

THE GUARDIAN

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"The Strongest Memory is Weaker Than the Weakest Ink"

CHARLOTTETOWN SATURDAY, JAN. 13, 1951

"What's A Million Dollars?"

Trade Minister Howe's familiar quip, "What's a million dollars?" may not have been a politically wise utterance, but it revealed an understanding of what is wrong with public finance in Canada.

That dilemma is simple to state, but not so simple, politically, to solve. In plain language, Mr. Abbott's problem is how to find enough money to pay for defence costs, and at the same time to meet present fixed charges of government.

Consider one or two examples. The Department of National Health and Welfare budgeted for \$455,000,000 for the current fiscal year.

The current budget of the Finance Department is \$575,000,000. Of that sum, \$540,000,000 must be paid out for servicing existing debts.

And so it goes, right down the expenditure line. Hobson's choice confronting the Government today, therefore, is to tell the people of Canada that they must either dispense with a good deal of the paraphernalia of the welfare state, or face a much stiffer dose of taxation.

Unemployables

The committee on public assistance of the Canadian Welfare Council has recommended that Canada's unemployables be made a Federal responsibility.

Apart from the desirability of unified administration of unemployment benefits there is a pressing need for relieving municipalities in particular of this burden.

In slack times and even when employment is at a high level municipalities are prone to deal with the unemployable by the simple and expeditious method of making him move on.

If the Federal Government were responsible we could expect the problem to be faced and to some extent solved at less cost than it is now being ignored.

Electoral Showings

President Truman has asked the American Political Science Association to make a study of the reasons why so many United States citizens stay away from polls.

At the turn of the century the suffrage in the United States was confined to males. The enfranchisement of women vastly increased the number of those eligible to cast ballots.

lic affairs on the part of women voters. A rather different story emerges, however, from the Canadian figures. The year 1900 also saw a general election in this country.

The most recent general election was that of 1949. For this we have the report of the Chief Electoral Officer which gives the percentage casting their ballots as 74, slightly lower than the 76 per cent voting in 1945 but actually better than in 1900.

EDITORIAL NOTES

Tomorrow 2nd Sunday after Epiphany.

Our interests at Ottawa require a directing force, which is lamentably lacking, and nobody here, Prince County excepted, seems to be worrying about it.

Absenteeism in the Special Service Force has shown a remarkable drop. The troops again feel that they have a job to do and are conscientiously going about preparing for it.

Tomorrow the Maritime flying curlers take off for Chicago, Milwaukee and other points in the United States, ambassadors of goodwill and exponents of true sportsmanship.

An awful warning to telephone gossip. In Kansas City, a mother said two women on a party line prevented her from calling firemen to save her baby from a fire that destroyed their home.

The decline of classical learning has brought with it a serious deterioration in the quality of thinking. Modern man tends to ask, not whether a thing is true, but whether it is advisable to believe it.

A scientist has announced, what everyone probably suspected, that a girl matures faster than a boy almost from birth. The situation, however, is not altogether one-sided. In later life women seem to age considerably slower than men.

The question is being canvassed whether the Maginot Line can be utilized as an atomic bomb shelter. Peace and security will really be here when we learn of its underground chambers being used to age wines and cheese.

Like many plants, the Federation of Agriculture seems to become the stronger for an occasional stormy blast instead of uninterrupted warmth. Its efforts in meeting potato marketing difficulties seem to give new vigor to the Federation.

In New Brunswick, an Islander, Mr. D. A. Riley, M.P., is pushing the claims of that Province for due recognition by Parliament and through Parliament the Government. He learned to do that here when Messrs. Matheson and Arsenault were in power, for their eternal endeavour was to focus attention of the powers-that-be on our rights and requirements.

The Post Office Department, or rather the Federal Government, is considering reducing mail deliveries to once instead of twice a day. The American example was a reaction to repeated losses which Congress would not permit to be avoided by increased postal rates and should have little bearing in this country where the Post Office continues to be operated without benefit of red ink.

