

THE EDMONTON BULLETIN (SEMI-WEEKLY.)

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FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1927.

TENANTS AND TAXES.

Tenants in the city are required to pay a special householder's tax of \$5 before being entitled to vote in municipal elections. There is a movement among tenants to have this tax abolished on the ground that the tenant really pays the tax on the premises he occupies, though paying it indirectly through his landlord, and in the form of rent. Replying to this recently, the finance commissioner argued that as dwellings are not taxed, the renter of a dwelling contributes nothing to the tax-roll. The conclusion is correct from the proposition as stated, but the proposition is not correctly stated. If the tenant of a dwelling occupied the dwelling only and if upon dwellings there were no taxes, then the tenant would undoubtedly be the favored mortal who escaped the tax collector. But by no possibility can a tenant occupy only a dwelling. Houses cannot be suspended in the air, and the occupant of a house necessarily occupies also the ground whereon the house sits. Usually also, he occupies the entire lot of which this ground forms a part. He is the tenant not only of the dwelling, but of all the land which accompanies the dwelling, and to the use of which his occupancy is admitted as giving him full and unquestioned right. His rent is paid not for the use of the house alone, but for the use of the house and the lot, and if the rent is made to recoup the landlord for the taxes on the property it makes no essential difference whether the taxes be levied against the house or the lot. In either event they come really from the pocket of the user of the property, the tenant. So far as the source of the taxes is concerned it makes no difference whether the tenant occupies a dwelling or not, nor whether there be any dwelling on the land. The taxes come from the occupant of the land. As a matter of fact no landlord in the city will dispute that the taxes on his rented properties are paid by his tenants, and not by himself. What difference can it make whether these taxes are levied on the houses occupied by the tenants or on the land which they also occupy?

To put it in another way. Suppose a tenant vacated a house, and no tenant could be found to take his place, would it make no difference to the tax receipts? And suppose all the tenants in the city removed, and the properties remain unoccupied? We fancy it would make no difference to the tax receipts. In the long run, and it would not be a very long run either, the city would be forced to seize the properties for arrears of taxes and sell them for what they would bring. Does this not prove that the presence of the tenants has a very decided influence on the tax-roll? Does it not indeed suggest the query of how much of a tax-roll the city would have if we had no tenants? What is the difference, so far as the revenues of the city are concerned, whether a citizen owns or rents the property he occupies? Every charge levied on that property, general tax, special tax, water rate, electric light charge, telephone rental, is paid by the man who occupies it, directly or indirectly. So far as contributions to the city treasury are affected, the tenant is in every sense and in every degree as valuable a citizen as the property owner.

The city charter recognizes the tenant as the source of taxes on rented property, makes special provision whereby he may be required to pay the taxes on the property directly to the city treasurer, and in the event of his being required to do so entitles him to deduct the taxes so paid from his rent. Title 33 and section 9 of the charter provides that "where taxes are due upon any land occupied by a tenant the secretary-treasurer may give such tenant notice in writing requiring him to pay the secretary-treasurer the rent of the premises as it becomes due from time to time to the amount of the taxes due, and unpaid, including costs; and the secretary-treasurer shall have the same authority as the landlord of the premises would have had to collect such rent by distress or otherwise to the amount of the unpaid taxes and costs; but nothing in this section contained shall prevent or impair any other remedy for the recovery of the taxes or any portion thereof."

From such tenant or from any other person liable therefor. The preceding section provides that "any tenant may deduct from his rent any taxes paid by him which (as between him and his landlord), the latter ought to pay." Thus in the event of a landlord failing to pay taxes on any property, the tenant of that property may be required to pay them under penalty of having his belongings seized, and in the event of his paying them, the city justifies him in deducting the amount so paid from his rent. What clearer recognition could be desired that the tenant is a taxpayer?

FIGHTING FOR LIBERTY.

Between Mr. Borden and his party in the West at least there is a great gulf fixed. Outwardly an appearance of cordiality is maintained, and a feeling of loyalty professed, but neither the appearance nor the profession deceives anyone. The consistent lifelessness of Mr. Borden's western tour is one of the things that can be neither denied nor explained away. It revealed the relations between the honorable gentleman and his followers beyond all necessity of language and all power of denial. His thoughts were not as their thoughts, nor his ways as their ways. For some reason he did not possess their confidence and could not arouse their enthusiasm. He left them with a poorer impression than he found.

