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THE MORNING GUARDIAN

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1902.

THE SYSTEM AT FAULT.

We are of opinion that very few who have given any serious thought to the subject are quite satisfied with the machinery and the methods under which the government of Prince Edward Island is carried on. Our governmental system is primitive, outworn, and needs reconstructing from the bottom. The defects are apparent in every department to which attention may be directed. Our finances are by no means in a healthy condition. A long succession of deficits under successive party administrations have shown that something is wrong. A gain and again we have sought and obtained a little relief from Ottawa, but these have not wiped out the adverse balance. Resort has been had to new taxes, based on no well considered system, but the deficits are still with us. Our plan of supporting education is unlike anything else in the world. We have the worst features of paternalism alike in the support of education, in the care of the poor and in the maintenance of our highways. And we may add that as a result of our defective system, our legislation from year to year is largely patchwork, sometimes mere change for change sake, often adding new cloth to an old garment with the effect of making a worse rent. We have a system in which we look to the Provincial Government for every thing, from feeding and clothing the pauper, or repairing the roof or chimney of a jail, up to the higher and legitimate functions of administration and legislation. It is by division of labor that industrial enterprises have developed and made their marvellous progress. The maxim "divide and conquer," may be as fittingly applied to the science of Government as to military or industrial affairs. The obvious remedy for our backward and cumbersome system of government is to drop the paternalism under which the Executive and the Legislature are expected to do everything, and introduce the municipal system which prevails everywhere that civilization has spread—everywhere but in Prince Edward Island. That system wherever it has been tried has been approved. There is yet no

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single instance in which after trial it has been abandoned. All other Provinces of Canada have it and would as soon think of parting with their representation in Parliament as of reverting to the moss-grown system which they had abandoned.

What does the municipal system mean? It means government of the people by the people and for the people in the fullest sense of the word. It means that the people of each county shall tax themselves for local purposes, and expend the money themselves as they see fit. It means the abolition of the central grab-bag in Charlottetown, which none may approach except by political favor, and the substitution of the County treasury, guarded and controlled by men elected within the county and the money expended where it is raised, without being sent away. It means that the people shall pay for what they get and get what they pay for. It means non-partisanship in the conduct of local affairs. It means co-operation in the work of local government and making provision for local needs. It means the relief of the central Government and Legislature of heavy responsibilities and endless details of administration which can be better, more economically and more satisfactorily managed by the people themselves. It means also the restoration of the provincial finances to a basis of stable equilibrium.

It would be quite as reasonable to ask the government to control all the petty details of street lighting, water supply, sewerage, the building and care of streets and sidewalks as to continue to supervise all the petty details of local services in the country districts as they now do. These local matters of city or country can be better handled by those on the spot, who are to derive benefit from the service and who see and know precisely what they are paying for. The fact is too obvious; too well established by experience in other Province and by the city and town Councils we have in Prince Edward Island, to need any support of further argument. What is needed is the administrative ability and courage to grapple with this question. We must get out of the old rut and adopt well approved modern and progressive ideas. Our people have shown by successful co-operation in the dairy industry that they are fully capable of local self-government. We feel assured that they would respond most heartily to the offer of local control. We invite the Government to consider it, and take it up. The municipal system is bound to come, and if the party in power refuse to take it up they must in the end give place to more progressive men who will do so.

Ontario is evidently to have a great battle over the referendum. The temperance people, although heavily handicapped by the very large vote required at their hands, are thoroughly arousing the country and by so much their chances of securing the requisite majority are increased. The liquor men are evidently alarmed and will put forth their utmost efforts to win the day. Premier Ross, himself, a life-long prohibitionist, is expected shortly to deliver an address in Toronto in favor of his measure. It is said, however, that his colleagues will take no active part one way or the other. The result will remain in doubt until after the polling on 4th December.

The November issue of the Prince Edward Island Magazine is graced with an excellent full page likeness of Premier Peters. There is a good table of contents, the first article being a description of an old-time charivari, by Hon. J. H. Fletcher. It is written in the easy and interesting style with which readers of The Argus were long ago familiar. Pichon's interesting narrative of Old St. Jean is concluded in this number. One of the more pretentious poems is from the pen of W. W. Rogers and is entitled Adam Snow. We shall be mistaken if some of



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