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ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, MAY 18, 1912.

MR. COPP'S NEW PLATFORM.

It will be gratifying to the majority of the people of the Province to know that the Opposition has at last obtained a policy. True, it is only a little policy yet, but, perhaps, it may grow when Mr. Copp succeeds in finding a few more unfortunates willing to sacrifice their political future under his banner. The "policy" is also a trifle belated. When it was understood late last December that Mr. Robinson had proved a failure as the Opposition leader, it was clearly stated that he was to be succeeded by a "fighting leader" in the person of Mr. Copp, who it was announced with a blare of trumpets had a policy in preparation that would be something out of the usual, and would be a revelation in the way of political platforms. Day by day slipped by, week after week passed and still Mr. Copp labored in solitude with his policy. Nothing happened.

When the session of the House was called Mr. Copp was still burning the midnight oil and struggling with his platform. The House met and it will be remembered that the "fighting leader" presented a very lonesome spectacle in the legislative chamber in the early days of the session—when not half of his following thought it worth while to give their attendance and hearken him in his work. Then came the Sweeney episode when the ex-Surveyor General moved the adjournment of the debate on the Address and failed to make an appearance and deliver his speech. This was a body blow at the influence of the new leader, but he was to receive another before the end of the session, when Mr. Upton repeatedly stated Mr. Copp's authority because he cast the vote of the whole Opposition against the Valley Railway when the bill providing for its construction came up for a third reading.

The public didn't know it but Mr. Copp was laboring with his policy. It was still on his mind when he spoke four times in the Budget debate and then moved an amendment in order that he might make another speech. That he allowed no hint of this policy to escape during the week he was wrestling with the Budget is another proof of Mr. Copp's resolute determination. There is no other member of the House with sufficient mastery of words to have used so many of them and still to have retained that policy in his own possession. Mr. Copp is unique in this respect.

Now for the policy. What does it mean? Mr. Copp is responsible for the statement at Hampton that Mr. Fleming's ready-made farm scheme does not go far enough. According to Mr. Copp Mr. Fleming's plan would give the immigrant an unfair advantage over the native. The immigrant would have the use of money at a lower rate of interest than the native. If Mr. Copp could only persuade himself that misrepresentation is a decided sign of weakness of argument he would be more honest in dealing with his opponents. Mr. Fleming's plan is exactly the opposite of what Mr. Copp says it is. The plan of the Premier is to repopulate the vacant improved farms of the Province. For this purpose he will constitute a commission with authority to purchase suitable farms, make the buildings on them habitable and the land ready for cultivation. These farms the Commission will sell to anyone, native of the Province or immigrant, at cost of land and improvements, taking as a first payment 25 per cent. of the purchase price, the rest payable by instalments extending over a period of ten years and bearing 5 per cent. interest. There is no preference shown to immigrants over our own people.

Mr. Copp's proposition to lend money to the farmer is as yet only a half-baked scheme which apparently originated with some crack-brained financier who cared nothing for details. Mr. Copp does not say for what purpose he would lend money to the farmer, the character of the security he would require, nor, and what is most important of all, where he would get the money to lend to the farmer and the nature of the security the Province would put up to secure the loans. Mr. Copp's scheme is yet too crude to be worthy of consideration at all. The second plank of this remarkable platform is even worse than the first. The farmers—it is always the farmers—are to have cheaper telephones when Mr. Copp has the say. "There is no greater monopoly in any country than the New Brunswick Telephone Company, and I hold that the responsibility rests with the Government to see that the rural districts are given cheaper and more extended service." No one will object to this declaration of principle on the part of Mr. Copp, but that worthy gentleman has oversteered himself. The time for him to have got busy was in 1907 when the Public Telephone Act was pushed through the House by his friend Mr. Pugsley. Had he put these Hampton views before the House on that occasion he might have been in a position to make this plank of his platform effective today. His political godfathers, however, have made it impossible for Mr. Copp to carry out his Hampton platform if he wished, because of the restrictions of the Public Telephone Act which Mr. Copp himself helped to frame and make into law.

