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SAINT JOHN, THURSDAY MORNING, DEC. 16, 1909.

SAWDUST WHARF.

The Richibucto Sawdust wharf deal, exposed yesterday in the committee of public accounts, is calculated to make the warmest friends of the administration take notice. There is no escape from the conclusion that in this case the Government paid for a property five times the price at which it was offered, and seven times the price for which the Government could have bought it. It may be pleaded that the amount of graft is small; but \$4,300 rake-off in a purchase of \$5,000 is not small. When we apply even a much smaller percentage to the public works expenditure of fifteen millions a year the result is appalling.

There is no reason to suppose that the Richibucto deal is out of the common way. It is defended by the minister like other transactions. There has been no sign from the department that it was deceived, or that the whole affair was not worked out to the satisfaction of the minister and his colleagues. The matter has been treated just as the Merwin and Arctic deals were defended by the Marine Department before the unexpected report of a commission gave the country a shock. Mr. Pugsley defended the sawdust wharf deal in the House when he knew a great deal more about it than the public learned yesterday. He has made it clear that the country may expect this kind of thing to be repeated and to continue.

Take this deal as it is revealed on the evidence of the middleman himself. Some statements which he makes about Mr. O'Leary, and which the latter contradicts, may be left out of consideration. They do not affect the Government or the Department of Public Works.

The wharf was for sale for \$1,000. It had been offered at that price to two officers of the Department of Public Works. The owner did not ask from anybody a higher price. He was in fact willing to sell for \$700 to \$800. This is sufficiently proved from the fact that he did sell at \$700.

Mr. Murray bought with the intention of selling to the Government. He bought in election year. He offered to sell to the Government as soon as he had bought. The department could then have easily found out what the property had cost. Mr. O'Leary was not refusing information. He had consented to make the price appear at \$1,000 on the record for the benefit of the middlemen. Apparently Mr. Murray did not at first expect to strike the minister for \$5,000.

But he asked \$5,000 and the offer was accepted. This, however, did not happen until Mr. Pugsley had been seen. It did not happen until Mr. Murray had telegraphed to an officer of the department that the sale was important to Mr. LeBlanc, who was then a candidate in the election. Then it happened.

In what way this deal was of interest to Mr. LeBlanc has not been disclosed in the evidence. The middleman has not yet disclosed what he did with the \$5,000. He at first said that he gave it to his wife, but afterwards admitted that she gave it back to him. When the whole story is told it will be better understood in what way the matter was important to the Government candidate.

The wharf was worth \$700 and no more. The man who sold it believed that when he sold it, and swears that he believes so still. The Government paid \$5,000 for it just before the election, more than a year ago, and has made no use of it since. It cannot be used as it is, and no start has been made toward repairing it. The other wharf which the Government had bought for a third of the money, and which was in working order, seems to meet the needs of the case.

The sum of the matter is this:—The Government did not need the wharf at any price.

The Government refused to buy at \$1,000. The owner was ready to sell at \$700 to any person. The Government could have bought for that price. The wharf was sold for \$700.

The Government then bought at \$5,000. This was after the middleman had seen Mr. Pugsley. It was after he had telegraphed to Ottawa that the sale was of great importance to the Government candidate.

The purchase was made a few days before the election. The man who got the \$5,000 does not explain what he did with the money.

The wharf has neither been repaired nor used since the Government bought it.

It was not needed when it was bought, and is not needed now.

DRUGGISTS AND SUICIDE.

While all possible precautions should be taken to guard the sale of poisons, it is not likely that these would greatly diminish the number of suicides. The care is more necessary to protect people from accidents than from death by their design. It has been found that the man who recently bought poison for the purpose of taking his own life had a perfect right to buy, and the druggist had a right to sell to him under the existing law. There are many poisons which are in common use for domestic as well as for medicinal purposes. Poisonous preparations are kept in many if not most residences. Poisons also grow in the fields and woods.

Moreover a man who intends to kill himself can usually find another method of suicide, if the one he prefers is not available. If the intent to commit suicide is suspected, special precautions may be taken. But

If the purpose is not suspected, no general protection can be provided. If a man is determined to kill himself, and has once overcome the natural instinct of self-preservation which keeps the human race from becoming extinct, a hundred ways are open to him. It is physically as easy for any citizen to cause his death any day as it is to keep himself alive.

