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"The Strongest Memory is Weaker Than the Weakest Ink."

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1943.

Parliamentary Under-Secretaries

The creation of Parliamentary assistants to relieve the burden of over-worked Cabinet ministers in the House of Commons is a feature of the proposed legislative program this session at Ottawa. This proposal, says the Montreal Star, "was advanced by Mr. King himself some years ago, but never implemented." The Star being an ardent supporter of Mr. King, the irony of this sentence is doubtless unintentional. What happened was that Mr. Bracken, in his first broadcast after his appointment as Progressive Conservative leader, urged this policy so strongly, and the reaction proved so favorable throughout the country, that the King Government was prodded into taking action, just as it has had to be prodded all along the line of our war effort.

The Star simply paraphases Mr. Bracken's speech (without credit to the author) when it says that the necessity for Parliamentary under-secretaries, or whatever it is decided to call them here, has been demonstrated rather painfully again and again since the present war began, and the proposed appointments will constitute no more than a tardy act of justice to Ministers who cannot reasonably be expected to discharge the heavily increased responsibilities of their respective departments outside the House, and at the same time attend every sitting in order to answer any question that may occur to any particular member.

The Star omits reference to the strongest point raised by Mr. Bracken, namely the need of re-establishing the supremacy of Parliament. The appointment of responsible under-secretaries would not only relieve the ministers, but would do way with the excuse for delegating ministerial powers to bureaucrats who are not answerable to the people.

Priority On Brains

A grave fault in the Canadian system of higher education is its failure to meet the case of the brilliant and promising student denied university training because of lack of means. Australia is meeting this problem by direct governmental assistance in deserving cases. The plan is explained by the news bulletin of Australian Section, Empire Press Union:

"In future the whole field would be open to rich and poor alike. Where a student could meet the full cost of a course without hardship no assistance would be given. In other cases payments would be partial or total according to circumstances. In assessing means there would be no prying into personal affairs as inquiries would be limited to the amount of the family income and the number of dependent children.

"For three years after graduation a student would, if required, accept Commonwealth employment in his professional capacity.

"Assistance would be given to students in medicine, dentistry, engineering, veterinary, science, agriculture, and science and perhaps

Post-War Salvage

A parliamentary sub-committee on salvage has tabled a report in the House of Commons, and its recommendations are of interest not alone to industralists, but to every Canadian who gives thought to this matter and would like to see Canada's economic future bolstered by something more reassuring than vague hopes or fears. A program of conversion is plainly needed, and essential to its success, in the opinion of the sub-committee, is the over-all planning and surveying of war-time salvage and conservation both in a national and an international sense. The sooner this is done, the easier it should be to avoid huge wastage when industry is confronted with a change-over for the post-war era. The sub-committee urges that the same principles of salvage and conservation be continued after peace has been established. Its members attach importance to the knowledge gained and the practices followed by industry during war-time and is convinced that tremendous savings can be made if the fullest advantge is taken of these improved techniques.

The unprecedented demands of war have been so successfully met by Canadian industry that it should be possible to grapple with the requirements of peace without general stoppages or widespread dislocation. Preparation, practical adaptations and salvage of everything that is useful should facilitate the big job, hasten the re-establishment of Canada's post-war economy and keep the spectre of unemployment where it belongs—on the outside looking in, with every door barred against it.

No More Strikes

The Government's experience with the steel strike ought, says the Ottawa Journal, to be enough of the kind while this war lasts. It is running the war industries, and is the final authority on rates of pay and other working conditions. It awards the contracts and uses the products. The manufacturers are its agents; the work being done is Government work.

No other authority is so intimately concerned with the results of the operations if it truly represents the people of the country. Therefore it is the duty of the Government to make certain that obstacles do not impede, and that the maximum of production is achieved. Grievances, justified or not do not usually come to the surface with a suddenness that need surprise. Ordinarily much spadework is done to bring about a strike on a large scale, and there are signs of brewing trouble.

With all the machinery at its command to deal with trouble in its active stages, surely the Government can anticipate a crisis in time to head it off. If not, it is blind to the realities of industrial operations and the ways of professional agitators. It should make certain beyond peradventure that there will be no recurrence of these stoppages, which, obviously, are likely to occur in a minority of plants. Strikes can be stopped in initial stages, and it is the Government's responsibility to keep closely enough in touch with operations to see that the initial stages are not passed.

