

## The St. John Standard

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ST. JOHN, N. B., MONDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1919.

### POLITICAL PROSPECTS.

The prophets who declare that Union Government is bound to go down to defeat at the next elections, because it has lost some by-elections, and because it is a bad time for Governments anyway, will not find much ground for their hopes in the results of the general elections in New Zealand, or in Australia, any more than in France and Italy. According to the political prophets the Governments of both Australia and New Zealand had reached the end of their tether and were doomed to overthrowing defeat whenever they dared to face a general election, but both came back to power with large majorities. The fact that the Australian Coalition Government came back on a strong policy of tariff protection has a special interest for this country.

If Union Government in Canada only had to face the opposition of the Liberals at the next election, the issue would not be in doubt. Even Liberal organs express little or no confidence in the ability of Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King to lead his party to victory; they base their hopes of the defeat of Union Government largely on the Farmers' movement, and rather envisage the possibility of a Farmer-Liberal Alliance. But the Farmers' leaders at present show no inclination to such an alliance, and, according to some reports, the Liberal leaders have come to the conclusion that there is no chance of such an alliance, or that it would not be good policy in any case. The Ottawa correspondent of the Financial Post of Toronto says the feeling at the recent meeting of the National Liberal Committee was that the party's only hope of victory was to avoid suspicion of being ready to assist the Farmers to tear down the tariff regardless of the consequences, and to try to enlist the support of business men, financial interests, the manufacturers, and men of a conservative cast of thought generally. The Financial Post's correspondent adds:

"It was with this in mind that the Liberals at their recent meeting decided to plough a straight Liberal furrow in the country hereafter, having no affiliations with any of the new elements. They will put a straight Liberal candidate in the field in every constituency, will have no say in any party, and will fight hard for their own hand. Their belief is that by so doing they will attract to themselves all the solid elements in the country, including men who may not be much enamored of Liberal doctrines or history, but will say to themselves: 'Well, we at least know what the worst would be with the Liberals in power; but with the Farmers or Labor there is no knowing where we might be led.'"

"They assume that what the stable interests of the country desire above everything else is the continuance of that very stability. If the tariff must be revised and come down, it would be better to have it gently pared in the feeling fashion than torn down regardlessly in the way which Hon. Mr. Crerar and the farmer leaders of Ontario would advocate; and they realize that during the time they were in power the Liberals never did anything which could seriously injure the stability of business in Canada."

If Union Government went to the country, at once without a definite tariff policy, or on a mere stand-pat platform, the Liberal party would doubtless have a fair chance of enlisting the support of moderate electors who believe that tariff revision is advisable, but who do not favor the hasty and drastic treatment the leaders of the Farmers promise to apply if they get the opportunity. But Union Government is pledged to a comprehensive tariff enquiry and each revision as the best interests of the nation demands, and it would doubtless have been proceeding with its tariff programme, if it had not been for the retirement of Sir Thomas White and the illness of the Premier. In any case it will undoubtedly redeem its pledge before it goes to the country, and if the tariff revision which it makes is reasonably satisfactory, it will probably be able to make a stronger appeal to the "conservatively minded electors generally" than Mr. King and his supporters will be able to do.

The Union Government has not been looking to its political fences; it has been sawing wood—a very good excuse for neglecting the political arts in strenuous times. Nobody has ever accused it of possessing much subtlety—its leader's outstanding characteristics are frankness and sincerity—so there may have been no deliberate purpose in allowing Mr. Crerar and his colleagues to enunciate rather extravagant views without any effort to challenge or canvass them. But the apparent indifference of the Government so far may turn out to have been good political strategy. Unchecked by authoritative criticism Mr. Crerar has advocated extreme policies that a Farmer's party wedded with the responsibility of

power, would be chary of carrying out in their entirety. In the general discussion which will precede a general election Mr. Crerar will have to modify some of his views, or run the risk of alienating the support of many farmers themselves. With European nations, Australia and Latin America going in more strongly for tariff protection as a result of the lessons learned in the war, and with our next door neighbor enriched by the war producing a big surplus of both farm and manufactured products, the Canadian farmers are going to think twice before giving Mr. Crerar a mandate to tear down the tariff mainly for the reason that he thinks the Canadian manufacturers have in some cases taken undue advantage of the tariff to make money. The Canadian farmer is a great deal more prosperous than he ever was; he knows very well that his prosperity is largely a reflex of the industrial progress of the country, the expansion of the effective demand of his home market; and when the issue is brought home to him as the discussion preceding a general election will bring it, he will not be eager for drastic tariff action, which may leave the industries of this country at the mercy of the large scale production of the United States, where cheap black labor is now being largely utilized.