Fortunately most people cling to life even when life has little of comfort to offer. Hamlet and many other speculators have discussed the reason for this clinging to life. We all know that it is a normal and wholesome impulse, and one which should be supported by all the assistance that science and mutual co-operation can do. When a man is believed to be anxious to end his life, or even when he seriously considers such a thing, he is understood to be in an abnormal condition of mental or physical health, or else involved in some circumstances with which he has not the courage or strength to grapple. In the particular case recently discussed the victim had all kinds of nerve and courage, but the sort necessary to face a disgrace, which most others would have accepted many times rather than take their life. It would be utterly impossible to protect a person in this frame of mind from himself by regulations of the sale of poison.

TWO OF A KIND.

There is a striking likeness between the report of Judge Cannon on Montreal civic graft and malversation, and those of the Royal civil service commission, and of Judge Cassels on the federal departments, especially the Department of Marine. Judge Cannon believes that twenty-five per cent. of the Montreal revenue has gone to graft and much of the other three-fourths has not been well expended. Almost the same opinion was expressed in the evidence before the civil service commission in respect to the expenditures in some of the Marine Department agencies. The "lack of conscience" charges against the Marine Department, and the judgment that the only intelligent principle of which visible sign appeared, was the policy of spending as much money as possible, is almost repeated in the language of Judge Cannon concerning the Montreal Government.

It is a remarkable coincidence that last week Judge Cannon should report as a striking instance of Montreal rake-off how a middleman bought in advance a building required by the city and turned it over to the corporation at a handsome profit; and that within a few days the public accounts committee at Ottawa should bring to light a case where a wharf was similarly bought by a middleman and turned over to the Department of Public Works with the price advanced from \$700 to \$5,000. The Montreal rake-off was, we believe, less than fifty per cent., while the Richibucto margin was two per cent. But the remark of Judge Cannon applies directly to the Richibucto case. "He (the intermediary) was only a middleman, could not the city itself have bought this property, thereby saving the profit realized by Houle? It seems to me that it could, but it is always the same system of patronage and middlemen."

STILL TENDER TOWARD THE N. A. T. COMPANY.

The North Atlantic Trading Company, which got \$330,000 out of the treasury without making any return that could be discovered, wants \$70,000 more. After the exposure of 1906, the force of public opinion compelled the cancellation of a contract that was certainly improvident and undoubtedly corrupt. The Government had agreed to pay a price per head on all the immigrants coming to Canada from the larger part of Europe. It was not required that the contractor should send these settlers, or should even see them. The allowance was paid on settlers brought out by Baron Hirsch, or who came on their own account, or who were obtained by agencies which the contractors did not know. When the contract was cancelled by the Government the immigrants came as before, and the contractors claim that their allowance should not have stopped.

It will be remembered that the Government refused to give the names of the contractors. To this day they have not been disclosed, though so much has been paid them and so much is still claimed. The people paid but were not allowed to know who got the money. The people are sued, but are not allowed to know who sues them.

Mr. Preston, who recommended the contract, was accused by a fellow official of having made a great deal of money out of it for himself. Mr. Smart, the Deputy Minister, who made the contract, made it over again a short time afterwards, giving the contractors a far better deal.

Afterwards, he testified that when he did this he had been negotiating with the contractors to leave the public service and join them. He did resign and join the company soon afterwards, and is apparently representing the company in pressing the claim. But neither Mr. Smart or Mr. Preston could be induced to give the names of the contractors.

Mr. Borden points out that there are contractors with claims against the Government who have tried to get permission to take legal action. If they had worked for a private party they could sue without the permission of the defendant. But no man can sue the Government without the consent of the Department of Justice. Mr. Aylesworth does not always give the flat. But he has done it promptly in the case of these immigration contractors whose names he will allow to be known. This mixture of tenderness and generosity seems to be reserved for suspicious characters.

NO NEED OF A CHANGE.

There will be a general concurrence in the spirit of Sir Wilfrid Laurier's statement on the question of a Canadian diplomatic agent associated with the British embassy at Washington. If the British ambassador desires a Canadian advisor at Washington, the want can be supplied, but it does not appear that this country is suffering from the lack of such vague and ambiguous representation. Sir Wilfrid admits that this country has not been satisfied with the solution of some of our controversies with the United States. In the example which he gave the Premier might have done the Imperial diplomatic corps the justice of explaining that the Canadian Government and not the ambassador at Washington was responsible. The basis of arbitration was accepted at Ottawa, and the chairman, whose casting vote did the business, was chosen by Sir Wilfrid Laurier himself after the Imperial ministry had suggested that a Canadian be chosen instead. The public will accept the statement of Sir Wilfrid that Mr. Bryce seeks advice and instruction from Ottawa on all matters affecting this country. That is what a Canadian representative would do. And so far as one can see, as the Canadian representative could do nothing in any international matter without reference to the ambassador, it does not appear that the change would be useful.