—EDITORIAL NOTES—

About 1,000,000 pounds of butter per day are being consumed in Canada at present, according to Mr. W. C. Cameron of the Dairy Products Board in an address to the convention of dairy farmers of Canada at Calgary.

* * * *

From yesterday, Quebeckers are restricted to 40 ounces of alcoholic liquor per person per week, with the provincial government to furnish free rationing books through the Quebec Liquor Commission. The announcement made no mention of limitation of wines and beer.

* * * *

Mr. J. S. McLean, chairman of the Canadian Aid to Russia Fund committee, reported fund receipts totalled $1,056,000 at Jan. 27. Original objective of $1,000,000 was reached at the week-end, and officials expect when the campaign closed on Saturday the final total will be many thousands in excess of the first goal.

* * * *

Aneta News Agency tells this one on the strength of a Netherlander just escaped to Britain from German occupied Holland. A man, fed up with conditions tried to commit suicide. First he tried to hang himself, but the "ersatz" rope broke under his weight. Next he threw himself into a canal, but his "ersatz" suit, made of wood, kept him afloat. In disgust, he bought some poison from a drug store, but that was "ersatz" too, and had no effect. Finally he gave up the idea of suicide and started to live on his ration coupons. As a result, he died within a month.

* * * *

Mr. Maxime Raymond, former Liberal member for Beauharnois-Laprairie who left the Liberal ranks last year to form his new federal political group—Bloc Populaire Canadien — is being moved to a seat with the opposition groups in the House of Commons at his own request. Mr. Raymond is reported to have said he expects to be followed into the opposition ranks by Mr. Edouard Lacroix (Lib. Beauce) and Dr. Pierre Gauthier (Lib. Portneuf) both of whom opposed the government on its conscription policy last year.

* * * *

Candlemas, the festival held to commemorate the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. The custom of blessing the candles for the whole year on this date came into use in the 11th century:

"If Candlemas day be fair and bright,
Winter will have another flight:
If on Candlemas day it be shower and rain,
Winter is gone and will not come again."

"If the sun is bright on the day of the Purification(Candlemas Day) there will be more frost after the feast than before it."

* * * *

In the British House of Commons a member inquired whether Mr. Dalton, to meet the pressing needs of war workers and to reduce absenteeism, would arrange for immediate distribution of alarm clocks and bicycle lamp batteries at reasonable prices. Mr. Dalton replied that his representative in Washington was trying to obtain increased shipments, the export from U. S. A. having fallen off. Mr. Will Thorne, Laborite, caused laughter when he asked Mr. Dalton if he could not arrange to revive the old system under which men with long poles, went around rapping at sleepers' windows. Mr. Dalton did not reply.

* * * *

Says the Canadian Press: Censors don't quail at even the most complicated codes but they probably developed headaches trying to understand a photostat copy of some old Gaelic poetry, submitted to Ottawa for censorship by Rev. Donald Sinclair, R.C.N. chaplain at Cornwallis Barracks, Halifax and formerly of Montague. Although Mr. Sinclair is a naval censor himself and "has the Gaelic", he was not allowed to censor the poetry, since he was sending it to Harvard University as a gift. Perhaps the censors found a happy solution and just turned the puzzle over to Navy Minister Angus L. Macdonald, himself a Gaelic son with more than a mere smattering of the tongue.

* * * *

After the sensational success of "While Rome Burns", and his simultaneous radio hit as the "Town Crier," Alexander Woollcott's star of popularity had begun to wane, says the Montreal Gazette, when an odd thing happened. George Kaufmann and Moss Hart wrote a play called "The Man Who Came To Dinner," a portrait of Woollcott so brilliantly savage that if they had submitted it to counsel, they would probably have been warned not to produce it for fear of libel action. It was an instantaneous hit. The incredible rudeness, implacable egotism and ruthless wit of Sheridan Whiteside became famous from coast to coast. And Woollcott, who by all the ordinary rules should have been either in a towering rage or a cowering shame, urbanely fitted the cap to his head by playing the role in person. His death was sudden but not unexpected—intimates have been predicting for years that he could not keep on drinking 40 cups of coffee a day, with other eccentricities to match. Woollcott preferred to live as he liked, and enjoy it while it lasted. He did.