The cause of this cleavage is not far to seek. The western party demanded a convention and Mr. Borden turned a deaf ear to their demands. Whether the Winnipeg lieutenants formulated a resolution or not makes no particular difference. From a hundred western Conservative papers and from a thousand supporters of unquestioned loyalty has risen the demand for an assembly of party delegates to consider the relations of the party and to shape a policy. The refusal of Mr. Borden does not want advice from his followers, and says so by declining the followers an opportunity of tendering their advice. He coolly informs them that their business is to be led not to lead, to follow instructions not to instruct, to locally support the King of the gods have appointed them, and follow the path he chooses without remark.

On the part of Mr. Borden it is a fight to maintain the throne. He understands very well that the first item of business before a convention would be to consider what have been the results of the Foster-Fowler depositions on the party conditions. For these results a portion of the onus belongs to Mr. Borden. He was free to leave Mr. Foster and his associates to stand or fall according to the merits of their case. But he did not do so. He rushed to their defence, marshalled his parliamentary contingent to the work, and did all that his influence and position enabled him to do to whip the party into line behind them. Their conduct was beyond defence; to attempt its defence was both bad strategy and bad morals. For this Mr. Borden would be held answerable by a party convention. How badly he is prepared to make an answer, witness his refusal to call a convention.

But this is not merely a squabble over the leadership between Mr. Borden and his followers—it is a clash that is to determine the future character and usefulness of the Opposition. The point at issue is whether or not the party will be permitted to adapt itself to the democratic conditions of the times, to assemble in convention, select its leader and formulate the programme of dominion by the leader regardless of the wishes and opinions of the party. Against this condition the western followers of Mr. Borden are protesting; he replies by ignoring their protest and by proffering them a platform of his own construction. The voters of the party demand liberty to control the party affairs; Mr. Borden disregards the demand and proceeds to control their affairs as pleases himself. The course may reward him with a measure of gratification, but it is likely to provide him with sensations of a different character one of these days.

THE BANKS AND THE STRINGENCY.

Eulogistic essays on the superior wisdom of Canadian bankers is a prominent feature of journalistic effort these days. Indeed these gentlemen must be both surprised and gratified at the number and spirit of the defenders who have espoused their cause. Perhaps they are equally surprised, they must be equally gratified, by the rare qualities and splendid attainments which are credited to them. Certainly no well-wishing and reasonably well-informed Canadian would desire to deny the heads of our banks the credit that rightfully belongs to them. But it might occur to their defenders that the credit due would be much more likely to be received if their efforts were devoted to

showing why and for what that credit is deserved, rather than to heaping abuse on those who venture a word of criticism. Generally speaking, the supposed defenders of the bankers spend far less time in the business of their defence than in berating the ignorance of those who have dared question the invariable wisdom of their conduct. Just where, when, and in what manner the superior sagacity which should draw our unmeasured praise has been displayed, the defenders somehow or other fail to explain. Instead they present us with columns of placid assurances that it has been displayed, accompanied by assurances not so placid that we are ignoramuses for not knowing it. Perhaps this is the easier course of the two, but it is not very convincing. It is begging the whole question and accompanying the begging with abuse. It looks very suspiciously like a breakdown at the very centre of controversy. If the bankers have deserved better than they are receiving, why not explain where, how and when? If the ignorance of the public and the press is doing an unintended injury to these great interests, why not enlighten the ignorance? And why not wherein the conduct of our banks has been such as to deserve not only freedom from criticism but the credit which is claimed to be their due? Ignorance is not always criminal, and can be neither removed nor frustrated by sneers. That these have been the replies to the critics of the banks is abundant testimony either that the defenders have a very poor case with a good one.

The Canadian public has strong faith in the national banking system. They believe not only in the privileges it grants to the banks, but in the obligations it imposes on them, and they do not believe that a banker is entitled to any remarkable degree of credit for conducting his business in accord with the spirit and purport of the banking laws. Just here is the real point on which rests the public grievance against the banks. They are not convinced that the practice of the banks has been invariably parallel to the limitations of the banking system, and suspect that at times their courses have crossed the boundary into forbidden territory. Rightly or wrongly the public believe that it is the duty of the banker to discriminate between business and speculation and to devote their funds to the uses of business rather than to the chances of speculation. More than this, there is a well-grounded conviction that this obligation prevents or should prevent the use of bank funds in speculative ventures of such nature as not unduly enhance the hazard which must ultimately fall upon the legitimate business of the country. Along with the rapid development of business of late years has gone an even more rapid activity in speculation. Real estate prices have doubled and trebled, while a steady stream of stock has been poured into the market by newly-organized and re-organized companies. This buying and selling of real estate and stock at prices far in advance of its actual present earning power could never have reached the proportions it did reach without the coöperation of the banks supplying the money. Now one result of this speculative movement has been to double or treble the expenses of business—and hence to greatly increase the demands which business must make on the banks for funds. By aiding or abetting the speculation therefore the banks have assisted in swelling the demand of legitimate business far beyond what it would otherwise have been. If that demand-to-day taxes the volume of money in the country to the utmost, the banks must surely share the blame of having produced this condition. Nor is it readily apparent why their merit praise for shutting down on speculation only when the abnormally expanded needs of business demanded all the funds available.

