

The Wayside Philosopher

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LIBERAL LEGISLATION

When the present Provincial Government Leaders were seeking to obtain power, one heard much of the need of "Liberal legislation." In the event of their achieving victory at the Polls, we were to have this boon conferred on our—to them—long-suffering body politic.

It is to be presumed that they have carried out their promise and that their legislation has been the much vaunted "Liberal Legislation." Let us see in what it has varied from preceding Legislation.

First; It has thrown a reserve over our Mineral resources. Granted the best of intention viz;—the conservation of our mineral resources, has it paid?

Mining has been good in British Columbia. The output has largely increased. A further large increase is predicted for the current year. Has this brought the measure of prosperity it should have done? Undeniably no! Why? Because the increase has been that of the output of a few highly developed properties worked by a small force of men. The small Miner, the vast army of prospectors that should swarm our mountainsides when mining quotations are favorable, where are they? Practically vanished, done away with by "Liberal Legislation."

Second; It has provided an ever-increasing authority in the hands of Ministers and their appointees.

One of the marked propensities of legislation under the Oliver regime has been this steady acquisition of Ministerial authority. One need only refer to the Land Act and the Taxation Act as examples. The Land Act was enough of a weapon in Ministerial hands under former Governments but their already too great powers have been added to by the various acts and amendments of the present administration dealing with Government Lands.

For the powers assumed in the Land Acts etc., let us give the greatest allowance. What then of the Taxation Act with its broad scope of authority to the Minister "OR SUCH PERSON AS HE MAY APPOINT." Such appointee may be—probably would be—some mere party hack with no expert knowledge of Taxation. Yet, so great is his authority, under the Act, that an injury done by him must be of some financial moment to warrant the expensive remedy provided by the Act for appealing his decision being invoked. Any less injury must go unredressed.

This arrogant assumption of authority is probably capped in the recent Insurance Act. Here authority is given whereby a Government employee, without any proof of wrong-doing, without having to arm himself with affidavits showing it probable that wrong-doing has occurred, can enter an Insurance office, seize the private papers there, inspect them at will, and, if his suspicion prove groundless, leave the injured party no right of redress.

Surely "Liberal Legislation" can go little further and still pay any respect to the constitutional rights and privileges of a citizen! It might carry the principles of its Insurance legislation into all fields of commercial activity. Do we want this? Is this what the Provincial Party propose in promising us "more Liberal Legislation?"

THE POLITICAL "CLAN MACRAE"—A LOST OPPORTUNITY

It is not only the political "Clan Macrae," the leaderless Provincial Party, that loses by the unwisdom that wrecked that Party's political chances and shut a door that might have led to better things politically in the judgment of some very thoughtful men.

Unquestionably the people were—and are—tired of the snapping and snarling, the crimination and recrimination that have occupied, too greatly, the time of our Legislators to the exclusion of much that might have been beneficial in the way of Legislative action on our Provincial problems.

People who remembered the days before the advent of the late Joseph Martin, when political discussions were carried on upon a much higher level than they are today, were disposed to welcome any party which would restore the former conditions, an event unlikely to ensue from the political discussions of recent years taking place either within or without the Legislature.

There were those within the Provincial Party, good, sane, sober-minded men, who felt that this might, and could be, accomplished. They desired unproductive debate abandoned and the problems of advancing our different business interests more closely and successfully studied. They, perhaps, overlooked, or underestimated, the effect on the public mind of the influence of the years of partizan Government that have intervened since Semlin's time. It is to be seriously questioned if this dream was more than a dream, incapable of realization. Be that as it may, it was, at any rate, a noble dream and many good men felt it could come true. These were the real strength of the "Clan Macrae."

Unfortunately these idealists were not to control. In spite of the well-known weariness of the public at the controversial bickerings of Conservative and Liberal; in spite of the fact that they were adopting the very policy they decried; in spite of the known risks they were running; we have the Provincial Party launching charges. The spleen of some of its leaders, the rash inconsequentiality and stupidity of others led it thus to the slaughter.

Even with the Rossiter charges there was lack of judgment in the manner in which the Provincial "Clan Macrae" prepared itself for the Commission. In its preparation for the personal charges the stupidity shown was almost incredible. The disappointment of those who sought better things, in being thus sacrificed, must have been intense.

With the Commission fiasco the Provincial Party's chances of success went a-glimmering. A large number of the dreamers may remain faithful, wise selection of candidates may help them; money and oratory may aid; but, with it all, this Party can count on but a few seats and those in Vancouver and on the Island. A golden gate of promise has closed with a decisiveness that foretells final and irremediable defeat.

THE CONSERVATIVE SITUATION

With the Liberal Government an admitted failure; its legislation autocratic and despotic in its tendencies; its financial programme a farce; its Law enforcement a tragedy; with the Provincial Party's prospect blasted; what of the remaining Party, the Conservatives and its Leader Hon. W. J. Bowser?

At first blush it promises nothing better than the others. Its Leader a man of undoubted force, keen intellect and indomitable will has to face great, though fast diminishing, hostility to himself in his own ranks and, with the public, the results of some of his blunders.

When, as Leader of the Opposition, speaking at Langley, or Surrey, about the time when a Committee of the House was inquiring into P.G.E. affairs, he said, in reference to the summons directed to himself to appear before that Committee and tell all he knew of these matters, "I am not going to go before the Committee and tell them all I know and I have a good friend John Oliver who will see that I do not have to go."

This challenge Oliver dared not take up. It may have been good politics thus to expose Oliver's weakness and inability to use his authority and compell Bowser to give his evidence in full. Oliver failed and, since then, respect for law, that a premier dared not enforce, has dwindled until, today, it is hard to name a law that is properly and rigidly enforced in