Notes By The Way

A waitress in a downtown Victoria restaurant was dismissed and ended an argument with the manager by throwing a lemon pie at him. He struggled through the goo to report to the nearest policeman, but later, decided not to lay a charge. It was explained that the lady did not throw any plate with the pie. A soft touch, in other words. —Vancouver Sun.

A death blow to long-established beliefs that character may be judged by the contour of the face, is dealt by Dr. Maxwell Maltz. Four persons —a playwright, a musician, a lawyer and a doctor — were unable to distinguish correctly the character of a man by his facial appearance. Two thousand years ago, Aristotle taught his students that character can be told by the contour of the face, and to-day we still persist in that thought, Dr. Maltz states. The doctor's experiments prove that human beings are judged by behaviour, expression, gesture, manner, posture, speech, voice and entire conversation and that these have far greater value than judging by looks. — Forest Free Press.

Living in an atmosphere designed to impress the importance of such things, Mr. Justice E. R. E. Chevrier speaks feelingly of the dignity which surrounds the process of administering justice . . . It is not play-acting that goes on at the Bar. It is the majesty of the law, the only real majesty in a democracy, in operation. We could ill afford to sacrifice one form or ceremony, for that would be the beginning of the break-down of our whole great system. —Windsor Star.

Ideal logging conditions have been prevailing in New Brunswick woods, and it is now estimated that close to 400 million feet of lumber will be cut this year, which is slightly over last year's estimated cut of 380 million. Despite war-time handicaps it is stated by lumber executives that the cut this year will be nearly up to standard. — Amherst News-Sentinel.

Australian troops are to be taught how to find sustenance in the bush, like the aborigines do. A new instruction course, designed to make them independent of ordinary supplies if cut off or isolated, is being taught without delay. The troops will learn that—The roots of certain trees contain water. Four teaspoonful of water can be obtained from a frog dug out of dried mud. Onion weed bulbs are palatable. Certain shrubs and plants such as lucerne, nettles, saltbush and milk thistles can be used as substitutes for spinach. The big white and pink wichetty or pelattie grubs on redgums, bluegums, wattles, honeysuckle and mallee roots are a native delicacy. Ants' eggs, toasted on a hot stone, taste like bread. The bark of a certain tree, when crushed up and thrown into a creek, will dope fish and bring them to the surface within an hour. Snake meat is nourishing. It is not claimed that such a diet would be satisfying, but it would keep a man alive for weeks —Australian Press Union.

There is a revealing article in an American weekly, by Charles Lanius, which descibes the mammoth war industry of Switzerland, working on a 24-hour schedule for the Nazi war machine. Switzerland is known for its highly skilled labor. It provides precision instruments, watches, radio, and listening devices for submarines, among other things of great number. It is very true that the Swiss cannot help themselves; they are imprisoned on all sides. And they are as neutral as they dare be, which isn't neutral at all in their high functioning for Hitler Their factories, however, are as much a part of the Nazi war machine as tank brigades and air squadrons and might very well be subject to destruction, because of the ends they are serving. The American reporter had the gumption to tell the Swiss war profiteers that it would be logical if they were visited by the R.A.F. Only the hard fact that Churchill won't emulate Hitler methods is what no doubt saves the German war plants in Switzerland. There must also be some avenue through which Germany can be approached by the Red Cross for the benefit of British prisoners. Swiss production of most vauable war instruments of Germany is a great disability. —St. Catharines Standard.

In the midst of the most highly mechanized war in history, it may seem an anachronism to equip troops with knives. There is nothing anomalous, however, in the collection of these weapons being made by a San Francisco night club, for shipment to soldiers and marines in the South Pacific. In that area, the war has been more primitive than on any other front. It is man against man in the jungles of New Guinea and the Solomns, where mechanized equipment has only a limited scope for its work, and personal daring and prowess have become the deciding factors. Cold steel is playing a big role in the battles, and the man without a blade of some kind is at a disadvantage. Knives are not issued, so the night club is trying to fill the deficiency. Its unique idea will probably play no small part in the success of the American campaign. — Windsor Star.