OLD AGE ANNUITIES.

Attention is again called to this very important subject by the publication of a blue-book containing the draft bill introduced in the Senate last session and the speeches delivered on the question in the upper chamber. The title of the volume suggests the difference, recognized in the bill and pointed out by Richard Cartwright, between annuities and pensions. A pension is an allowance made to an individual in consideration of his past services to the State; an annuity is paid because of past services of a public character, but in return for premiums previously paid by the recipient. A pension is more or less a matter of sentiment; an annuity is a purely business proposition. A pension is usually granted in consideration of military or other exceptional service; an annuity is paid simply as a debt due by reason of previous advances of money. The purpose of the bill introduced by the Minister of Trade and Commerce was not to pro-

A LARGE JOB.

A Borden club has been organized in Ottawa to secure "strict adherence to the Halifax platform." This scarcely be construed as an evidence of the marked unanimity with which the party are persistently represented as having accepted Mr. Borden's program. It would be interesting to know upon whom the influence of the club is to be exerted, and upon whom it is thought necessary to enforce "strict adherence." Manifestly it cannot be Mr. Borden, for that gentleman would surely not be suspect of an intention to desert his own child; is it his corporation follower in the House who are to be disciplined or his clamorous "followers" in the country? Or both? In either event the club will have ample employment.

SUBMIT THE AGREEMENT.

The city solicitor thinks it unnecessary to submit the C.P.R. agreement to the ratepayers. Perhaps not necessary, but it would be better. The agreement involves undertakings by the city quite as important as the issue of debentures, yet a debenture issue must be ratified by the ratepayers, and a clear public understanding of what it means or is supposed to mean, with the expression of the public judgment as to whether it should be accepted or not. There does not appear to be any good public reason for not submitting it and there are some splendid reasons for doing so.

THE REAL LIMITATIONS.

The question before the house is not how much money we are empowered to borrow by law, but how much we are justified in borrowing by circumstances. The city is entitled to borrow nearly \$4,400,000. This limit refers only to general debt debentures, and the law does not prevent the city borrowing all it can get over and above this sum by the issue of special debentures for local improvements, payable by frontage tax. Edmonton's legal credit is simple—simple that it would be difficult to locate the bounds beyond which we could not go without interference from the law. But this is altogether different from saying that we should plunge ahead until halted by fear of legal intervention. There are other bounds to our borrowing power, which may not be so far distant as those fixed by statute, but which would quite as effectively stop our progress and stop it a fashion not more pleasant. One of these bounds is the unwillingness of financiers to lend us money, a condition within sight of all Canadian cities at present. Already they refuse to advance us more than \$92 on condition that we pay them back a hundred and that in the meantime we pay interest not on the \$92 but on the \$100. The question is whether we should venture nearer this line or not. If money would be a severe blow to the credit of the city, and probably pro-

vide pensions for all Canadians who lived to a certain age, but to provide means whereby a person in the active years of life could lay aside a sum of money, and in return receive an annual allowance when he passed beyond the age of activity. The advantages appear to be strongly on the side of the annuity as compared to the pension. A pension payable to all who lived to a certain age would simply be a guarantee against future want, regardless of how one spent his life and his money. It would be some a premium on idleness and improvidence rather than an incentive to industry and thrift. To the lay it would afford an excellent opportunity to idle through life, secure in the assurance that the public must provide for the event-ide, an opportunity of which the class would be by means slow to avail themselves. No one would evince his industry or his energy unless spurred by ambition or by inclination—qualities which unfortunately, do not dominate even all Canadians. As a consequence those who were willing to work would be burdened in some way or other to support thousands of stalwarts who were not willing to work, and in an unknown fate protracted their useless existence beyond a certain limit, to pay their pensions for having continued to breathe and eat. The condition of an annuity, on the contrary, is that: "A man toil not neither shall he eat." It offers every man the opportunity to protect his declining years from want but leaves him the incentive of knowing that his safety depends on his own exertions—the incentive which is the mainspring of human effort and the source of human progress.