Sir John Seeley, English historian, died this date 1895. His greatest work was "Ecce Homo", an unconventional and non-theological treatment of Christianity and its founder. He also wrote and published "Natural Religion" in which he sought to mediate between science and religion; and "Expansion of England", which had a great success because the author's line of thought fell in with the Imperialistic tendencies of the time.

If Winter Comes, Can Spring Be Far Behind?



PUBLIC FORUM

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

RED CROSS ACTIVITIES

Sir,—Permit me to point out to you that there was a misleading statement made in the Editorial Column of The Guardian on Thursday, January 11th, with regard to Red Cross and its function in the event of disaster.

In Canada, the function of the Red Cross in times of disaster is to have committees set up and ready to make provision for emergency housing, feeding, transportation, registration, etc. of those affected, but not to rehabilitate the victims. This is usually taken care of through funds raised by public subscription such as in the case of the floods in Manitoba, and the fires in Rimouski and Celano, and administered by a committee on which the Red Cross may have representation, or which may, as was the case in British Columbia, be turned over for administration by the Red Cross.

LAWSON JENKINS, Chairman, P. E. I. Red Cross Disaster Services.

AN ISLAND MINSTREL

Sir,—I was much interested in a letter recently published in your paper, from Mr. G. L. McInnis, of Vancouver, B.C. If you will send me Mr. McInnis' address, I will be happy to send him an article I wrote in 1949 for the Maritime Advocate, of Sackville, which contains all the information I had then about Larry Gorman — I have more now. If you'd like to reprint it, I am sure Mr. Avarad wouldn't mind, and I can send you the article, too.

Some of the New England song collectors (notably Mrs. Eckstrom in her "Minstrelsy of Maine") credited "Peter Emberley" to Larry Gorman, and Helen Creighton in her "Songs and Ballads of Nova Scotia" has unfortunately followed their lead.

I don't know about Mr. McInnis' name Nelson, but here on the Miramichi we know that "Peter Emberley" was written by John Calhoun of Boiestown. I have it as given me by a nephew of Calhoun's, who says it is exactly as his uncle wrote it. The two last verses are in dispute — one faction holding that they were written by Calhoun, and the others that they were added by someone else. Maybe Nelson?

As to Larry Gorman's "Prince Edward Isle, Adieu", sent to me as "The History of Prince Edward Island", if you read a dozen or so of Larry's poems, you would be convinced he wrote this, for he has an ease and lit that the other ballad makers haven't got. He was undoubtedly the greatest woods balladist that ever lived. It is about seventy years since he worked in Miramichi, and we still sing "The Scow at Cowden Shore", and some others.

There must be plenty of Larry's poems floating around Prince Edward Island, in manuscript. Some of my radio listeners from the Island have sent me several, and I would certainly like to have more. Mr. McInnis is right when he says that many of the songs drifted down, and were much altered through the years. Many of our balladists take an old song, alter the names of people and places, and feel they have made up an original song. As Mrs. Eckstrom remarks, "It a woodsman added two lines to Hamlet's soliloquy, he would feel it was his original work."

Old Charlottetown (And P. E. I.)

TORMENTINE IN 1852

From an account by Lieut. Colonel Sleigh, "late of Her Majesty's 77th Regiment," of his passage by ice-boat to Prince Edward Island in the first week of March, 1852, continued from yesterday's issue.

"The following morning I got up early, and the Island mail not having arrived during the night, I determined to push on for Cape Tormentine, a distance of forty miles, without further delay. A small sleigh was provided, well furnished with buffalo robes, and driven by a young American from Maine, whose sister kept the hotel.