What's wrong with the Garman army? Many things. Shortage of men, of alloys, and very particularly of good gasoline and reliable oil. What the Northern Miner hears probably accounts for the poor performance of the once proud Luftwaffe. Samples of the gas and lubricating oils used in German airplanes, tanks and transport have been regularly analyzed. It is said that up to late last Summer the gasoline taken from German planes brought down within our lines was found to be good or made good by the high quality of German engine design. The fuel and lubricating oils from tanks and trucks was fair enough, although there was evidence of a need for husbanding supplies. In recent months there has been observed remarkable deterioration, the Northern Miner is able to say. Aviation gas from German planes captured in Libya recently varied up to a maximum of 87 octanes, as compared with the 100 and even 107 octanes of aviation gas supplied by Canada. It is of such poor quality that it will not feed through one of our carburetors. —Northern Miner (Toronto).

PUBLIC FORUM

This column is open for the discussion by correspondents of questions of interest. The Charlottetown Guardian does not necessarily endorse the opinion of correspondents.

MODERN CANADIAN POETRY

Sir,—A few days ago on entering the Charlottetown Library my eye fell upon a small magazine entitled Canadian Poetry. I was interested at once in this magazine, for I have in my possession several small poems, or lyrics, which I sometimes show to my friends, who advise me to have them published. Here then, I said to myself, is the place for my lyrics; and so I took up the little booklet and read it, or rather I tried to read it. My heart and head failed me. For what concord hath light with darkness, or how shall two walk in a way except they be agreed? Whatever my poetry was or was not, the meaning in any one of my poems, it appeared to me, was as clear as day; the meaning in much of the modern poetry was as dark as night. And in such of the modern poems as had a clear meaning, the style, in contrast to that of my poetry, deliberately defied all the rules and regulations of poetry, in blank verse or rhyme, from the days of Homer down to the days of Tennyson, Kipling, and "Bob" Service.

I will give as a sample of this modern "go as you please" poetry the following lines from a Vancouver Lady-Author, selected from her book of modern poetry. The poem is entitled "You Manikin," and is written as follows:

"You manikin to Fate!
Stand up and take the blows!
Dont stare with pain-bewildered eyes then stagger to the next rebuff.
Stiffen the thing you call your spine!
Drag at the muscles of your legs!
Order your strength into your puny arms and fight, fight back
And make a soul."

One may be inclined to think that perhaps the above poem is just an attempted imitation of that strange American poet, Walt Whitman. Or again, one can imagine that perhaps these lines were written by Jack Johnson, Joe Louis, or the once famous John L. Sullivan. But it is hard to believe that they were written, as they actually were, by a dainty woman, of considerable modern culture too.

There is no accounting for taste, but our modern poets must pardon some of us if we prefer to the above lines a verse from Longfellows "Psalm of Life" as follows:

"In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of life,
Be not like dumb driven cattle,
Be a hero in the strife.

I tried to express my own preference by the following lines:

"Dear poet, I have read your poem;
I dare not call it verse or rhyme:
I tried to put it to a tune,
But oh! I found it had no time.
"And now I think I hear you say:
Pooh! anyone can write a rhyme;
A mere mechannic artisan
Can write a verse and make it chime.
"But oh good friend, do not despise
The potency of rhym-ed verse:
There's some mysterious hidden thing,
Unites it with the Universe."

And in my school days I was led to believe that all good poetry, in blank verse or rhyme, and no matter how grand and classic, had in it, like all good architecture, some element of universal appeal. Our old grandmothers, for instance, could listen to college boys and girls reciting lines from Milton's Paradise Lost, and although they did not pretend to understand one-tenth of the classic allusions in this great epic, they could still nevertheless sincerely say: "I do not wholly understand the poem you are reciting, boys and girls, but I quite realize that it is something grand, and I love to hear you recite it." Similarly all sorts of people from the college-hall down to the common public school, and from the palace to the cottage, found something beautiful and appealing which they could only define by the word poetry in such simple poems as Wordsworths' "Lucy Gray," Mrs. Heman's "Landing of the Pilgrims," or Burns' "Afton Water." But what modern newfangled poem has any such universal appeal? Indeed one thing alone seems clear in most of the modern poetry that I read, whether it be British, American, or Canadian, and that is, that it is not intended to have a universal appeal, but rather to appeal to new-fangled schools, and cliques and coteries, of poetry.

