

# Raising Revenue From Titles

**N**EXT to winning the war perhaps no two Canadian problems are so much discussed today as those of nobility in title and war profits in excess; but though no suggestion has yet been made whereby the two problems may afford a mutual solution, such a solution is quite possible in the light of past experience.

Three centuries ago, Francis Bacon sounded a warning to his countrymen, "Let states that aim at greatness take heed how their nobility and gentlemen do multiply too fast, for that maketh the common subject grow to be a peasant and base swain, driven out of heart and in effect but the gentleman's laborer." This warning was uttered in the reign of James the First; but the King went on frankly selling titles to increase his revenue, and, unintentionally, suggesting to us a method whereby the desire for official recognition as gentleman may be exploited to the economic advantage of the nation. Charles the First went further than his father, and revived the compulsory knighthood of Edward the First, who, three centuries earlier still, had decreed that all men possessing a stated income should assume both the privileges and the responsibilities of knight-hood—that is, should provide a horse and armour for the defence of the kingdom or pay a fine which would enable the king to equip such a knight and feed him for a definite number of days.

## Herein Lies a Solution

Herein lies the solution of both our problems: the problem of nobility in title and of war-profits in excess. Let us too have a daint of knight-hood or compulsory assumption of title and responsibility. Let us compel all who are getting an income of \$5,000 a year to become gentlemen and pay annually to the state the cost of a soldier for 40 days and 40 nights; and further insist that those who are getting a larger income shall assume a proportionate honor. In this way, justice will be combined with distinction and every free man, modest or aggressive, will be compelled to play his part in governmental work; and will learn something of the great truth that underlies the old feudal motto "noblesse oblige." Nor would it be necessary to make compulsory knight-hood an hereditary institution. The title, baronet, could lapse; and knights would be such for life only—subject to good behaviour and the payment of annual dues. Similarly, barons, earls and dukes would be unable to transmit their rights or duties; but in cases of fluctuating revenues, they should be allowed to ascend to the class above or drop automatically into the class below, just as in America one can go from shirt-sleeves to shirt-sleeves in three generations.

It follows as a corollary that we should have to apply to the Imperial Parliament to amend our constitution so as to allow our Governor-General to confer these titles in Canada. In this way the money made out of our own resources would be kept at home, and our progressive citizens would not find it necessary to forfeit both wealth and patriotism in working up a proper interest in their merits abroad. It is not suggested that the Governor-General should procure a number of letters-patent to be filled in at will like the "lettres de

## A Practical Application of the Traffic in Knight-hoods to a National Necessity—By D. C. Harvey

cachet" of the ancien regime, but rather that it is one of the prerogatives of self-government to confer distinctions upon our own citizens. If desirable, these titles could fall under the two-year clause of the constitution like our legislation; but it should be distinctly understood that only an aggravated case of injustice should be considered by Downing Street—for example, if a clergyman, a woman or a minor were compelled to become a knight.

### Grounds for Title

If it be supposed, then, that our government had the right to confer titles upon its citizens and that these titles devolved automatically upon all who acquired a certain income, the difficulty in regard to war-profits would cease to exist. Not only would the privilege have to pay an annual contribution of the highest percentage for his honor, but he would also have the punishment of dropping to a lower rank after the war when he would be unable to liquidate his honors in the blood of sacrifice.

It is also a part of this scheme, many details of which could be worked out at leisure, to have all titles indicate the grounds upon which they were granted: for example, if a man were a prosperous farmer and attained the required income he might be called a "right courteous and valiant Knight of the Plow." In fact this suggestion is not new. In the days of the French Revolution when the old order was being recreated according to the laws of nature, Arthur Young claimed that the National Assembly in discussing the abolition of nobility should have petitioned the King to institute a new order of knight-hood—Knights of the Plow—though he admitted that there are "doubtless little souls who will smile at this and think a thistle, a garter or an eagle more significant and more honorable, to say nothing of orders that exceed common sense and common chronology, such as St. Esprit, St. Andrew and St. Patrick, which should be left to those who venerate most what they least understand."



"Right Courteous and Valiant Knight of the Plow."

mate aspirations might be expressed in the following well-known couplet:—

"For my trade's sake, if good success I have,  
The Grocer's Arms shall in my ensign wave."