take expense. Neither of these points was seriously doubted by his audience and neither of them was sufficiently novel to require the prominence given them. But what surely might have been reasonably expected and required was that Mr. Borden should accompany these assurances with the condition with which they were accompanied in the other provinces—that in return for the privilege of administering the lands we would be required to surrender the very substantial indemnity now paid us in lieu of them. It is true that Mr. Borden did not contradict his statement as made in the eastern cities, but neither did he repeat it, nor allude to it in any shape, manner or form. Again, the tariff question was carefully side-stepped by Mr. Borden, at least in this portion of Western Canada. In Halifax he devoted some time to this subject, and laid down as one of the planks in the platform steady allegiance of the party to a policy which would promote the production within Canada of all special commodities that could be advantageously produced from or by means of our national resources. Throughout Eastern Canada protection was a dominant note in his addresses and a general increase in the tariff the only policy to be reasonably deduced from his remarks. But not a word of this in Edmonton. It is true he did not repudiate the protectionist statements made in Eastern Canada, but neither did he repeat them nor refer to them. True, Mr. Cocksbutt was put up to deal with the tariff, but the audience were left to draw their own conclusions as to whether Mr. Cocksbutt spoke for Mr. Borden, for the party or only for Mr. Cocksbutt.

These omissions could not have been accidental. The omitted sections were integral portions of a speech which Mr. Borden had been repeating almost daily for a month. Their omission left very conspicuous gaps in the speech, made it so far as the people to whom he was talking were chiefly concerned, an entirely different speech from that delivered in Eastern Canada. The omissions could have only been intentional, made with calculated purpose, and that purpose the deception of his hearers in Western Canada. Before those hearers and in their judgment, Mr. Borden stands condemned not of contradicting in Edmonton what he said in Ontario, but of not saying in Edmonton what he said in Ontario on subjects in which Edmonton was most concerned. The speeches may not have been contradictory, but they were different notes, the less and the difference was designed to mislead the people of Western Canada.

HIS FINISH.

Women's Institutes have been slimy attended in Ontario of late, due it is said to farmers' wives being afraid to drive alone on the automobile-invested highways. The diversion of motoring has had much the same effect on the roads of Ontario were it not for saying in Edmonton what he said in Ontario on subjects in which Edmonton was most concerned. The speeches may not have been contradictory, but they were different notes, the less and the difference was designed to mislead the people of Western Canada.

DIFFERING FRIENDS.

Mayor Ashdown and the Winnipeg newspapers which supported him in vetoing the plant-bond sale scheme are jointly and severally arraigned by the Toronto World as the enemies of public ownership. The view of the World is that the people of Winnipeg want the scheme, that therefore the scheme should go through forthwith, however poorly it may be understood, and however little its consequences may be foreseen by the public. In this the World represents a species of well-meaning but ill-advising friends of municipal ownership more to be dreaded by the cause and its supporters than any open array of avowed opponents. Municipal ownership in Canada is on trial. If it stands the trial it will become widely adopted as a means of avoiding the irritation and dissatisfaction from which cities frequently suffer for whose public services are controlled by private corporations; if it does not do so it will not and should not continue to replace private ownership. So far municipal ownership has not been found an invariable success, but the percentage of successes is high enough to confirm the faith of its supporters in the value of the expedient when the expedient is governed by prudence and applied with discretion. On the other hand, the failures have been quite numerous enough to convince all who care to learn that municipal ownership, no more than any other kind of ownership, can be successful unless it go hand in hand with common business sense. Municipal ownership as a general cause in Canada could not stand many signal failures, and the surest way of making those failures would be to rush headlong into all manner of municipal enterprises at unfavorable seasons and under adverse conditions. If municipal ownership fails as a general means of relief from corporation abuse, it will perish at the hands of its misguided friends, not of its avowed enemies. A more unfavorable season or more adverse conditions than the present it would be hard to conceive, and those who urge the immediate undertaking of large municipal enterprises must be regarded as badly advised, if well meaning, friends of municipal ownership.

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Another aldermanic vacancy. Mr. Bennett simply cannot keep his "corporation connections" from getting tangled up with his politics. Meantime, Attorney-General McKewen who succeeds Hon. Wm. Pugsley in the New Brunswick Government, was returned by acclamation in St. John. Sir William Van Horne says we are in a financial storm, and the only thing to do is to "lie low and wait"—in an attitude of nervous prostration as it were. Mr. Hugh Graham, of the Montreal Star, has offered Longboat \$2,000 if he will keep sober for five years. Perhaps a similar stipulation will accompany Mr. Graham's future contributions to the Opposition campaign fund. The Galt Reporter censures the Government because the Hespeler woolen mills closed down seven years ago, and threw 500 men out of employment, but is constrained to add that four new industries have taken the place of the woolen mills, and that the population of the town is now larger than ever before. Even those who come to sea remain to pray. Dr. Beattie Nesbitt has resigned the job, finding it quite impossible to resign himself to silence. The report that Mr. McCarthy, M.P. of Calgary will retire from politics, is denied. It may be significant, however, that Mr. McCarthy is leaving the denying to his friends.

