addition to the income assessment would have carried us along very nicely, but because of widespread complaint and the recognized unfairness in taxing incomes from investments, the new Act under which we are now working provides that personal property shall be assessed at one-half its value. Consequently the personal property valuation, already ridiculously low, has been reduced by an amount which wipes out in its entirety the increase made on income account. That is, we find seven million dollars in new incomes and we have cut off seven million dollars on personal property. More than this we have cut off certain business taxes and made minor changes in exemptions none of which are very big in themselves, but all of which tend to affect in some degree the final adjustment of the assessment rate.

The Standard admits that in the old assessment law there were many weaknesses, but under the new Act when the greatly increased civic expenditure is taken into consideration we seem merely to have shifted the burden from the shoulders of those least able to pay to those in a scarcely better position, for by means of a higher rate on a very slightly increased valuation we are compelling real estate and incomes to contribute more heavily than before while personal property in turn enjoys exemption.

COL. CANTLEY'S LETTER.

The Standard publishes today a letter from Lieut.-Colonel Thomas Cantley replying to criticism which this paper offered touching the handling of troops by the Canadian National Railways at Halifax. Colonel Cantley confines his attention to a review of the celerity with which various special trains were despatched, which feature was not at all the subject of comment by The Standard, and he omits altogether reference to the bungling, mismanagement, indifference, lack of discipline, and negligence in providing accommodation, which was so apparent on the particular occasion referred to among the employes of the government road. The Standard stated, and repeats, that on the arrival of the steamer mentioned there were not sufficient cars to accommodate the soldiers and their families, despite the fact that for the Western Canadian and Central Ontario business many cars had been provided by the Canadian Pacific and the Grand Trunk Lines, and because of this, many persons arriving by that steamer were forced to remain in Halifax. This paper further stated, and repeats, that employees of the Canadian National Railways sold to soldiers arriving on that steamer second-class tickets for their wives, accepting considerable sums of money from these soldiers for such accommodation when they knew, or should have known, that the accommodation which they were selling was not available, and persons for whom these tickets were purchased were deprived of both their money and accommodation for which they had paid until the matter became too serious for further neglect. This paper stated, and repeats, that one of the leading officials of the Canadian National Railways in Nova Scotia whose duty it was to see that equipment was on hand for proper transportation of troops was not aware, or said he was not aware, of the expected arrival of two troops-ships on the day previous to their docking at Halifax.

The Standard has never disputed the point brought up by Colonel Cantley, that the transfer of the men and baggage from the ships to the train was made with reasonable despatch. This phase of the question was not gone into. But The Standard is in a position to affirm that the record which Colonel Cantley looks upon as satisfactory could not have been attained had it not been that employees of railroads other than the Canadian Nationals were on hand to give their assistance. And while this subject has been brought up by Colonel Cantley, it may also be intimated that the frequency of mishaps and serious wrecks on the Canadian National which are gaining for that road a distinctly unenviable reputation, are very largely due to lack of discipline among the employees, a condition which has come about during the past year or eighteen months, following the reorganization of the road under Canadian Northern management from Toronto. The present staff of the Canadian Nationals is not in any sense to be compared in efficiency, in so far as the Maritime Provinces at least are concerned, with that staff as it existed only a few years ago.

THE NURSES' HOME.

Another bubble has burst. The nurses' home is laid on the shelf for three months, which in all likelihood means three years. Members of the Municipal Council, having worked themselves up to a fine state of enthusiasm over this important project, have now stuck a pin in the thing and all that remains is the wave of hot air. Is not the whole incident typical of St. John? Year after year we have realized the necessity of hospital extension. We have complained of insufficient accommodation for nurses and patients and we have talked in a circle of what should be done and how nice it would be to do it. In course of time after those in authority had displayed a unanimous desire to sidestep the responsibility, the Hospital Aid, composed of some two thousand women, swooped down upon the Municipal Council and presented the case so clearly that action was at once apparent. Carried away by the eloquence of the women and the realization of their own negligence, the commissioners voted a trifle more than one hundred thousand dollars to provide a nurses' home on an estimate prepared a short time previous by a local architect. That estimate was too low, for when tenders were called it was found that the building could not be erected by local men for less than one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Everything of course went up in the air. By reason of the months of delay we were asked to contribute fifty per cent. more than had been anticipated. But despite this shock, the majority of the members of the Council would have been prepared to go ahead with the work and it might have been undertaken, had any enterprise been shown. But there were further holidays. For no apparent reason there was shuffling of the tenders and all the various devices employed by those who are only lukewarm in any project they undertake, and the expected has happened. Added delay has meant an increase of an additional ten thousand in the tenders instead of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars for a complete job the lowest bidder now asks one hundred and sixty-one thousand dollars, and the Municipal Council which was prepared to swallow without a shudder the fifty-thousand additional unexpectedly demanded, balks at the further increase of ten thousand and shelves the whole proposition.

