

THE GUARDIAN

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THE MORNING GUARDIAN.

MONDAY, MAY 1, 1899.

PARTY ORGANS.

The best that can be said of the party organs, to which class a large majority of the newspapers in Canada yet belong, is that they have survived their usefulness. In the old days when the irresponsible family compact held sway and dispensed patronage and offices among the branches of the family tree; when not to belong to the state church was a bar to preferment; when few of the people had votes and the masses were looked upon by those in power as mere hewers of wood and drawers of water—in those days the newspaper advocates of reform had a great work to perform and they did it manfully. They were party newspapers, but their battle was for popular rights and they wrought a great victory for the people. The old compact was broken down, the franchise was extended, responsible government was brought in and the equality of all sects and creeds in the eye of the law was established.

Against this revolution there were other party organs making strenuous battle for all the old abuses, upholding the class privileges, and denouncing the new doctrines as perilous, republican and disloyal. It may be that the men behind the desks of the Tory newspapers of those days believed in the narrow political creed of which they were the exponents. They may have been as sincere in their defence of hoary abuses and moss-grown precedents as were Howe in Nova Scotia, Fenety in New Brunswick or George Brown in Ontario in their advocacy of the new and better order of things. If so there was an earnest conviction of right and duty on both sides as there certainly was on one side.

The same might be said of the days when the newspapers and public men of the country were battling for and against the union of the provinces, or engaged in the struggle for and against the introduction of the protective system. The party organs of those days were contending for great principles. Their deliverances were argumentative and informing and powerfully aided in developing the public sentiment of the time.

But there is no longer a battle for principles between the party organs. They have largely degenerated into simple brushes with which whitewash is applied to the leaders of one party and black-wash applied to the leaders the other party. Take up the average Tory newspaper today, form your opinions from its editorial columns alone and you will readily conclude that Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his colleagues are corrupt, ignorant, and ridiculous persons who, by some caprice of fortune have been placed in power and are malignantly doing their best to ruin and impoverish the country, while Sir Charles Tupper and his lieutenants are all Heaven-born statesmen, imbued with pure patriotism and endowed with the loftiest talents.

Take up the average Liberal organ and you will find the ridiculous Bytown Coons of which you had read in the Tory papers are a collection of Solons and Gladstones of Canada, who are kindly lending their superb talents and distinguished patriotism to the task of rescuing this once fair Dominion from the wreck and ruin wrought by eighteen years of Tory misrule, corruption, favoritism and extravagance. In so far as editorial opinions are valued, it is for this false and delusive coloring, this black washing and white washing, this fulsome adulation on the one side and continued misrepresentation on the other, that the patrons of the party organs are paying.

It is needless to say that broad-minded and intelligent readers, who seek to become acquainted with the real facts of the case and who seek to form just estimates of public men and public policy place very little value upon all this mass of false and lurid coloring poured forth from day to day. Indeed if they read it at all, they hold it in derision. By those of less intelligence, and who read one side only, false and distorted impres-

sions are formed. This class becomes smaller from year to year with the spread of intelligence, and there is now a healthy and rapid growing sentiment in favor of the independent journal, as compared with the mere party organ. One thing only saves the party organ from rapidly falling into contempt, and that is the excellent news service which characterises the better class of party journals. The reading public want news, first last and all the time. They are willing to pay for it, too, and even to accept with it a mass of distorted and delusive argument and opinion. The news and the news only gives circulation to the organ's editorial misrepresentations—a swift vehicle for the disreputable and ill-favored passenger.

The mass of intelligent readers are now discovering that they can obtain all the news of the day, well-arranged and digested, and with it fair, dispassionate and just editorial opinions, and an impartial estimate of public men and measures. Hence the rapidly growing popularity of the independent newspaper. This, in its turn is reacting upon the party journals for their good. The better class of them are becoming more just to opponents and less conspicuously partial to their favorites. But Canadian political journalism is yet far behind the British standard in this regard. It is improving no doubt, for which fact thanks are due to the few really independent newspapers in the country which have set the example and led the way.

There is some hope that the GUARDIAN's representations in the matter of the Srimgeour warehouse may yet bear fruit. An Ottawa despatch tells that in reply to an inquiry Hon. Mr. Paterson said "that the privilege of the bonded warehouse in King's, P. E. I., was given last December for an indefinite time, but that representations had been made which the government would enquire into." If an honest enquiry is made and the result honestly acted upon, which we have reason to hope will be the case, then the scandal complained of will be abated.

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Among others who have strong claims to consideration in the appointment about to be made to the Lieutenant Governorship is Hon. Peter Sinclair, who has seen over thirty years service in public life, both in the Island Legislature and in the Commons. Mr. Sinclair was twice elected to the Commons from Queen's County in 1873 and 1874, being elected by acclamation in the latter year. He unsuccessfully contested the seat in 1878. He had also been a member of the Executive Council and of the Board of Education from 1863 to 1871 when the government resigned. He was again called to the Executive in 1872 and successfully led the lower House against the strong opposition of Messrs. Pope, Brecken, Howland and others at that time. Since 1882 Mr. Sinclair has ably served his constituents of the First District in the Legislature and more recently as a member of the administration. His high character and moderate and consistent Liberalism give him strong claims to consideration when an opportunity of preferment offers. Only his well-known modesty—a rare quality among politicians—has prevented Mr. Sinclair's name being much more prominent than it has been in the gossip about promotions and appointments.

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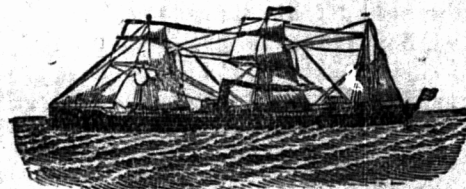
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