The member for York, who conducted yesterday examination of witnesses in the sawdust wharf inquiry, may expect the usual allowance of abuse from the Government organs, and especially from those owned by favored Government contractors and middlemen. Emerson's advice to scholars to "stand by your own order" applies to other classes.

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FLOUR FROM SAWDUST

THE LATEST FIND

Washington Authorities Are Investigating a Norwegian Process in the Furtherance of Conservation Policy.

Washington, D. C. Dec. 15.—Flour from sawdust is another step in the movement for the conservation of forest resources. The United States consul at Christiania, Norway, has sent to this government a suggestion along this line, which may be of value to American lumbermen who are wrestling with the problem of sawdust waste.

The flour in question is not the kind which goes into the making of light, fluffy biscuits, and the other kind which are not light, or flaky pastry, but it is an ingredient for a whole lot of useful things not intended for man's stomach.

The wood flour is ground in a cheap mill, very similar to those which grind corn and rye. Pine and spruce sawdust is used in Europe, and after passing through the stones and the bolting chest, it is sacked or baled for shipment. It is then worth \$12 to \$13 a ton.

The flour has a number of uses, one of which is in the making of dynamite. It is the absorbent for the nitroglycerin which is the explosive ingredient. Wood flour dynamite is inferior to the made with infusorial earth as the absorbent; but it serves many purposes, and is cheaper.

Linoleum makers mix wood flour with linseed oil and give body to their floor coverings. It is not considered quite equal to ground cork for this purpose, as it is less elastic, but it is cheaper and meets requirements for medium grades.

The flour fills an important place in the manufacture of xylite, a kind of artificial flooring, resembling wood in weight, and stone in other respects. It is used for kitchen floors and in halls, corridors, cafes, restaurants and public rooms. It is impervious to water, and is practically fireproof. It is floor material in some of the German war vessels. It is so used because it is not liable to take fire or splinter if struck by shells.

The amount of sawdust to be had in this country is practically unlimited. Norway exports thousands of tons of this sawdust yearly, and the United States takes some of it. England is an extensive buyer, and much goes to France.

MARRIAGES.

Thel-Weir.

An interesting event took place at the residence of the bride's parents, Dorset avenue, Cumberland, B. C., on the 27th ult., when the Rev. D. McMillan officiated in the holy bonds of matrimony. Miss Elsie, second daughter of Mr. J. J. and Mrs. Weir and Mr. Walter Roy Thel, formerly of the Cumberland branch of the Royal Bank of Canada, second son of Capt. Winfield Thel and Mrs. Thel of St. John, N. B. The bride was becomingly attired in a princess gown of cream novelty cloth and the going away costume was of self-striped red and black with hat to match and furs. Heartly congratulations and good wishes followed Mr. and Mrs. Thel.

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to the defendant this lot of fish which is used as lobster bait. The defendant claimed that the fish were rotten and the plaintiff alleged that they were good enough for baiting purposes. The defendant put in a set of oaths. The defendant paid for \$350, claiming that he was put to this trouble and expense in procuring fresh bait. Mr. Fred R. Taylor appeared for the plaintiff and Mr. Joseph Porter for the defendant.

The case was commenced in the morning at 11 o'clock and concluded at four in the afternoon. In the morning several witnesses were examined for the plaintiff and Ring himself swore that the herring were in excellent condition for baiting purposes when delivered. He was corroborated by the rest of the witnesses for the plaintiff.

When the court met at half past two in the afternoon the defendant gave evidence. He claimed that the fish were unfit for lobster bait. Argument of counsel then followed. His Honor gave judgment for the plaintiff for \$162.50.

Mills vs. Porter
The Mechanics' Lien case of Mills and Edwards (contractors) vs. Porter (owner), which was to have been finished yesterday morning was further adjourned until tomorrow morning at 11 o'clock.

Bogart vs. McVey.
Final judgment was signed in the case of Frank C. Bogart of Rothesay against William B. McVey for \$34.36, when delivered. He was corroborated by Mr. L. F. D. Tilley.

Mr. F. D. Tilley.