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SHOUTING TOO LOUDLY.

"Ten members of the liberal party in the Ontario legislature have announced their retirement into private life, Harcourt, Monck; McMillan, Glengarry; Currie, Prince Edward; Preston, South Brant; Munro, North Oxford; Hislop, East Huron; McCoig, Kent; Cameron, West Huron; Anderson, East Peterboro; McDougall, East Ottawa."

The conservative papers are spreading the above with comment upon the contrast shown by conservative members in nearly all clambering for re-election. It does not take much courage to champion a signally victorious party, especially when that party feels it is the very salt of the earth and invulnerable. But several of the alleged "retirements" are not on grounds of political discouragement. McCoig, Hislop and McMillan are candidates for the House of Commons—are going up higher. Anderson has been on a death bed, literally, for over a year. Currie has been very ill, and unfit to run. McDougall is in the field. The retreat is therefore reduced to four members and Preston is yet, the whole province hopes, to be South Brant's choice.

Hon. A. G. MacKay lately said: "The liberal party in Ontario is strong and united for this provincial election. I never saw liberals in better fighting fettle. The more I go through the province the more that is apparent. There's hardly a convention in ridings now held by tories in which there are not numbers of strong men who feel confident of winning. Take South Oxford, for example, half a dozen good men offering. Lots of men, and that shows there's a good hearty liberal spirit abroad in the land."

Hon. F. Cochrane is going to law for a vindication of his character. It is charged by Mr. Laughrin, formerly a member of the legislature for Nipissing, that he was offered $8,000 to keep out of the way when Mr. Cochrane sought the seat, that he was promised immunity from the spoils system and as registrar suffered decapitation. If the suit goes on we may get at the facts, but meanwhile the election will be over.

WHITNEY A DECEIVER.

Mr. Whitney has been exposed as a deceiver. When he sprang the Canadian Northern railway guarantee upon the house he alleged that he wanted to improve the security of the government, that the original mortgage on the road did not cover the terminals. He did not give the opposition time in which to investigate. It had been before the conservative party caucus, but the grits were not entitled to any favours from the government, and they were expected to gulp down the dose without a grimace.

Two days later the business of the house was rushed to a close, designedly it would seem, and the bill was given its third reading at a session which was called half an hour before the usual hour. Later, Mr. McKay, the leader of the opposition, in reading over the act of 1904, discovered that it provided for a first mortgage on all the property, moveable and immovable, building, plant, rolling stock, and revenues present and future. If there were anything defective about the mortgage, the Whitney government had to assume the responsibility since it was not given until 1906 two years after the maps and records had been filed for inspection.

The scandal deepens and becomes indefensible as a consequence, and it is not relieved in the slightest by the gross deception of the premier. He intimates that the liberals knew the facts. They did not or there would have been a more emphatic protest against the deal. It was indeed smuggled through the house, and became effective when some of the members were away from Toronto, and unconscious of what was going on. Some conservative members, however, expressed dissatisfaction, and they were in counsels of the party and conveniently absented themselves from the session, which gave the full effect.

Had the doctrine preached by the conservatives while in opposition prevailed last year—regarding the succession dues, the supplementary revenue and the brewers' tax—the income of the province in 1907 would have been $1,200,000 less. Where then, as Mr. MacKay asks, would have been the surplus of which Col. Matheson boasts?

LOBBYISTS WITH A PULL.

Lobbying is an ancient art, and in some places, and under some circumstances, quite honorable. In England there are men whose profession it is to give information to those who have business with members of parliament, or who are interested, legitimately, in the passage of certain bills. Some men's interests are vitally and materially affected by legislative measures, and men who have no ignoble purposes to serve are very glad to have the guidance of those who are skilled in parliamentary procedure, "the registered and officially recognized legislative agents," aforesaid.

There was a time, in the years ago, however, when the lobbies of England's great house of parliament were invaded by political thugs, and an American writer lays the flattering unction to his soul that the scandals which then occurred "were greater than any that have disgraced the American congress." For there has been something doing at Washington in the lobbies recently, that was rank enough to be outrageous, and the feelings of one congressman found vent in a charge of bribery.

It is one thing, to be sure, to make an indictment, and another to sustain it, and there is the usual difficulty of gaining form or justification to the charge of wrong-doing. The very fact that the white light of publicity has been turned upon the transactions of some men is having the effect of making life at the capital more tolerable.