"The outskirts of the town were soon passed, and making a detour from the road, in consequence of the heavy snowdrift of the preceding night, which rendered it impassable, a fence was removed to allow our getting into some cornfields, where we floundered over half-bare hollows and ridges, in a manner sufficiently rough to set your teeth on edge. A couple of miles off the road was regained, and, more at ease, we went at a glorious rate to Bay Verte, where we arrived in less than two hours, without stoppage. The Bay was frozen over, and outlines of the stocks of some half-built ships, covered with snow, presented a melancholy appearance. After an hour's delay to rest our steed, with 'Alles' from the driver we resumed our journey.

"About eighteen miles off we met a sleigh approaching at full speed, while a little crazy-looking individual was wildly blowing a horn, and on our nearing him, he shouted out, 'Make way there, you fellows, for Her Majesty's mails! We had just time, in moving to one side, to glean from the excited driver and his two equally excited companions, that 'the ice-boat had got over; such an awful passage nearly lost! sixteen hours in crossing; if the weather was fine, the ice-boat would go over again tomorrow.' This pleasant information was wound up by a piece of advice: 'Let the gentlemen go to Allan's, the best house in New Brunswick.'

"With this, away flew the curlicue, and the woods re-echoed with the shouts of 'Wild Tom, or 'Poor Tom,' as the driver of Her Majesty's mail was designated. We were soon crossing the brittle sheet of ice which formed the surface of a salt-marsh abutting upon Cape Tormentine. A few hayricks were dotted here and there, and on a slight eminence, with a belt of pine-wood in the background, stood the log-building of those respectable New Brunswickers, the Messrs. Allan — lonely, late, and forlorn — while before me I saw the Straits covered further than the eye could see with confused masses of ice, of every distorted shape and size; the field-ice, which is that which stretches from either shore for about a mile out, with a smooth, glittering surface, was fringed with mishapen masses, with sharp conical points thrown together, as if by some mighty convulsion of nature, some twenty, some ten feet high, their peaks forming a 'chevaux-de-frise' which appeared to bid defiance to human progress. Further out again, more mighty blocks rolled and thundered down the Straits, while the distant roar, of awful import, told of the rude interecine strife and mad headlong passage of those icy masses.

"A vast bank, apparently a couple of hundred feet high, white, shrouded with snow to the summit, with a few glistening angles presented to the setting sun, which sank angry, red, and sullen in the west behind Bay Verte, stretched beyond the intervening gulf. This then, I said 'is the Island.' 'Island?' interrupted my informant. 'What you see is not more than four miles off; Cape Traverse is high upon ten; that is a mass of bergs which have come

songs, sung by the woodsmen themselves, in their own style, and they are most interesting. I am, Sir, etc., LOUISE MANNY Newcastle, N.B. (Miss Manny has kindly forwarded her article from the Maritime Advocate, the first part of which appears in our issue today. —Ed. G.)

The Age-Old Story

The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God.

"I now entered Allan's hospitable abode, and was ushered into an apartment grandly designated 'the Governor's room,' from the reminiscence of a few days' sojourn of the Governor of Prince Edward Island, who, in the previous year, had waited a week at Cape Tormentine for favorable omens to warrant his attempting the passage over. This apartment was capacious, two rickety chairs, an old table, and an American cooking-stove, which smoked most painfully, formed the unique and unostentatious embellishment of the regal room. A small door in the rear opened upon a recess, in which a bed monopolized the entire space, except half a foot, behind which the toilet was performed.

"I passed from this chamber into the public kitchen, where I found Arthur Irving, the conductor or captain of the ice-boat and his crew, warming and drying themselves at the fire. To judge from their wearied appearance, they had had a hard time of it. Arthur looked particularly sad, for his narrow escape had caused reflective thoughts. When Irving learnt who I was, he expressed great pleasure at seeing me, having been on the lookout for me ever since the ice set in.

"After gleaning information regarding my Island purchase, I requested Mother Allan to produce her best viands. These in time appeared, and consisted of slices of fried fat pork, with a large bowl of boiling grease, by way of sauce, and some water potatoes, with a plate of brown doughy bread. A cup of whisky was also added; while that everlasting accompaniment to every Provincial dinner, a teapot, completed the spread. I was hungry when I entered, but the peculiar fragrance of the pork acted as the herring in the 'White Horse of the Peppers,' and I soon rose from the table, after a very frugal repast.