The Nurses' Home is just as necessary today as it was in June or in January or at any time in the past five years. It has to be provided some day, yet despite the fact that a further delay of three months may mean an additional twenty thousand dollars we are content, according to the Municipal Council, to wait until that prospective increase becomes an actuality. Even the member of the council who proposed the adoption of the committee's report which would have meant the acceptance of the lowest tender and the commencement of operations, slid out of the meeting before the vote was called. Naturally no one else could be found to shoulder the responsibility, and the Nurses' Home passes into the discard along with the new city hall, Fort Howe Park, a new alms house, paved streets, the Lancaster extension, better housing and all the other pipe-dreams with which our commissioners and councillors beguile their lonely hours. Meanwhile we are content to potter along with a wheelbarrow of gravel on Prince William street, an unnecessary twelve-inch pipe line along Douglas avenue, a heap of sand and sawdust on Union street and a tax rate of two dollars and sixty-two cents. Indeed that tax rate is the only big thing we can brag about.

WHAT THEY SAY

Why Aid Bulgaria?

Buffalo Courier: Just what has Bulgaria ever done for the Allies or for the world that entitles her to the consideration of having a port on the Aegean Sea? It has a long Black Sea coast and the Dardanelles will be open. That's enough.

Not Too Trusting.

Buffalo Commercial: We trust the Government will bring down prices of food and shoes and other articles that we must have in order to live, but we are not going to begin buying porterhouse steak and broilers on the strength of our hopes.

Useful and Very Interesting.

Toronto Star: The new board of commerce should assign to one of its experts the task of preparing a report on the Canadian fortunes running into millions that have been made in the past twenty-five years, and how they were made in each case, and to what extent misgovernment has been responsible for the enrichment of a few at the expense of the many. It would be a highly useful report.

A BIT OF VERSE

SUNSET ON GEORGIAN BAY.

'Tis eventide; the summer day is done;
Behind the Point, with shadowy forest crowned,
In slow, majestic splendor sinks the sun,
His robe of glory wrapping him around.

The glistening sands he turns to yellow gold,
On every wave his Midas fingers fall
The golden cloudlets, billowing fold on fold,
Are regal curtains for his palace hall.

But hist! A low, soft sighing in the pines,
Where Marigold, bereft of roses, weeps,
The monarch, all her sorrowing love divines—
A rose-flush through the dazzling splendor creeps.

The tender gleam to vivid crimson grows,
Love's tear in burning passion is appeased.
The sky, the wave, the earth with rapture glows;
The murmured plant amid the pines has ceased.

A fading light—pearl-tints of memory,
A little wind that rustles and is still,
Across the silence calls mysteriously
That plaintive voice of dark, the whip-poor-will.
And old-time hymns come floating on the dusk—
The quavering notes bespeak life's eventide;
While mingled fragrance of myrrh and musk
Upon the winds are wafted far and wide.

And then—a thousand whisperings of the wild,
Breathings of Nature in her dreamful sleep,
Upon her breast I sink, a tired child,
Knowing God's stars unwearied vigil keep.

—Lilian Leveridge.

A BIT OF FUN

Borem—"Now, what would you do if you were in my shoes, Miss Cutting?"

Miss Cutting—"I'd point the toes towards the front door and give them a start."

Hayes—"Sandstone has asked me to lend him a couple of pounds, and I don't know whether to do it or not. would you?"

Bayes (earnestly)—"I would, old man. He has invited me to dinner this evening."

He—"Oh, pray, Miss Dairimple, don't call me Mr. Brooks."

She—"Oh, but our acquaintance has been so brief." (Sweetly) "Why shouldn't I call you Mr. Brookes?"

He—"Oh, only because my name's Somerset!"

Photographer's Assistant — "Mrs. Perkins has sent her new pictures back, sir, and says she won't pay the bill. They don't look like her, she says."

Photographer — "Mrs. Perkins? Don't look like her, eh? Well, I ought to charge her double if that's true."

Poor old Professor Dreamer went home the other night, and he knew there was something he wanted to do.

"And didn't he remember at all?"

"Oh, yes; after thinking about two hours he realised that he had wanted to go to bed early."

LETTER FROM COL. T. CANTLEY.

To the Editor St. John Standard:

Sir,—In your issue of August 26th last there is a leading article entitled "Where Halifax Fails." This I have read with some considerable surprise.

I have been more or less in touch with the work of the Canadian National Railways, as far as transporting troops from Halifax is concerned. On two occasions I have crossed the Atlantic on troop ships—my last homeward voyage being on a trooper carrying 3,000 returned soldiers. The service rendered by the railway and disembarking conditions generally at Halifax were on these occasions, simply beyond criticism.

I was not aware that any complaints of a serious character as to lack of accommodation at Halifax for returned soldiers or dependents had been made at Ottawa. It is quite true that in the case of two or three steamers, as to the arrival of which the railway were not notified, some confusion did result—this, of course, was only natural.