It is hard to differentiate between lobbyists and between the motives by which they are influenced. Our own Whitney broke out furiously in the last session against those who lined the corridors of parliament and made the passage from his office to the legislative chamber an occasion for stumbling. There were in that group the men of great and little pull, and if the events of "that awful week," could be analyzed it might be seen that those who profited most were not "the registered and officially recognized legislative agents," who are extolled in England and America, but the mighty men whose influence, as representatives of the financial corporations, cannot be scouted or ignored.

There has been a murmur among the mulberry leaves around Harrowsmith, and Mr. Gallagher, late M.P.P., has been heard from. He wants it understood that he is in need of the support of every "true conservative." He means by this the machine men, and they are not as numerous as they were.

WHAT THE CITY WANTS.

The close of Mr. Campbell's connection with the light department, as an expert adviser, opens the way for a new and candid review of the whole situation. The city now owns all the great works called the public utilities, and they involve business and technical treatment. There is, therefore, the concentration of legislative wisdom to the end that the city may get the results financially which it has a right to expect. The Whig has already, on several occasions, as it is prepared to do again, advocated such a course on the part of the council as will secure to the city the best service on the part of its officials.

It has now an expert at the head of the works department an authority on the subjects which come under his attention. It has in connection with the water works department a man whose fidelity is beyond all question, an expert on pipe-laying, with a limited field for usefulness now that the water system has reached pretty nearly every habitable portion of the city. And it has at the power house men who are said to be competent to direct the public interests so far as steam and electrical power are concerned. Are all these men, and the subordinates whom they control, employed to the best advantage? One has to go again to the private capitalist for lessons in economy. Would any man, owing all these properties or plants, run them separately with divided interests and staffs, and without the harmony of action which makes for profits? Certainly not. He would probably select a head for all the plants, a level-headed, experienced man, and would commit to him the task of reorganizing all the employees so that each fitted into the place for which he had the qualification and that all the departments worked with that understanding with each other which ensured success.

To Mr. Craig, the city engineer, he would assign the excavations in streets and construction work for which he has had a special training; to Mr. Hewitt he would remit all pipe-laying of every kind, for gas or water purposes; to Mr. Folger he would refer all matters pertaining to the electrical appliances and equipment, and to Mr. Evans all that concerned the steam-boilers and machinery in the pump and power houses.

In this way the mechanical and technical departments would be harmonized as have the financial departments of the city, and its utilities; and only when this is done will the friction between them cease and the civic government become really effective and economical.

How can it be done? Send it to a special committee of the council. This committee can consider all the facts, and can surely evolve a workable plan which will give the city the reform in its working service which it so greatly needs.

CHASING DOWN THE SINNERS.

The first session of the new Civil Service Commission—that appointed to do what the previous commission had failed to do, namely point out the offenders—has begun its work. At the outset, however, a disappointment is felt. The old commissioners groped their way through much darkness, the civil servants and "suspects" having, according to the auditor-general, offered them no light and guidance. They found out some things, and left on record that they believed there were in the service men without conscience, men who were dishonest.

Two of the commissioners were the first witnesses before Judge Cassels, and they declined to point the finger to anyone and say, "Thou art the man." They repeat that the public have in their employment officials who are serving two masters, and doing it successfully, scripture to the contrary, but not being detectives, and not being required to go further by the commission under which they acted, they declined to name the sinners. So the work practically will have to be done over. Each of the transactions of say the last three years will be examined, the transactions of the period covered by the present minister of marine and fisheries, and wherever evidence is found of irregularity it will be pursued to a finish and the responsibility or censure for it fixed. The work will be thoroughly done, in public, and justice will eventually be handed out.

The whole department must meanwhile remain under a cloud. Nor will there be much sympathy expressed for it under the circumstances. The officials gave the government and the minister all the worry they could. They became stumbling blocks in the way of the first commission. They aided the opposition in a wanton attack upon Mr. Brodeur during the discussion of his estimates. They may be suffering now, but not seriously. Those who could stand the taunts and jibes of press and parliament can stand the suspicion of being tainted until Judge Cassels has been able to single out the sheep from the goats and treat them as they should be.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

Mr. Grey was good enough to be a candidate in London when no one else would run, but now that the party is in power in Ontario and flush the Beck faction hands Bill a lemon.

Mr. Brodeur has at last seen the necessity of handling the troublers of the opposition without gloves. After his last round with the Bennett in tion they wore a sad and subdued appearance.