The farmers of New Brunswick do not catch birds by putting salt on their tails and are not deceived by the hollow interest on the part of those who would deceive them. Mr. Copp is just five years too late with his telephone plank, and it is his own fault. He should have remembered the difficulty of serving two masters in 1907 and then he might not have found himself in his present dilemma.

Mr. Copp has also a policy on roads, but he is not quite sure himself just what that policy is. He fears to trust the Municipal Councils, and he is apparently afraid of the people because they might find some way of getting away with the money without spending it on the roads. Evidently Mr. Copp has painful recollections even yet of some of the road superintendents appointed by the old Government. Mr. Copp's stand on the road question is heartily endorsed by the Times, but Mr. Copp himself will not fully endorse it until he has amended it by getting something better and more definite.

Mr. Copp does not grow in wisdom as the time for election approaches. He has abandoned his charges of broken pledges and ill-treatment of Liberal office holders, and brought out a platform so crude as to be ridiculous, and which so appreciable body of the electorate will consider seriously. It will make even more certain his own defeat and that of his following. As a "representative statesman" Mr. Copp has proved a greater failure than was even expected.

IN KENT COUNTY AND ELSEWHERE.

It needs no wizard in divination to forecast the opinion of the people of this Province on the record of the Government. The enthusiasm which has marked the conventions and public meetings already held in the interest of candidates supporting the present Administration is sufficient proof that the policy of Good Government has made good. Kent County is now in line. At the convention on Wednesday the three members who have so ably supported the Government for the last four years were again endorsed as standard bearers of the party in the coming election. Dr. Landry, the Commissioner of Agriculture, Dr. Bourque and Col. Sheridan have deserved well of the people of Kent and they were not slow to recognize this fact by making them again the unanimous choice of the convention.

Premier Fleming who has been paying a visit to the North Shore was present at Rexton when the convention was held and gave the electors an account of his stewardship. No Government in New Brunswick for many years has so faithfully redeemed its pre-election pledges. The Premier was in a position to place before the electors a convincing statement showing that the affairs of the Province have been economically and honestly administered. Kent County in common with every other constituency has benefited by the money wisely expended in the public service.

Mr. Fleming vividly recalled the conditions which existed under the old regime, the careless neglect of keeping the public accounts, the criminal method of collecting stampage due on Crown Lands, the payment of large sums of public money without vouchers and the general incompetence of the old Administration. The Premier was able to point to sweeping reforms in every department. An increase of nearly \$200,000 in the revenue from stampage, with no corresponding increase in the out, is in itself alone undeniable evidence that the people of the Province made no mistake when they elected the Hazen Government. Mr. Fleming has worthily continued the policy of his predecessor whom he supported in his campaign when Provincial Secretary. It is small wonder that his hearers at Rexton cheered him to the echo.

There is no desire on the part of the people of this Province to return to the old regime of graft and extravagance. They are fully aware of the fact that the men who supported that regime and profited by it are now in opposition and hungry for another onslaught on the public chest. Not a solitary reason can these gentlemen advance that it is time for a change. They have made their bed and now lie on it. The Fleming Government possesses the confidence of the electorate. They have justified the choice of the people. The enthusiasm displayed at public meetings permits of no contradiction on this point.

THE QUEBEC ELECTIONS.

Of the four Canadian Provinces in which the Liberals still control the reins of government, the record of the Administration in Quebec has been in many ways the least objectionable. The people of Quebec in the recent Provincial elections signified their approval of the Liberal Government's record and the opinion that it justly deserved another lease of power. Under the circumstances, as the Quebec Chronicle remarks, there is nothing for the Opposition to do but defer to the popular decision.

To all intents and purposes the standing of the parties is the same as it was in the last House. There are a few changes on both sides, but the balance is evenly maintained, as the gains of the one party are offset by those of the other.

The Conservatives made a better showing in reality than was indicated by the returns, as they reduced the majorities in most of the constituencies. Still, for all that, in Laurier's pet Province they have much leeway to make up.