I rather think your information is at fault as to some of the statements made. I fancy that the boat referred to by you as the "Celtic," was really the "Baltic," which docked at Halifax at 1.20 p.m. August 21st last. With the troops and dependents on this boat were some 3,000 pieces of baggage which had to be unloaded from the steamer, sorted, passed and loaded on the train. The last piece of this was unloaded from the steamer by 9.30 p.m. The ticketing of passengers was finished at 11.45 p.m.

Four special trains were handled in connection with this steamer as follows:

Special 1636 was spotted at 2 p.m., on that day and left Pier 2 at 12.20 a.m. the following morning. The delay in this case was due to immigration and military regulations at Pier 2, and also delay in having baggage brought from the steamer to floor of the pier so that it could be checked. The Canadian National Railway passenger equipment was in readiness for this boat and in position in ample time.

Special 1637 was spotted at 12.35 a.m., and left Pier 2 at 1.35 a.m.

Special 1638 was spotted at 1.50 a.m. and left Pier 2 at 2.20 a.m.

Special 1639 was spotted at 2.30 a.m. and left Pier 2 at 2.50 a.m.

You will see from this that after the immigration and military regulations were completed with, and all the baggage (which required eight baggage cars) was unloaded, there was no delay in getting the trains away. I might further add that one or two subsequent boats which arrived a day or two later, came in prior to schedule time, and the railway authorities found it impossible to secure definite information from the military officers in time to have equipment lined up. One of these boats slipped in ahead of time and naturally the first special train carrying men from this steamer was somewhat delayed, owing to insufficient time being given to have the train made up prior to the arrival of the steamer.

From the foregoing I think you will agree with me that there is really no justification for your article, and I know that your sense of justice will insure you in the future being satisfied as to the correctness of the information put before you before publishing criticism such as referred to.

As to the whole matter of transport of returned troops, the record for rapid entraining of the men at Halifax, and their safe transport over the Canadian National Railway is one of which the management may well be proud, especially the superintendent of the Eastern Division, Mr. L. S. Brown, and his transport staff.

Yours respectfully,
THOS. CANTLEY.

Little Benny's Note Book

BY LEE PAPE.

Yestidday afternoon me and Puds Simkins and Sam Cross was wawking along, jest wawking along, and a man went pass weeling a blue baby carridge with a baby setting in it, and Puds Simkins got all ixcited, wispering, G wizz, fellows, that was Mrs. Wernicks baby, holey smoaks, its being kidnapped, jiminny krissmas.

And us fellows quick wawked pass the man and looked back at the baby, and it had the same ixpression as Mrs. Wernicks baby and everything, and the baby carridge looked the same and everything and we kepp on looking, and the man sed, Well, well, ident you ever see a baby before?

We saw that one before, sed Puds.

Well then wats all the ixcitement? sed the man. Being a big tall man with a black mushtash and a ixpression like a kidnapper, and he went pass us agen and kepp on going, and Sam Cross wispered, You get about 1000 dollers for stopping a baby from being kidnapped.

Lets go rite up and tell him we know whose baby it is, and maybe he will get nerviss and run, and then we can weel the baby back to Mrs. Wernicks house and get the reward, I wispered.

Wich we started to do, running after the man agen and Puds Simkins saying loud as enything, We know whose baby that is, its Mrs. Wernicks baby.

Wat, agen? sed the man looking mad insted of nerviss, now you kids cleer out of heer double quick time or I'll paddle the hole 3 of you. And he kepp on going, and us fellows quick ran to Mrs. Wernicks house and rang the bell and Mrs. Wernick opened the door and we all started to tell her at the same time, me saying, Some mans kidnapping your baby, Mrs. Wernick, and Puds saying, He's kidnapping the baby carridge and everything, and Sam Cross saying, He's a grate big tall man with a black mushtash, we saw him.

Goodniss grayshiss, boys, sutch ixcitement, thats ony my brother taking the baby for a ride, sed Mrs. Wernick. And she thanked us jest the same and shut the door agen, and us fellows kepp on wawking.

ABE MARTIN

A feller never realizes how little he knows till he tries t' help his little boy out on a school composition. No buddy ever paid th' fidder without feelin' it.

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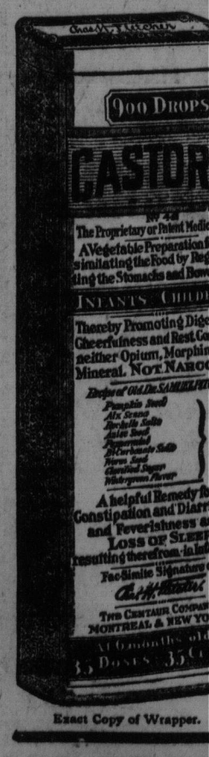

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