It is true of course, that on page 29, volume 1, July, 1936 edition of the Canadian Magazine of Poetry, there appears a poem entitled "A Fine Day for the Exhibition," which notwithstanding the fact that it grossly violates standard rules of syntax and versification, gives nevertheless a vivid description of a typical exhibition or fair, and this poem is liable to have a strong appeal to the average school-boy. But the same school-boy is bound to confess that this panoramic description of an exhibition contains more truth than poetry—in the ratio perhaps of 10 to 1. I will quote as an example, the first verse and the last 9 lines:

"Fine day for the exhibition.
Good roads to drive the stock to town;
Sheep panting and bleating hoarsely in the dust.
Oxen with their flanks rubbed sleekly down,
The brass on their yokes gleaming;
stallions neighing,
Fat thick-necked bulls, their tails blue-rinsed and braided;
Jersey cows, dreamy eyed with great udders swaying.

Children licking the bright candy and ice-cream cones,
Travelling tirelessly around,
Boasting shrilly together:
"That's my calf bawlin'!
"Them's the eggs our pullets laid.
See our old gander!"
"Our horse would have won the haulin',
On'y he slipped. You see next year!"
Grownups over their heads gloating:
"Ye-es I sa-ay, reg'lar exhibition weather!"

No! This panoramic, photographic phonographic description of an exhibition was not written by a husky male farm laborer, but by a graceful female poet; and her "poem" received high commendation from sober brows—high brows too at that, from several of our Canadian universities.

And then on page 12 of the same volume there appears a poem entitled "The Clam Digger," which the same afore-mentioned sober brows awarded first prise to its author in a competition for the best poem in this July 1936 issue. The opening verse is as follows:—

"I shall go and dig clams today,
When the tide is low.
That will be late in the morning;
the floor of the bay will be bare then.
I shall go and dig clams today."

This whole poem I confess, which again by the way is written by a girl or woman is of such a nature as might tempt the proverbial school-boy to play hookey, but I fail to see how he would be tempted to call it a poem—unless indeed the word poetry can be applied to any composition so long as it be vividly descriptive, and stimulating to the imagination.

The final question then arises: Granted the old legal maxim that long possession is nine-tenths of ownership, what right, we may well ask, have the writers of these strange modern compositions to call them poetry, seeing that the word is a time-honored one, associated for ages with an entirely different form of composition to that of our modern composers? The answer to this question has little practical value to myself, but it has an important bearing on the fact that a considerable number of the younger generation in Prince Edward Island have a distinct talent for writing verse; anyone of whom for ought we know, may have in himself or herself the potentiality of a great Canadian poet. What manner of poetry then shall these young writers adopt for their models? The immortal poems of the old masters, or the new-fangled ones of the modern iconcoclastic amateurs? As for myself, after reading or trying to read a good deal of the latter, I feel like calling up the shade of Lord Byron whom his poetical compeers dubbed chief of the Satanic school of Satire. But I forbear to do so, especially as I quite well remember that he recklessly satirised a contemporary poet whom posterity acclaimed a greater poet than Byron himself. But however, with an apology to him for an attempted imitation, I conclude my essay on modern poetry:

"They call it poetry, and it maybe too,
In future ages,
When Shakespeare shall have grown quite dim
On history's pages.
They call it poetry, and it may be deemed
Not wholly rotten—
When Burns and Moore, and Wordsworth too,
Are quite forgotten?"

I am, Sir, etc.,
AN OLD TEACHER

Aiding The Fishermen

(Halifax Chronicle)

Under the scheme sponsored by the Department of Fisheries to assist fishermen with the planning of joint action to meet their proolems, more than one hundred and sixty meetings, attended by 7,700 fishermen, were conducted during the last five months of 1942 in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. That is an achievement of high order for an educational program that has been in operation only for the relatively short period of six years. And it is one that speaks well for continuing expansion and inclusiveness in the future.

