

The Standard



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SAINT JOHN, MONDAY MORNING, FEB. 13, 1911

BLISSFUL IGNORANCE.

"In these days," said the Telegraph on Saturday, "when the average taxpayer is attempting to decide for himself whether or not St. John's civic affairs would be more satisfactorily administered by means of a commission, he is confronted from time to time by statements, or intimations, or suggestions, that the present plan is fairly satisfactory, and that it should be continued, or that some modification of it would answer all present needs. But there is a class of evidence that friends of the present system do not say much about; for instance, here is a ten year comparison of the expenditures in the principal civic departments in 1901 and in 1911," and then the Telegraph, with greatunction, proceeds to quote statistics which, on investigation, show that its knowledge of the present system is about on a par with that of many of its friends who are advocating commission rule.

Apart from making a trifling error of \$21,000, obviously due to ignorance, the Telegraph makes no effort to analyze the figures it presents, but contents itself with asking "whether in any one of these principle departments of civic business there has been any increase in efficiency, or in the general good derived from the expenditure, to warrant any such growth of the city's expenses." As the Telegraph wants to change the system it should surely have made an effort to answer the question.

As a very potent example of the want of insight advocates of commission possess when they start in to criticize the city's methods of administration, The Standard quotes the Telegraph's summary showing departmental expenditures for 1901 and 1911, and, at the same time, in black type, the correct figures, as follows:—

	WARRANT.	Spent.	WARRANT.	Limit
	1901	1901	1911	1911
Streets	\$ 45,500	\$ 52,500	\$ 78,000	\$ 75,000
Fire	33,900	36,005	66,400	64,878
Police	27,250	30,070	54,167	50,467
Light	22,350	21,383	27,000	26,450
	\$129,000	\$139,958	\$225,567	\$216,795

* The warrant for Police expenditure 1911 is not \$54,167, as stated by the Telegraph, but \$67,400. No account has evidently been taken of the estimated revenue from the police court.

The error into which the Telegraph has fallen would be a natural one for those who pay little attention to civic affairs, but, for a journal which in season and out of season has criticized the Common Council, and professes to keep abreast of the times and teach "business methods," the mistake is ridiculous and inexcusable. The Telegraph has jumped to the conclusion that because a warrant authorizes so much expenditure, that must necessarily be the amount expended. Now in 1901, before the present system was adopted, the actual money spent by the departments mentioned, largely exceeded the warrants of expenditure in three out of four cases.

Take the streets. A total expenditure of \$45,500 was authorized, but in actual expenditure, that amount was exceeded by \$7,000, as appears in the second column, and so with others. It was a pernicious and unbusiness-like system and when Mr. T. H. Bullock was chairman of the Treasury Board, some five or six years ago, an order in council was passed placing a limit on the expenditures. The result has been that the city has lived within its income ever since.

There are other good features of the system, which, as the Telegraph has broached the subject, we will endeavor to make clear. Year after year, on account of the expenditures exceeding the warrants, debit balances accumulated which eventually had to be written off. All that is now a thing of the past. Even when the expenditures did not exceed the warrants, there was often a debit balance arising from the fact that the amounts mentioned in the warrants were never collected in full. There were, and there always will be, arrears in tax collections. Consequently, the money available under a warrant was always less than appeared on its face. To remedy this difficulty an order in council was passed limiting the expenditures, not to the amount of the warrants, but to a safe percentage below that amount, thus leaving a margin for taxes uncollected. Take, for instance, the streets' department for the current year, the warrant, as seen from the above table, is \$78,000; the limit of expenditure is \$75,000, and with the Comptroller supervising the bills, this amount can never be exceeded.

Not knowing anything about the methods which prevailed in 1901, or the up-to-date system in force throughout every department of the city's business today, the Telegraph's blunder worked two ways. It assumed that the expenditure in 1901 was some \$10,000 less than it actually was, and that the estimated expenditure in 1911 was some \$11,000 more than the true figures. Hence, a departure from the facts which leaves this organ of commission rule somewhat discredited as a financial critic, and has enabled The Standard to explain the present up-to-date and businesslike system which the Telegraph started out to condemn.