A railway magnate might well be called, Knight of the Sleeping Car; and a financier of outstanding ability might well be designated, Real Estate Marquis of the Canadian Labrador; Cement Prince of Vancouver; or Viscount Wheat of Fort William. In this way every town and village might find its way from the geography into the Peerage, while every trade or profession would be as liberally recognized by the national government as it is at present by the Kiwanis or Rotary Clubs.

Nor would it be necessary to confine the titles to our English list. With the experience of the world before us we could adopt or adapt at least two more: *ebant* and *graf*. Our clerks could all be counts while the managers and more highly paid officials could climb into one of the other classes. All our successful "grafters" could be compelled to assume the title of *graf*. This would reach a two-fold objective: it would compel recognition of the fact that efficiency is a German contribution, and it would diminish the number of grafters just as the Spartan law permitting a certain alien race to be filthy had a greater deterrent effect than previous legislation against filth. Perhaps it is not too much to say that if a history of the procedure necessary to secure the various titles were published there would be even less respect for them than at present and there certainly would be less competition for the distinction.

It is not the intention of this article to discuss the relative value of the different methods that have been adopted in the past to recognize merit or indicate social distinctions. Whether public spirit can be stimulated and perpetuated without some such recognition is a topic in itself and a moot

we must keep our heads and remember that in Canada a titled nobility has been an exotic inseparable from the carpet bag. It is not as in England the lineal descendant of a feudal aristocracy which once owed suit and service to the King in return for landed estates. It cannot be defended as a fundamental part of our constitution to be approached only as one would approach "the wounds of a father, with pious awe and trembling solicitude."

It is not in Canada a useful survival needing only to be modified in conformity with the spirit of the age, but rather an innovation, and as such, an ominous shadow of future disaster. As one maiden aunt expressed it, "we are trying to introduce class distinctions into Canada."

### First Attempt in Canada

It will be remembered that the first attempt to create a local aristocracy in Canada was revealed in the negotiations which preceded the constitutional



The Cold Storage Magnate might be called Baron Grunt

Act of 1791. Owing to the influx of Loyalists into Quebec, it was found necessary to grant representative government to the Canadians and the general plan as expressed by "Mr. Mothercountry of the colonial office" was to assimilate the constitution of the Canadas to that of Great Britain as far as the local circumstances and manners would admit. The intention was to confer upon members of the Legislative Council, which was to be the image and transcript of the House of Lords, "some mark of honor, such as a provincial Baronetage, either personal to themselves or descendible to their eldest sons, in lineal succession." In case of an increase of wealth, these gentlemen might look forward to a "higher degree of honor." The object of these suggested regulations was to give to the upper Branch of the Legislature "a greater degree of weight and consequence than was possessed by the councils in the old Colonial Governments and to establish in the province a body of men having that motive of attachment to the existing form of government which arises from the possession of personal or hereditary distinction."

In reply to Grenville's despatch, outlined above, Dorchester questioned the wisdom of an hereditary legislative council, and expressed the fear that the fluctuating state of property in Canada would expose all hereditary honors to fall into disregard. He recommended the appointment of members for life only, subject to good behavior and residence in the Province. His advice on this point was accepted and the Constitutional Act of 1791 did not create an hereditary body of councillors for Canada, although the King was actually empowered to confer at a later date, if he should think such a course expedient, the hereditary right of sitting in the Legislative Council. Fortunately, he did not see fit to confer such honors and when the two Canadas were united in 1841, provision was made for life membership only; and no mention was made of hereditary councillors.

### Sir John A MacDonald Opposed

The Fathers of Confederation were equally wise and recognized the danger of attempting to transplant, without

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Sir Wilfrid says he would gladly burn his Title at a Bonfire in the Marketplace

Again, if a potential nobleman were a tradesman and dealt in hardware or old clothes, he might be called: Knight of the Tin Can or Knight of the Pyjamas; Baron Sartor Resartus or Baron Dynamite. If he made his wealth from cold storage products he might be called, Earl Bacon or Baron Grunt; and, if a successful corner grocer, his legiti-

question. There will always be some who like Burke, consider hereditary wealth and rank "too rashly slighted in the shallow speculation of petulant, assuming, short-sighted coxcombs of philosophy," and others, like Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who would gladly burn their titles at a bonfire in the market place. But in the presence of both champions,