Mr. Crerar will probably return to Ottawa with a considerable following. Naturally the political ambitions of the farmers have grown with their increasing recognition of their importance in the economic life of the nation, their realization that their interests are interwoven with the interests of every other section of the population. In their own and the nation's interest a larger representation of farmers in Parliament is doubtless desirable. If their immediate inspiration is class interest—a thing some of their leaders deny while others affirm it—their appearance in politics as an independent organization is bound to broaden their outlook, emphasize the interdependence of their interests with other classes, and deepen their sense of responsibility. And it will require no great political enlightenment to convince them that Mr. Crerar's sweeping assertion that wiping out the tariff and adopting the New Zealand system of taxation will cause this country to flourish like a green bay tree, is susceptible of further argument, especially in the way of elucidating what share of Mr. Crerar's taxes would fall on the farmers themselves.

### THE HOUSING PROBLEM.

Union Government in Canada has stolen a long march on Coalition Government in England in the matter of dealing with the housing problem. Before the war was two years old the British Government began considering schemes to provide housing for the working class, recognizing that with the practical cessation of private building the longer the war went on the more serious the shortage would be. Moreover Lloyd George discovered that the slum areas were responsible for a large 3-c. population, and he promised to establish the housing conditions necessary for the making of an A1 nation. He was loud in the protestations that it was a reproach to the wealthiest nation in the world not to have paid its working classes sufficient wages to enable them to have a decent roof over their heads.

Perhaps Lloyd George reckoned without mine host, the landlord, who is powerful in the British Parliament. At any rate his good intentions and righteous indignation have availed next to nothing so far. He talked of building half a million houses at least. His Government acquired vast stores of lumber from Norway, British Columbia and Eastern Canada—and a year after the armistice appears to have erected about a score of experimental cottages.

After dallying with various propositions for years the British Government has at last decided to offer private builders subsidies of £130, £140, £160, according to the class of house built. If houses are not completed in twelve months the subsidies will be subject to reductions. Dr. Addison, the Minister of Health, estimated that this scheme will result in the erection of 100,000 houses within a year at a cost to the Government of £16,000,000. At this rate it would take five years to build the half million houses now said to be required. While the Government proposes to subsidize private construction, it is urging the municipal authorities to embark on housing schemes which would involve an expenditure of one billion pounds in five years—which they are very unlikely to do in competition with subsidized private construction.

Whatever may be said of the Canadian Government's housing scheme it has the merit of having already promoted a substantial amount of new building, and has the great advantage of giving wage earners an opportunity

to acquire homes at cost. The Canadian scheme is also calculated to exercise some influence on rents. The British scheme, though it will grant a subsidy equal to one-fourth or one-third of the cost of a house, does not attempt to influence the rents that may be charged, nor does it provide for sale of the subsidized house to the occupant at cost.

The Union Government in its housing scheme has considered the interests of the wage-earner in a manner the British Government is not yet disposed to do.

### BELGIUM'S AMBITION.

The Allied Council does not have to look for trouble. Now perky Belgium wants a new international status. She wants to be freed from the fetters of permanent neutrality with which she was bound in 1839. She observes that the international guarantees did not save her from invasion, and only lulled her into a false sense of security. She says she would sooner rely on herself and such allies as she can secure, and she points with pride to the fact that she has the nucleus of a navy, and an army on a peace footing of 100,000, capable of expansion to 700,000 in war. Besides, King Albert and his Ministers argue that neutrality is incompatible with full sovereignty and independence, and with the new prestige little Belgium won in the war.

France is said to look with favor on Belgium's ambition to be more than a cipher in European affairs, and to be anxious to have her join the Anglo-French Alliance. There is fear in some quarters, however, that Belgium may be too ready to provoke a quarrel with Holland over the Zealand and Limburg questions if she is not subjected to neutral restraint, at least until the passions provoked by the war have time to cool.

### WHAT THEY SAY

#### Sure Things.

(Hamilton Spectator.)

De Valera, in returning to Ireland from the United States, avers that his efforts there have met with success. He fails to state what kind of success. It can hardly be financial, or the fact would have been blazoned throughout the land.

#### Sporty But Sensible.

(Calgary Herald.)

The British House of Commons has rejected the Lottery Bond scheme by a decisive vote. John Bull will meet his obligations in the straight old-fashioned way. He loves to bet on the races, but gambling will not be permitted in the nation's finances.

#### The Patient People.

(Farmers' Sun.)

Sir John A. Macdonald used to complain that the plain people asked for so little. Had they asked for more it would have been easier, he believed, for his government to hold the clamorous and self-seeking in their place. The people who pay taxes in this province will do well to con his saying.

#### Nickel Coinage.

(Montreal Herald.)

The proposal that Canada should adopt nickel for coinage of small denomination, which was proposed at the Ontario board of trade meeting, carried unanimously, is one which has frequently been suggested to successive governments but never acted upon. Fifty-four countries use nickel coinage, while Canada with eighty-five per cent. of the world's nickel, has no nickel coin.

#### Price-Fixing.

(Hamilton Herald.)