"I sauntered about until night-fall, and then was only too glad to seek rest, and in sleep forgot the dullness which surrounded me; for it was wretchedly melancholy — that lonely log-hut perched on Cape Tormentine, with the wind howling round it, and the snow pattering at the windows."

The Poet's Corner

FROM THE CHINESE

These grey stones have rung with mirth and lordly carol. Here proud kings mingled Poetry and ruddy wine. All hath passed long ago; nought but this ruin abideth, Sadly in eyeless trance gazing upon the river. Wouldst thou know who here visited, dwellth and singeth also, Ask the swallows flying from sunny-wall'd Italy. —Robert Bridges.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Anton Chekhov, Russian novelist who died in 1904, was the grandson of a serf who managed to purchase his freedom.

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Larry Gorman's Ballads (Louise Manny in The Maritime Advocate and Busy East, October, 1949).

My name is Larry Gorman I fell in with two portash teams, Bound for McCullam Camp, John Ingraham, Bill Derringham, Were both of these men's names Belonging to McCullam Camp, And drove two portash teams,

I drove with Billy Derringham, A verse for him I'll make, He drove a gray (horse) and a roan, That he brought from the Grapp Lake.

The horse he weighed twelve hundred, And a noble beast to haul, In Chatham. He is still a legend in Miramichi—woodsmen to this day remember him, and sing his songs. The old-timers say, "When I was a young fellow, I used to see Larry Gorman on the street in Bangor" as one might speak of a king. Every man who worked in our lumber woods knew stories of that Imp, Larry, whose songs were the terror and delight of the Miramichi before he went off to Maine to have an charming lumbering folk there. So well known is he in Maine that American folksong collectors usually refer to him as the "Maine Woods Balladist", but some of his best songs were made in Miramichi.

Larry Gorman was born in Prince Edward Island. His mother, they say, was "a great singer." She rocked Larry's cradle with her foot, keeping time to the old songs, which she sang all day long. As Larry grew up, he began to sing old songs, too, to make up songs about friends and neighbours, and longer poems to be sung to the old tunes.

There is an unmistakable ease and charm about Larry Gorman's compositions. One soon learns to recognize the light, bright touch, the quick and lilting metre, the sardonic phrase, which characterize them. They are all eminently singable, which is another reason why so many have survived. In their day they were apt and devastating—the jilted lover, the pompous employer, the dishonest inn keeper, the miser, the silly girl, the vain young man, were neatly imbedded on Larry's wit. I don't think many people fooled Larry Gorman. Old-timers begin a story about him by saying, "There was a man who lived on Bathurst Road" (or wherever), "who cheated his neighbours" (or "his wife left him", or "he was so mean he wouldn't buy a newspaper"), and "Larry made a song about him." They say he made one song too many here, and was "run out of Miramichi" for a song about the men in one lumber camp. It is more probable that better conditions and higher wages lured him to the Maine woods.

The earliest of Larry's songs which has survived is the "Gull Decoy" a lampoon on Larry's own uncle, who was so-called because: "When I stand up and begin to whistle, You'll see all the gulls around me fly, And in the sand they seem to nestle, From whence they call me the Gull Decoy."

(as sung by John B. Stymiest, aged 87, of Tabusintac, for the Lord Beaverbrook Collection of New Brunswick Folksong.) But though a bird-charmer, the Gull Decoy was a mean and cruel man—so mean that he would not buy a newspaper, but visited his nephews, who read the papers to him. A cruel man. "It's all for spite and satisfaction, I set my dog on the orphan boy, And all such other dirty actions, Adds more grief to the Gull Decoy."