In a future issue The Standard will present an analysis of the expenditures in 1901 and 1911, showing how and why the increase has arisen. It will then be for the advocates of commission rule to reply, and to demonstrate by the facts that in their how much better a commission would have managed the city's affairs. As matters stand at present we have heard a great deal of the improvements commission rule has wrought in cities morally and financially bankrupt, but as regards its advantages in St. John there has been no evidence.

VANCOUVER AND THE SINGLE TAX

The question of St. John introducing a Single Tax system being under discussion at the present time, the following extract from the Yorkshire Observer may be of interest:—"The optimistic account given by Mr. Joseph Fels of the experience of the City of Vancouver, B. C., in the application of the Single Tax, may be suspected of prejudice. Yet the experiment is one of which the future course will be watched with interest. Not quite a year ago all buildings, improvements and industries of every kind within the city were exempted from taxation, and the whole burden was placed upon site values. The result was, says Mr. Fels, that within a month \$1,750,000 worth of new buildings were contracted for. He adds that the American city of Seattle has been losing an average of five families per week in the last six months, who have migrated to the City of Vancouver; and Prince Rupert, Victoria and other towns in British Columbia are agitating for the same conditions. Business and industry, we are told, are booming; but we believe that is a present condition common to all the neighboring cities. If Vancouver shows, in the next few years, a prosperity greater than her neighbors, they will not be slow to imitate her policy. The experiment promises to decide some points in economics which have been hotly contested."

The Vancouver World, commenting on the above, says:—"It is apparent from accounts which we have published from time to time regarding the effect which the result of the adoption of Single Tax in Vancouver has had upon the public mind in Seattle and other cities, that the description which Mr. Fels gave of conditions as he found them here was not overdrawn. At present it is only necessary to point to the fact that the number of building permits issued for the twelve months ending December 31, 1909, was 2,054, a total value of buildings amounting to \$7,238,565; whereas the number issued during the twelve months ending on December 31 last was 2,260, with a total value of buildings amounting to \$13,150,265."

One point on which the comment of the Observer might lead to misapprehension is that with regard to the taxing of industries. Industries are not taxed in Vancouver, but the machinery used in industry is a provincial tax, payable to the Government.

THE MORIBUND MR. CARVELL.

During the course of the Public Accounts Committee's investigation into Pugsley scandals on Wednesday last, Mr. Carvell, of Carleton, is reported to have jumped to his feet as if pierced by a pitchfork from below, and in a white heat, to have yelled at Mr. Crockett, of York, "You are a liar." An uproar naturally followed for a time, during which there were foolish threats of personal violence, but after order had been restored, Chairman Warburton demanded of Mr. Carvell a prompt retraction and an apology; and this order the member for Carleton of many ailments obeyed, although with "mental reservations," which a press reporter describes as "prodigious and profound."

To this the Montreal Star adds that "neither Mr. Crockett nor anybody else appeared to trouble about the 'psychological aspects of Mr. Carvell's withdrawal.' Another exchange, in referring to the incident, wonders 'if Mr. Carvell will ever learn to understand what is really required of him when he is in the presence of gentlemen. It is humiliating to a Parliament to have such experiences as that of Wednesday; and it must indeed be humiliating to the Maritime Provinces, which have given to Canada so many of the ablest of her public men, to reflect that it is one of their representatives who is responsible for the baseness of the 'innovation.' And by none, we are confident, will the 'humiliation be more keenly felt than by the intelligent electors of Carleton."

"Parliament is not the place for a person who, in the absence of sufficient mental equipment to meet his opponent, resorts to the language and the tactics of the slums."—Frederick Gleaner.

CONCRETE TELEGRAPH POLES.

That the end of the wooden telegraph pole is near at hand may be doubted, despite the assertion to that effect of the Philadelphia Record, but that newspaper's announcement that the Pennsylvania Railroad has successfully substituted lean concrete pillars is encouraging. In this company's great yards there is not a wooden pole left. The telegraph wires are strung on "concrete poles" which we are told are made as rapidly as they are needed.