The Times' interpretation of Dr. Pearson's remarks at Hampton is "that the new policy is being put forward by new men." Mr. Copp is not so very new. He is old enough to have sat in the House with the old crowd who obeyed no laws—not even those of their own making; who used the provincial treasury as if it were their own bank; who made advances to contractors on contracts before work was commenced, who did the business of the country through suspense accounts in order to hide their over-expenditures; who paid out thousands of dollars for which no vouchers were ever received and whose accounts were oftentimes never audited. The "new men" who Dr. Pearson says are putting forward the "new policy" are the men who were either responsible for these things or knew of them and remained silent. The "constructive leader" was one of the latter.

The Telegraph and Times must think the people are easily gulled. Mr. Robinson found the position of Leader of the Opposition hopeless and untenable. He could neither defend nor repudiate the old Government, and as the public gained knowledge of his misdeeds, and as their whole miserable record of misgovernment and dishonesty was exposed he saw that the only course by which he could preserve his own self-respect was to retire from politics altogether. Mr. Robinson heard the words of the times aghast. He realized that the people had not yet forgotten that they had been humbugged to the limit by the old Government and were in no mood for more humbug. Mr. Copp is a very unfortunates successor to Mr. Robinson who, whatever his shortcomings, was not a personal grafter.

"The old Government is not on trial," frantically yells the Times. Yet that valued organ of public opinion is doing its best to have such shining lights of the old regime returned to power as Mr. LaBelle, former Chief Commissioner of Public Works, and Mr. Sweeney, former Surveyor General, and their chief apologist, Mr. Copp. The Times cannot separate Mr. Copp and his present supporters from the corrupt gang responsible for the Crown Land scandal, the Central Railway scandal and the thousands of dollars expended by the Public Works Department of the old Government which were never accounted for.

The Kingston Standard, a Conservative newspaper, criticizes the Board Government for awarding contracts and other patronage benefits to Liberals. The same "complaint" has often been urged against the Whitney Administration, but nobody was ever able to lay such a charge against the Laurier Ministry. In the public interest it must often be advisable for a Government to place orders with political opponents, particularly in cases where they are the lowest tenderers, but politicians who put party first cannot see this.

Mr. Copp in his speech at Hampton touched lightly on the Central Railway question, but forgot to explain what services he rendered for the \$1,425 the old Government paid him. If Mr. Copp were half as honest as he pretends to be he would take the people into his confidence and tell them what he did to earn this money. Until he does, the public will have a doubt that he earned it at all.

"Cheaper money for the farmer" the Times says is one of the planks in Mr. Copp's platform. This reads very attractively, but just what does it mean? Mr. Copp has yet to explain, and, until he does, it is only another of those gusts of wind which always blow when Mr. Copp is in the neighborhood.

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Whereas an unfortunate who jammed his finger or toe to such an extent that an operation was deemed necessary could formerly have the of tending member removed on payment of a five spot, it will now cost from \$10 to \$20 for the service and resections of shoulder, elbow, wrist, ankle, knee or hip will cost from \$100 to \$150 instead of from \$50 to \$100 as formerly.

In applying the rates the medical men will take into consideration the financial condition of the patient and in fact it may possibly be fair to state that this tariff will be administered in the same way as some of the railway tariffs across the border in the ratio of "all the traffic can stand."

While the medical men are no doubt acting well within their rights in increasing the fees for their services, it will be a bad job for any poor newspaper man who may have to call on them for the highest priced stunts. When resection of any of the bones which are most liable to get broken will cost from \$100 to \$150 it is more than likely that most of us in such plight will have to limp it out, and while \$5 for a toe was not too bad we will certainly watch our members with an increasing degree of care and attention before we will agree to cough up \$20 for the privilege of having them sliced off. A hatter can do the job just as quickly and much more cheaply.

Weekly Shoot.
St. John City Rifle Club will hold their regular weekly upon match this afternoon on the Rifle Range, if the weather is at all favorable, starting at 1:30 sharp. A good attendance is expected.



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