Premier Drury condemns the fixing of prices as "vicious principle." That is the opinion which was to be expected from a convinced free trader. But wouldn't it be interesting to have a debate on the subject arranged between Mr. Drury and that man O'Connor?

#### Rocking the Boat.

(London Free Press.)

"Everybody steady! This is no time to rock the boat."—Toronto Globe. Very good and very true. Yet in the next column in our contemporary's issue we read:

"If the circumstances surrounding the so-called investigation," are as reported, the authorities have added another to the series of blind-

## Benny's Note Book

BY LEE PAPE

Last Sunday morning I had my new patten leather shoes on, and I started to walk past Mary Watkins' house just for the walk and Mary Watkins was standing on her top step all dressed up as if she was either just coming home from somewhere or just going some place, looking pretty pretty all right, and I stopped going past, saying, Good morning, are you going out?

Good morning, no, I'm coming home, said Mary Watkins. And we kept on talking different answers and questions and I saw Puds Simkins coming up the street and I quick said, Do you want to take a walk this afternoon after dinner?

O I don't know, I mite, maybe, she said. Which jest then Puds came up with new brown shoes on, not looking so wonderful, and he started to talk by joining in the conversation, and pretty soon he said to Mary Watkins, How would you like to go for a walk after dinner, would you like to?

Maybe, perhaps I don't know yet, Benny asked me too, she said. And jest then Sam Cross came up in new yellow shoes, not looking so grand, and he stood there a while and then he said, How about taking a walk this afternoon, Mary, will you, do you want to?

O possibly, I'll see, Benny and Puds jest asked me too, said Mary Watkins, well, I haff to go in now. Which she did, and I said, Gosh, talk about stuck up, I wouldn't take a walk with her if she paid me.

Neither would I, I guess she thinks I'm her slave, said Sam Cross, and Puds Simkins said, I guess she thinks I am too, she can take a walk with herself if she wants to take a walk.

And I went home for dinner, and rite after dinner I walked around to Mary Watkins, thinking she mite be waiting for me, and who did I meet but Puds Simkins, me saying, Hello Puds, were you going? and Puds said, O nowhere spehll, I thawt maybe I'd take a walk out to the park, and I said, So did I, thaws wat I thawt. And jest then who turned around the corner but Sam Cross, saying he was jest taking a walk by himself. And we all started to walk out to the park together, and wen we passed Mary Watkins' house she was setting behind the parlor window, and we all tipped our hats proud and walked rite past as if we dident care weather she was there or not.

ers that have exasperated the returned soldiers and their friends."

Without knowing the circumstances as it admits, The Globe accepts the reported grievances as true and proceeds to berate the Government, thereby adding fuel to the flame. The Globe wants to stand up in the boat while it enjoins others to keep it steady.

### An Old Familiar Story.

(Woodstock Sentinel-Review.)

Why is it that, while the great mass of the members of the labor unions in the United States are men of reasonable and moderate views, they allow themselves so easily to fall under the control of radical leaders? An American paper which has undertaken to investigate the subject, has found that only a small proportion of the labor men attend the meetings at which the radicals gain their influence. It is an old familiar story. It is an explanation that is not restricted to labor unions. It indicates one of the serious weaknesses of democracy. Too many of the people are indifferent and ready to leave their work to be done by others who are willing to do it.

### Preached Virtue With Voice, Promoted Vice With His Votes.

(Toronto Telegram.)

Ontario is forced to remember that Hon. E. C. Drury came of voting age in the beginning of Canada's great railway debacle.

The origin and aggravation of the Laurier-Sifton-Fitzpatrick railway inequities were fastened upon this country with the help of Hon. E. C. Drury's vote and influence at every general election from 1890 to 1917.

Ontario's Premier builds a pulpit out of the ruins that Mr. Drury helped Laurier to create. From that pulpit Hon. E. C. Drury preaches wisdom with his voice to a country that Mr. Drury helped to curse with the folly of his votes.

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"Everybody steady! This is no time to rock the boat."—Toronto Globe. Very good and very true. Yet in the next column in our contemporary's issue we read:

"If the circumstances surrounding the so-called investigation," are as reported, the authorities have added another to the series of blind-

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### A BIT OF VERSE

#### BEYOND WARS.

(For the League of Nations.)  
Then will a quiet gather round the door,  
And settle on those evening fields again,  
When women watch the slow, home-coming men  
Across brown acres booted and hurt no more;

The sound of children's feet be on the floor,  
When lamps are lit, and stillness deeper falls,  
Unbroken, save where cattle in their stalls  
Keep munching patiently upon their store.

Only a scar beside the pasture gate,  
A torn and naked tree upon the hill,  
What times remembered will remind them still  
Of long disastrous days they knew of late;  
Till these, too, yield for sweet, accustomed things—  
And a man ploughs, a woman sows and sings.  
—David Morton.

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