With a rearrangement of the debt the city would have thousands of dollars for public improvement, and in the near future. Why should the citizens of to-day load themselves for the sake of posterity?

Why should there not be civil service reform in Ontario, and the appointment and promotion of officials on merit? Mr. MacKay favors it, Mr. Whitney is mum. Why? He favours the spoils system.

Toronto's latest estimate of the cost of a plant whereby it may get cheap power from Niagara is $3,578,080, and the contract for power runs for thirty years. The city may have occasion to repent of the deal in sackcloth and ashes.

Mr. Judd, of London, the official executioner of the Whitney government, does not object to serve when some official has to lose his head. But he does protest against the use of the word "hangman." It is not a dignified title. Axeman is better.

Mr. Grey declined to be a candidate in London at a convention which was packed for Mr. Beck. He does not decline a nomination from a convention "where every man who calls himself a conservative will have a voice and vote." The trouble is not over in London yet.

Up north the people want to know what information the La Rose syndicate gave the government that they should get $130,000 from the government. One of the syndicate is David Dunlop, a brother-in-law of the minister of mines. Evidently Mr. Cochrane is good to his own.

SPIRIT OF THE PRESS

Weather Freaks.

Ottawa Free Press.

A Kingston despatch speaks of "the rarity of a snowstorm in May." What short memories some of these rural editors have! The fourth of May last year was one of the freaks of that freakish spring.

Might Have Been More.

Toronto Globe.

The people of Ontario are assured that the $130,000 voted to brother-in-law might have been a much larger sum. This is a warning to provide against all such possibilities in the future.

The Wiser Course.

Montreal Gazette.

The minister of justice thinks a number of acts passed by the Ontario legislature are beyond its power, but will leave it to the courts to decide the issue. Sometimes this is the best way of dealing with such matters, even if it costs the litigants money. There is no political capital to be made in denouncing a court decision. Sometimes votes may be caught by condemning a disallowance.

Liberal Book Bargains.

Toronto Globe.

The school book reduction is one of Premier Whitney's failures. He has helped the publishers to work off some dead stock, but the change has been within limits too narrow to admit of general public benefit.

Shying At Gamey.

Exchange.

The Oshawa conservatives are still very angry over the sort of reception given to Mr. Gamey on the occasion of his recent visit. It appears that just before Mr. Gamey got up to speak a number of those present left the smoker, to the great annoyance and disgust of the faithful.

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM.

Why Not in Ontario?—Blighting Touch of Spoils System.

Hamilton Herald.

Some measures of civil service reform which will diminish the power of patronage and make appointments to the public service more dependent on merit than they have been, is sure to be introduced at Ottawa before long. A promise to that effect has come from the government.

It would be pleasant to be able to announce that a similar reform is being considered by the government of Ontario. The time is ripe for such a policy in this province. During the three years that the Whitney government has been in office it has made vigorous use of the "spoils" broom, and the political complexion of the civil service has undergone a rapid change. The application of the "spoils" system has produced its natural effect. For every official who has been unjustly dismissed there is a group of persons, the relatives and friends of the dismissed official, who are awaiting their opportunity to show their resentment.

A typical case is that of John Loughrin, late registrar of Nipissing. He was dismissed from office, and is now the liberal candidate for that riding. Mr. Loughrin has many conservative friends who believe that he was unjustly treated, and who will be inclined to make their protest and express their sympathy for him by giving him their support.

The action taken by Charles Collins, of Dundas, also reveals the blighting effect of the patronage system. Mr. Collins, one of the most stalwart conservatives in Wentworth, protests against the nomination of Mr. Wilson for the north riding, claiming that it was obtained through the arbitrary action of the "machine." He threatens to run as an independent candidate unless another conservative who would command the confidence of conservatives generally enters the field. He invites "the older and saner" members of the party to "come to the front and lift the party out from amongst the horde of office and patronage seekers into which it has by a great misfortune fallen."

If the conservative party of Wentworth has, as Mr. Collins charges, passed into control of a horde of office and patronage seekers, that misfortune is directly due to the patronage system. Not only is it a curse to the province; it is a source of weakness to the party in power. It would be good party tactics as well as a high patriotic duty for the Whitney government to abolish it.

How fine it would be to hear Mr. Whitney make a definite announcement in favor of civil service reform—such a reform as would do away with the patronage blight.

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