

THE CHARLOTTETOWN GUARDIAN

Evening Daily (founded 1887) \$4.00 per year (delivered) in advance; \$5.00 per year (mailed, in advance, in Canada, and \$5.50 for U. S. A.)

FRIDAY, MAY 21, 1920.

Monday, May 24th, being Empire Day and a public holiday. The Guardian will not be issued on Tuesday. Advertisers please take note.

THE SESSION.

It is expected that the legislative session will close today, at farthest, tomorrow. It has been an important one, a disturbing one and in many ways an unfortunate one. Not for many years in the political history of the province have the people been "rabbed up" the wrong way as they have been during the session now ending; not for many years have the people almost as a whole realized that they have been "gold bricked," that they have been made the victims of misplaced confidence.

The government had been elected upon clear cut issues; the opposing political parties had placed their respective policies before the people through the press, from platform, from house to house and from man to man. The policy of the Liberal party was no increase of taxation, economy, abolishing useless or superfluous offices (of which they claimed there were many); consideration for returned soldiers, some candidates even going so far as to declare that if the federal government refused the gratuity of \$2,000 it would be paid by the provincial government.

The sequel to all these promises came when the Liberal government was returned to power with a majority that made it independent of public opinion, independent of former promises, independent of anything and everything but the full and fat enjoyment of the "Seats of the Mighty" a term which they mouthed with boastful arrogance as soon as they even to their own surprise, found themselves in power.

What has happened since is fresh in public memory. After extravagant and absolutely unfounded statements regarding the finances of the province during the previous regime, they launched a taxation scheme of so drastic a character as to arouse a storm of indignation throughout the length and breadth of the province. The outrageous feature of this tax measure is that it was wholly uncalled for. The financial position of the province had been distorted out of all semblance to accuracy. This was shown incontrovertibly by ex-Premier Arsenault in his speech on the budget when he made a statement showing that instead of a deficit of \$230,000 as claimed by the government there was only a deficit of \$56,000 and his figures were not contradicted.

The taxation proposed by the government measure will amount to \$300,000 and possibly more. What the government purposes doing with it has not been divulged but no doubt a very large proportion of it will be consumed in paying officials of whom they claimed there were too many under the previous regime and which, judging by the several measures passed will be greatly increased before many days. As to their other promises, their treatment of applications from returned soldiers, their disposal of the teachers' question, their substitution of political heelers for faithful public servants, all speak for themselves.

In the face of all this the motion of Hon. ex-Premier Arsenault that the Education Act and the Taxation Act should not come into effect before receiving the sanction of the people through a general election was straight to the point. Of course it was defeated by the "brute strength" of the government although many occupants of the "Seats of the Mighty" had expressed themselves as opposed to these and other measures. They, however, had not the courage of their convictions and they all "took to the trees." Where the present indignation will end it would be useless to predict but in the meantime the government is in action, the taxes will be imposed and the money expended.

COURAGE.

Perhaps, apart from the stereotyped phraseology of ordinary politics, no other word was as frequently or as ostentatiously used by the government members during the present session as the word Courage—with a capital C. They boasted of the courage they had displayed in introducing the taxation Act; in the courage they had shown in picking up with their bare hands that red hot brand, the "Infernal Road Scheme" of unhappy memory, and which now, wrapped round with Liberal cloths is the respectable Federal Road Scheme. They boasted of the courage shown in giving the teachers less than they demanded. And yet this was but a shadow of the real courage they displayed during the election campaign. It was then they displayed real courage for by their manipulation of the whole moral law they staked not only their political future but the future that lies "behind the beyond" even for the politician. For the chance of four years on the "seats of the mighty" they took all the chances here and hereafter. Once safely ensconced on the coveted benches it really required no courage. They will have their one, two, three or four years anyway, according as the indignation of the people can be held in check and what does it matter if after that, there comes the deluge?

Ex-Premier Arsenault gave an apt illustration of their courage when he compared it with that of the man who boasted what he would do to the bear if it should come along. When the bear came he climbed a tree. When the bear came to the legislature the other night in the shape of an opportunity to face the electors they all took to the trees. But this required no courage; anybody can climb a tree.