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J. PERCY.

(Toronto News.) J. Percy, De Winton was a very careful boy. The darling of the debutantes, so beautiful and coy. Society had welcomed him with feelings of delight. For when he had his war-paint on, J. Percy was all right. His hosiery was crimson, silk, embroidered here and there with dainty clocks of palest blue. His mass of raven hair was curled and waved so sweetly over his brow so broad and high. He was a young Apollo in the pretty maiden's eyes. His business suit was always pressed, his hair was always wavy, clean. His evening clothes were elegant, he had a noble mien. His neckties showed a pretty taste. That Percy's shirts and collars always were immaculate. And if a merchant tailor ever gave a man a fit. The one that Percy patronized undoubtedly was "IT." But all the Social dowagers at Percy were entranced. For, while he talked sweet nothing, well—he never got engaged. If Percy took a maiden out, they never went alone. He bowed to Mrs. Grundy and engaged a chaperone. He drove about in motor cars and thought it simply sweet To patronize a midnight grill and get a bite to eat. Oh, Percy was the hottest thing in all this merry town. Full many a heart went pit-a-pat behind a silken gown. But Percy did not get engaged. "Alas" the poet groans, For Percy's weekly salary was only eighteen bones.

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THE C... The Natural Gas... Canadian Oil... in Perpetuity... Three Year... \$2 Per Ton... The agreement grants exclusive natural gas to American-Canadian Oil... before the city council... session Tuesday night... sidered by the council... of the whole. The agreement... special committee... men Smith, Munnell... discussed at length... joining of making... Thursday night to... sion an pass the agreement... to submitting it to the... duration early next... Summarized, the... is non-exclusive, pro... company shall within... ply natural gas to the... per thousand cubic... mified by the value... of gas relative to the... coal delivered at the... ing and waterworks... The aldermen were... sider the agreement... ing the discussion, Ald... remarked that the city... exacting in making ag... Mowat Biggar, solic... pany, was present at... well as H. H. Williams... has.

Has Company... Alderman Daly at... the council's satisfaction... gas at Morville... ply the city's require... was no guarantee that... the franchise... tend to sell the franchi... it. We have only the... that they have the gas... as at the well in M... to supply the city... and Strathcona. The... was tested and found... pipe rock pressure... inch pipe the flame fr... lighted attained a height... An effort to test the... ability of the gauge use... the pressure. Boring... the well had reached... feet. At 40 feet the... Mr. Williams also st... logically, the location... Morville was in the... can river in the north... the gas had been flow... He assured the council... the following are worthy... one well from a dozen... The Terms of Fr... A synopsis of the... of the agreement follow... The municipality g... many the right to conve... improved waterworks... the streets of the city... city engineer's sanction... connections to be ma... building or place with... pality. The franchise is null... company fails to complete... years from the date of... if after commencing th... fails to continue it for... months, the terms of... the city shall vest in... pality. Plans and profiles of... be established the city... will have supervision a... the pipe laying. If the plans are not... are so carried out as to... the engineer may stop... The company must... streets after laying the... good condition as that... are found. Mains shall be constru... so far as feasible. Gas shall be supplied... to exceed that charged... minimum rate of \$2... per thousand cubic feet... at \$2 per ton. The company shall... all applicants. The company shall... corporation from all de... out of the operation of... Gas meters shall be... expense of the company... year. For default in making... applied for by a propos... within two months, the... pay \$20 per day until... made. The other clauses... nature. In discussing the... Biggar stated that it... tion of the company... mum price, under the... Alderman Cartwright... ence was that the pit... would be the limit alle... parison with coal at \$2... The committee finally... with this clause. He v... mum rate for lighting... The committee finally... ported progress. The... clauses will be consid... meeting Thursday night... To investigate Pott... A. E. Potter kept his... made specific charges... Medical Health Office... connection with the l... dealing with the saniti... his stables. These char... effect of the statement... Medical Health Office... false. A committee, c... emon Munson, Man... the charges, was app... medical health officer... to accompany a comm... to protect himself in t...

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