Friends of conservation will watch the Pennsylvania's experiment with keen interest, for the demand for wooden telegraph poles has occasioned quite a drain on the forests. So considerable was the requirement at one time that a few years ago this same railroad went into forestry that it might eventually cut its own ties and poles.

The ordinary pole for wires or electric lights is, slightly, an obstruction on the landscape. Some cities which have successfully solved the problem of reconciling the aesthetic and the useful have forced the introduction of standards or supports graceful in design, but along country roads or suburban streets the long unsightly stick of timber rears itself in all its unabashed gauntness.

Current Comment

(Montreal Herald.)

A Hamilton poet wrote these lines:—

"In shady nooks the warning sun
Is tickling roots beneath the sod."

The man who allows sunshine to invade a shady nook is the same kind of actor as will tickle his feet with the lobe of his left ear.

(London Free Press.)

Ninety per cent. of the skilled laborers who appeared, to give evidence before the technical education commission were Englishmen. It seems as if the nasty phrase

"No Englishmen need apply," had been relegated to its proper place for all time.

(Brockville Times.)

United States magazines are holding up—among other things—to their readers as examples of public benefits enjoyed in Great Britain, the administration of justice, the pure food laws and the parcels post system. They are shingling examples for Canada, also.

(Toronto Globe.)

The law has already made it an offence for trainmen to indulge in alcoholic stimulants while on duty, and the railway companies have done much to supplement legislation in that regard. The twin danger of overwork should receive more careful attention.

(Ottawa Journal.)

Hon. Mr. Sifton, who is said to be opposed to the reciprocity proposals, is announced as "watching events closely, but saying nothing." This is a proceeding at which Mr. Sifton is an expert. But he can talk equally well.

(Vancouver Province.)

French capitalists are financing a new Canadian bank in Montreal. We may now expect more trouble with those bilingual bills.

The Standard's Old Reporter

A City With Ideals.

Talking of cities, Glasgow, the second in the United Kingdom, is a great, energetic and progressive centre. Its civic government is reputed to be the most perfect in existence; its enterprise has excited the admiration and the wonder of the world. No city has more successfully grappled with the problems of urban life; no city has done, or is doing, more for the comfort and well-being of its citizens.

In thirty years St. John's city has been transformed, as though the hand of the enchanter had been at work upon it. About Glasgow Cross thirty years ago clustered a multitude of narrow streets, dismal lanes, and filthy closes, where disease and death held high carnival, and vice and crime lifted up their heads unabashed. But great changes have taken place. The bridgegate, the salt market and the Gallows have been transformed out of their historical associations. The city has purchased and reconstructed the districts where thousands of reds and rookeries once existed, letting in the light and air of heaven upon broad and cheerful streets, and making a great improvement in the appearance of the city, and in the comfort and well-being of the citizens.

Municipal Ownership.

Thirty years ago the duties of the municipality were confined to police maintenance and supplying water and gas. Today the city owns and operates its tramway and telephone systems, provides electric lighting and water for hydraulic power, maintains public parks, museums, picture galleries, public halls, baths and wash-houses, lodging-houses and model dwellings for the working classes and a nursing home. The Bazaar Committee provides concerts on Saturday afternoon in various parts of the city, and the people crowd their own halls or parks to enjoy their own concerts. The Parks and Galleries Committee maintain a picture gallery, second to none in the Kingdom, which ministers to the aesthetic improvement and enjoyment of the public.

The Improvement Trust Committee is continually engaged tearing down unsanitary localities and making proper provision for the housing of the poorer classes. The Sanitary Committee has recently completed the most perfect sewage purification system in the world. The growth of the city, the increase in its manufactures, and the extension of the water-closet system all concerned to make the Clyde, which had been used as a common sewer of the city, so filthy and offensive a river as to be a menace to the public health. Some other method of dealing with the sewage became indispensable, and two vast establishments have been constructed on the banks of the Clyde where the sewage of the city, with its million inhabitants, is received and purified. In these establishments the solid sewage is separated from liquid and converted into fertilizers and other products, while the liquid, so perfect in the process, is rendered as clear as crystal and as pure as water manufactured by a condenser.