CURRENT COMMENT

Ex-Premier Arsenault's reply to the so called Budget was a settler. No wobbling. No camouflage. But a straightforward statement of the affairs of the province, buttressed up with an array of facts and figures not an item of which even the twisty Bell Government can successfully gainsay or deny. All through the session it has been a drag to get information tabulated concerning important public transactions. Piece by piece, as though drawing their very eye teeth, fact after fact was dragged to light. When these facts were compiled and laid before the House as they will be before the public, consternation pervaded the whole Government ranks.

In this column the utter falsity of their financial statements has been frequently the subject of comment. Challenges were issued to the Government or their friends to show an actual honest deficit of even \$100,000. They claimed that the shortage amounted to \$232,000, yet not one of them dared to face the challenge. They knew that the figures were falsified for political effect, and they knew the extent to which they were tampered with. A mere tyro in accounting knows that it is impossible to have an actual deficit in excess of the actual increase in the public debt, and knowing this they feared to submit their accounts to the crucial test of expert enquiry.

The exposure of the facts by Hon. Mr. Arsenault was complete. The net debt when the Liberals retired in 1911, was \$1,007,293.95. Computed in exactly the same way, without adding to or leaving out a figure, the net debt when the Arsenault Government resigned in 1919, was \$1,064,951.18, leaving the increase of the net debt after eight years of Conservative rule at only \$57,657.23. To show for this small debt increase they had \$241,197.46 expended in permanent public works, including no less than thirty steel bridges, nearly \$200,000 of which were paid for out of ordinary current revenue. Did the Liberal construction ever exist that could show such a record? In their twenty years they increased the debt almost a million dollars, and had \$10,000 less of permanent work than Conservatives had in about one third the time.

And as the leader of the Opposition enquired, why all this camouflage and deceit? Simply to prepare the way for the most stupendous Taxation scheme ever launched against an unsuspecting people. With their present revenues, augmented by prohibition profits, and without extraordinary expenditures for election, Prince of Wales visit, receptions of soldiers, teacher's referendum and released cost of public works by the Highways grant, the government could have managed splendidly by imposing only a moderate education tax. For this purpose if the Towns and incorporated villages were willing to tax themselves to pay their teachers, it would not be necessary or right to impose a provincial tax upon them, and the amount necessary to pay a sufficient salary to the country teachers need not be large. This was the policy which he was prepared to stand by and if the Government will tear up their taxation act and introduce an act along these lines, it would have the support of the Opposition.

Mr. Arsenault pointed out that

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WHY IS LOVE THE MOST VALUABLE THING IN THE WORLD?

The value of anything is the boulder that it has for service and making of life. Thus, a thing may be very cheap and very valuable, such as air or light. It is not a question of cost, price or expense at all. So, if we use the word "valuable" in the proper sense, we must answer that by far the most valuable thing in the world is love. Of course, there could be no life at all without such things as water and air, but this being granted, the thing which makes for more life and higher life than anything else is love.

But from our point of view as human beings there is nothing to approach love. Without the love of a mother for her child human beings could not exist at all, so that the highest kind of life that exists entirely depends upon love. As for ourselves as individuals, we learn sooner or later that for each of us love is the most valuable thing in the world. It is the affection and friendship, and companionship of those we love that give their value to life's other prizes, and that solace us in life's sorrows. And, unlike other things the more we give the more we have, for it is quite true that the more we love the more we are able to love.

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THE PUBLIC FORUM

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

The Fox Taxes

Sir:—As the proposed Fox Tax is a matter of much dispute, please give the following statement of the case space in the Guardian: The fox business had an inflation of values before the war and a deflation since the war began. We were then selling breeding foxes at soaring prices; we are now on a pelt basis, the pelts last

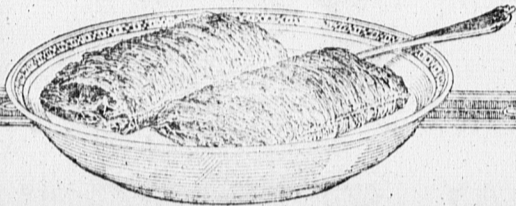
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AULT'S CLEAR AND CONCLUSIVE STATEMENT UPON THE FINANCES OF THE PROVINCE WAS ACCEPTED WITHOUT CONTRADICTION, AND NOT A SINGLE ITEM WAS QUESTIONED AS TO ITS ACCURACY. It was a tacit admission that all their foul charges against the financial record of the late Government, was without foundation, and was as the Opposition leader, declared, purposely contrived to justify the stupendous and unnecessary exactions from the people under their iniquitous TAXATION ACT.

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