The program is designed to make available to the fishermen competent assistance and guidance that they may study and organize for the solution of their difficulties through co-operative action. Development of fishermen's co-operatives has been one noteworthy result since the inception of the scheme. Joint production and joint marketing of fishery products, as well as joint purchase of necessary fishing supplies and other required goods, has in many instances proven most successful.

Under the impact of war and the necessity for economy measures wherever possible, there has been a slight curtailment of expenditure but the program nevertheless, has made definite and constant progress. At all the meetings assistance and suggestions were given the fishermen by adult educational workers, and the net result has been to improve operating methods while, at the same time, maintaining essential wartime food supplies.

A large share of the credit for the remarkable success of the plan is due the workers of St. Francis Xavier University who, in addition to their activities in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, have conducted meetings in Prince Edward Island and the Magdalens. They also held some one hundred conferences with directors and officials of the various fishermen's groups and conducted personal interviews with a great many fishermen, making 225 visits to fishing communities throughout the widespread area.

Educational meetings, conducted under the auspices of the Department of Fisheries and presided over by competent workers, constitute a valuable contribution towards aiding the fishermen of the province, and of the area as a whole, to improve their methods of operation and to maintain a steady supply of essential wartime food supplies, both for the Canadian market and for the needs of many allies.

Confession Of Failure

(Globe and Mail)

The statistical analysis of the operation of Canada's manpower policy for military purposes issued on Tuesday by the Departments of Defense and Labor must have left confusion in the minds of the casual reader. The tables most easily understood and therefore likely to receive closest attention were those giving results by districts. But even the statistics showing the percentages of enlistments to population were confused by including the male population up to 45 years when calls were restricted to those of 40 and below. The range is from 12.8 per cent in Military District No. 5, which is Quebec, to 44.1 in District No. 6, which is Halifax. In No. 2, Toronto, the proportion of enlisted men between 19 and 45 is 38.2. In the London district 36.7, and the Kingston district 40.5. The total for all districts is 33 per cent.

But the significance of such comparisons is dwarfed by a digest published today from the Ottawa correspondent of this paper, who rightly describes the record issued as an official confession of the collapse of the national mobilization machinery. Here are some of the pertinent facts disclosed: 32.4 per cent of the 750,611 men to whom medical notices were sent are still unaccounted for. There are 146,276 classified as "delinquents or otherwise unaccounted for." Some 96,830 notices were "undelivered." Of the men called 27 per cent got into uniform, and of these 95,261 enlisted on their own. The mobilization machinery got into the army only 14.3 per cent of those summoned.

When the call-ups were under the direction of National War Services, and the requisitions were moderate in size, the record of results apparently was good; but in later periods, under National Selective Service and the Department of Labor, with increased requisitions, the slump began and developed into a crisis. It is claimed the manpower pool was reaching depletion. Against this, however, are the facts that only a little more than 14 per cent got deferments, and more than 98,000 throughout the country were allowed to ignore their calls.

The voluntary enlistment policy was bally-hooed from the housetops as a success when all sorts of backdoor pressure were being used to make it work. The truth now is revealed that from the day of registration in 1940 there has been no effective policy for the allotment of manpower. The large number of delinquents and missing could have been accounted for in the records with a compulsory selective service that assigned each capable person where he belonged, in military service, in industry or agriculture. The finger could not have been pointed at discrepancies in military districts if this service had been invoked and applied equitably and honestly.

The story of the official figures condemns itself, and the tragedy for Canada is that in the fourth year of the war, when the world's two great leaders have been able to get together and map their plans for an offensive campaign to victory, this country remains unmobilized for total participation.

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The Poet's Corner

REINCARNATION

I too remember distant golden days
When even my soul was young;
I see the sand
Whirl in a blinding pillar toward the band
Of orange sky-line 'neath a turquoise blaze—
(Some burnt-out sky spread o'er a glistening land)
—And slim brown jargoning men in blue and gold,
I know it all so well, I understand
The ecstacy of worship ages-old.

Hear the first truth: The great far-seeing soul
Is ever in the humblest husk: I see
How each succeeding section takes its toll
In fading cycles of old memory,
And each new life the next life shall control
Until perfection reach Eternity.

—E. Wyndham Tennant (Ypres, July, 1916.)

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