All this activity in municipal well-doing has produced great and beneficial results. Glasgow the civic spirit is stronger than in any other city, and every extension of municipal enterprise has been marked by an increased interest in municipal affairs on the part of the citizens.

Citizens Approve.

Glasgow's municipal socialism has often been criticized, and even a responsible journal like the London Times has tried to discredit it. But the city continually extends the domain of corporate enterprise, and that shows beyond question that the great majority of the citizens have no objection to the extension of the municipal enterprises are not run as business undertakings. The corporation committees do not aim at producing profit; they are expected only to provide increasingly efficient and cheaper public services. In many English cities the profits on municipal enterprises are applied towards reducing the rates, but the citizens of Glasgow have steadily resisted the efforts of the landlords, who supported the municipalization movements in the hope that their rates would thereby be reduced to induce the city to follow the English example.

The municipality, says the canny Scot, can afford to do business at an apparent loss. It can throw away apparent profits on gas and water, and by doing so increase the real income of the users of these services, and thus, by turning a blind eye to the great benefit to the citizen as a taxpayer, it may greatly benefit him as a consumer without violating any sound law of economics. It can dovetail its policy with the housing policy, and though it may show very little ledger profits on either it may be doing better business than if it made big percentages on both; and it can reduce the value of land which it has purchased for working class dwellings in order to lower rents, and it can recoup itself ultimately from the improved stamina and morals of the citizen. Its expenditures on parks, music, libraries, etc., can yield a similar return—a return which the private provider could never secure, as social values have often no exchange value.

Then the Scot sees another danger in the proposal to run municipal enterprises for the purpose of relieving rates. In his opinion the salvation of municipal enterprises lies in the payment of rates as a condition of voting by every citizen. Therefore, he opposes a reduction of the rates, believing that it would lead to less interest in civic affairs.

BARNESVILLE.

Barnesville, Feb. 9.—The funeral of Mrs. William Connor took place yesterday, the last sad rites were conducted by her pastor, Rev. James McCune. Deceased was a consistent member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church. The late Mrs. Connor was 74 years of age, and was stricken on Friday with paralysis, dying on Sunday, having never regained consciousness. She leaves an aged husband to mourn who has the sympathy of a large circle of friends.

Miss Lena Cother, of St. John, who has been visiting friends in this place,

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Left this week to visit friends in Smithtown and Hampton, N. J. Westra Barnes, who spent the last two months in Hampton with friends, has returned home.

Mrs. Margaret Lawson is critically ill. Doctor Skinner of St. John, and Doctor King of Hampton were here on Monday in consultation. They held no hope for her recovery, consequently her children have been called to her side. Four of them arrived today from Boston. The eight surviving are here, and will remain until the change takes place.

Doctor G. O. Baxter, of St. John, was called here on Sunday to attend Joseph McFall, who is suffering from dropsy.

Miss Maud Curry arrived here yesterday and will spend some time with her parents.

Mr. and Mrs. William Floyd of Maine, U. S., are visiting the former's parents and other friends. They expect to remain for some time.

The many friends of Harry Rodgers are sorry he does not improve. Slight hope is entertained for his recovery.

Probate Court.
In the Probate Court Saturday morning Judge Armstrong granted letters of administration in the estate of the late Recorder Charles N. Skinner. The deceased died intestate and the petition for letters was presented by Sherwood A. M. Skinner, barrister; Dr. S. S. Skinner and Mrs. Eliza J. Skinner, deceased's widow. The real estate is valued at \$21,250, personal property at \$15,400 and life insurance \$6,500. Bowyer S. Smith is the executor.

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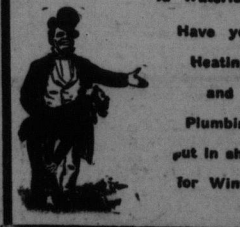
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