(Verse found by Dorthea Cox of the Canadian Broadcasting Co., in Boiestown.) Gossip accused the Gull Decoy of worse crimes: "I have by folks been accused of murder, Likewise expelled from the Church of Rome." Sung to a haunting tune I have not yet identified, the song that so enraged that worthy that he "ran Larry off the Island" for it. When one hears of Larry's later career, and the brilliant success with which he satirized those who annoyed him, one thinks perhaps the Gull Decoy got off cheaply.

"Larry Gorman would go into a camp at night, and by morning have a song about everybody in it," they say. The Winter of '78, or McCullam Camp, is typical. It describes Larry's arrival in Miramichi, where he worked at Snowball's Mill in Chatham. When the mill was shut down for the winter, he went to the woods at McCullam's Camp. It is a very long song, with a mention for every man he worked with—portashers, swappers, teamsters, chopers, sled tenders, cruisers, scalers—and their horses, too. Clem Ryan of Newcastle, and John H. Reynolds Wallace of Reynolds, gave me some of the verses as they remember hearing them sung in the woods over fifty years ago:

"On the eighteenth of September In Eighteen and Seventy-three, I left my native Island, And came to Miramichi. I hired the day I landed To work in Snowball's mill, That large two-storied building, At the foot of Sawdust Hill.

On the eighteenth of November, The mill she did shut down, Which caused a general scattering. The men went walking round, I heard of that that wanted men, That put me in good cheer, I packed my kennebecker, And for Indiantown did steer.

When I arrived at Indiantown, Being much fatigued from tramp I fell in with two portash teams, Bound for McCullam Camp, John Ingraham, Bill Derringham, Were both of these men's names Belonging to McCullam Camp, And drove two portash teams,

I drove with Billy Derringham, A verse for him I'll make, He drove a gray (horse) and a roan, That he brought from the Grapp Lake. The horse he weighed twelve hundred, And a noble beast to haul, In Chatham. He is still a legend in Miramichi—woodsmen to this day remember him, and sing his songs.

When we arrived at McCullam Camp, Being hungry, tired and cold, The face of Billy O'Brien Was the first I did behold. And glad I was to see him too, And asked who was the boss, When he pointed to a little man By the name of Charlie Cross.

I hired the next morning, Concluded for to stop, Along with Charlie Oxford, They sent me for to chop, And a loyal teamster, John McGinnis was his name, He drove a pair of roans, Called McCullam's fancy team.

O, Guy McCullam and Charlie Cross, They cruised the woods all round, They thought they could do better, Up on McInerney's ground. The spruce was good in bunches, Was handsome, straight and sound, But Guy not yet being satisfied, To Charlie Cross he said, "There's no use in stopping here, Where we can't work two sleds."

There was another Island man, Here amongst the rest, Three feet across the shoulders, In proportion round the breast, Though very big, not very cute, Jim Whalen was his name. On the seventh of March he cut his foot, And he marched off down stream.

He took with him five pounds of gum, The ladies' hearts to gain, But all the thanks he got for it, They said he was too green. He blowed the roost upon me, And said I'd made the song, And proved to be a traitor, For which many's the man was hung.

Now the men are all paid off, To take the long portash. Some are bound for Bathurst, And some for Pokemouche, Some in Salmon River dwell, More live in Miramichi, The rest gone down to Indiantown, To have a glorious spree.

They've all gone out excepting me, I stopped to watch the Camp, To see the squirrels and luciees, Go skipping through the swamp That cruel winter's over, Thank God, I'm still alive, And if the spring proves favorable, I intend to stop and drive.

(Part of the above was sung by Fred McMahon of Chatham, teamster with Fraser Companies, for a forthcoming book of folksong by William M. Doerflinger, New York.) The Fourteenth of October, another song by Larry Gorman, used to be sung with great effect by the late Traven Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook's brother, as part of Peter Emberley. Mr. Aitken sang it with what our come-all-ye singers call the "brawl", at the end of each line. "Ritchie" became "Ritch-eye-ee", "surrounded" "surroundi-ed", "caribou" "car-eye-bou-out", etc.