

#### WHEN GOVERNMENTS FEAR THE LIGHT.

The direct and specific charges against Hon. W. J. Hanna and the Whitney Government, made by Mr. C. M. Bowman in the Legislature on Tuesday, are matched in seriousness, so far as Ontario's recent history goes, only by the charges against Hon. J. R. Stratton and the Ross Government, made on March 11, 1903, by Mr. R. R. Gamey. In the one case as in the other a Provincial Secretary is involved. The Gamey charges alleged a corrupt bargain for the purpose of securing political support in the Legislature for the Government of that day. The charges against Mr. Hanna involve a corrupt bargain with the organized liquor interests of the Province for the purpose of defeating the Scott Act at the polls in Huron, Peel, and Welland, and of procuring for Government purposes from men engaged in the liquor traffic an enormous campaign fund for use in the approaching elections. Such charges, made deliberately by any member of Parliament, are lifted at once and completely out of the realm of mere party badinage and bickering. They become matters of the highest public interest. They cannot be suppressed. To attempt to burk their investigation would be, for any Government, not cowardly merely, but in the gravest sense incriminating and criminal.

In 1903, when the Gamey charges were made, *The Globe*, immediately, straightly, unequivocally, demanded investigation "before a court of competent jurisdiction." These words were used editorially on that occasion:

"There is only one course open to the Government and Legislature. There must be no semblance of trifling with the matter. Interests of far greater moment than the fortunes of either party or of any individual are at stake. The statement made by a member of the Legislature impugns the integrity of a Minister of the Crown, and involves the honor of the Province and of Parliament. The highest interests of public morality are concerned. . . . Either a Minister of the Crown, who is accused, or a member of the Legislative Assembly, who is his accuser, is unworthy of public trust. No interests of either political party must be allowed by the leader of the Government or by the leader of the Opposition to come between the offender and the punishment

which his offence deserves. In this thing we are neither Liberals nor Conservatives, but Canadians, whose first concern is the independence and the integrity of Parliament and an unsullied national honor."

That language, used in 1903, when a Liberal Provincial Secretary was accused, we use now, without change of accent or emphasis, when a Conservative Provincial Secretary is publicly and directly charged. Had the former Government and its Liberal supporters refused that demand, and by a majority vote blocked investigation, they would have been scorned by every self-respecting Liberal, and their loudest boasts of innocence would have been to the public but so much east wind. Are Conservatives to-day less sensitive to their own self-respect or to their party's honor? Is public opinion in Ontario less concerned for public morality than it was in 1903? Did not Mr. Allan Studholme, the one Independent in the Legislature, speak the truth for the man in the street, and the man in the club, and the man in the church when he warned Mr. Hanna and the Government, while as yet it was not too late, that to refuse investigation would be taken to mean not only cowardice but guilt?

If Mr. Hanna and those who voted to suppress evidence in the Public Accounts Committee and in the House think that this thing can be kept under cover or bluffed out they are fools or think the people of Ontario are fools. Too much is already known. Mr. Snider has said too much for his cautious and non-committal affidavit to hide the uglier truth. Mr. C. E. Steele, the leading and responsible Conservative from Welland county, whose letter so completely destroys Mr. Hanna's defences, cannot be silenced when the interests of temperance are at stake in the next election. Lifelong Tory temperance men in those counties where Mr. Snider interfered in the Scott Act campaigns as Mr. Hanna's authorized representative were ready to testify under oath, and, now that the facts as they know them have been falsified in the Legislature, they will put truth and the interests of temperance before any party obligations to the Minister who betrayed his trust. Burking investigation, instead of ending the matter, has only given it larger significance and a new beginning.

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