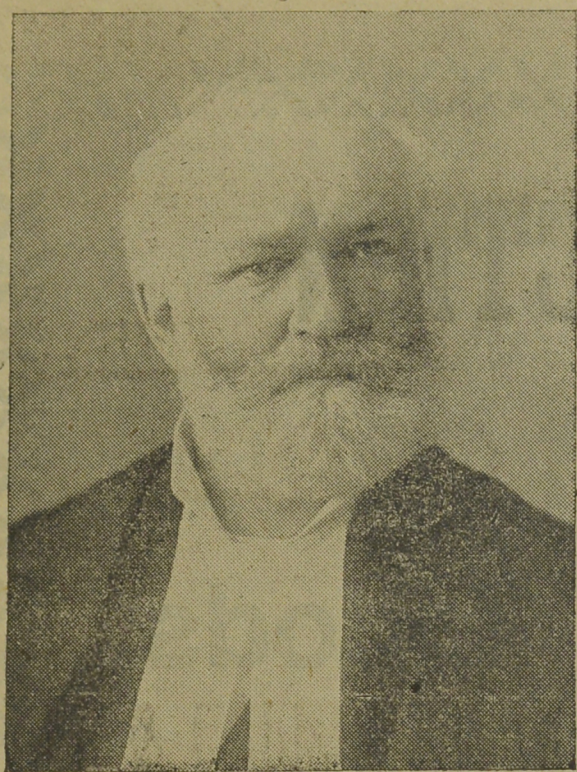




GREAT OVATION FOR BLAIR.

New Brunswick's Popular Minister Throws Himself Into the Local Contest.

TWEEDIE GOOD ENOUGH LIBERAL FOR HIM AND LAURIER.

Not since the memorable federal campaign of 1900, when Hon. Mr. Blair fought in St. John and defeated the combined forces of the Conservative party and the C. P. R., has there been such a solid, enthusiastic, victory predicting political meeting as that at York Theatre, St. John, last night, when Hon. A. G. Blair, Minister of Railways, spoke on the issues of the local campaign.

Long before 8 o'clock, the hour appointed for opening, the hall was filled, and at that hour one couldn't get inside and hundreds had turned away disappointed.

Scores of the leading Liberals of the city had seats on the platform.

Shortly after 8 o'clock the city candidates on the government ticket took seats on the platform and were greeted with prolonged cheers. Soon after Hon. A. G. Blair entered and as he made his way through the crowd on the stage round the side to the front his progress was marked by cheer after cheer which ended in a great outburst as the minister reached his place and bowed his acknowledgements.

A. O. Skinner, the chairman, then briefly addressed the vast assemblage and in a few words introduced the first speaker, Hon. H. A. McKeown, and it was about 10 o'clock when Mr. Blair arose to speak.

Ovation for the Minister.

Hon. A. G. Blair was given a reception which could not possibly have left him in doubt as to the enthusiastic sympathy of the vast audience before him. The people rose as one man and cheered again and again. When quiet had been restored he spoke of the pleasure which it gave him to meet his constituents and of addressing them upon political topics. He alluded to the great disadvantage under which he suffered of not being able to visit his constituency as often as he would wish, and it had unavoidably been some months since he had been for any length of time in St. John or the province. His duties were onerous and exacting and they called for his presence almost continuously at Ottawa.

Mr. Blair then spoke of the memorable battle which he had won against Mr. Foster in 1900, and thanked his constituents for the confidence then expressed in him.

After discussing briefly the question of patronage and paying a tribute to his colleague, Col. Tucker, M. P., Mr. Blair said he could heartily endorse all that had been said by Mr. McKeown in relation to the marvellous growth of the trade of Canada flowing from the policy of the present administration. Nobody of judgment and discretion would say in the face of these facts that the time had come when new methods ought to be tried, or that any tinkering should take place with the tariff. (Hear, hear.) In this connection a little domestic trouble had occurred some months ago. One of his colleagues had concluded, although the patient was in the best of health and showing exceptional vigor, that a little doctoring was necessary. He had started out to convince the people

that this doctoring process would be in their interest; but, unfortunately for him he had encountered an ugly snag and his voice was no longer heard in the council of the nation.

A voice—Mr. Tarte.

Yes, the minister said he referred to that gentleman. Mr. Tarte had shown himself a very pleasant little man. He had come to St. John and told them that he thought the government ought to do a great deal for them in the way of constructing wharves, and he had rather caused it be inferred that these things would be done at once. He had even gone to the extent of asking whether or not there was anything more that could be done for St. John. Mr. Tarte had, however, placed himself in an attitude of opposition to the policy of his department and he was now out in the cold. (Laughter and cheers.)

Mr. Blair next referred to the wonderful growth of Canada's trade, and then launched into a discussion of

The Local Issues.

Continuing, the minister said: "I want now to say a few words about the provincial government now on trial before the people. I do not conceal from you the fact that I am personally friendly to that administration, or that I am personally friendly to the individuals who compose it. They are my successors; they inherited the conditions which are controlling them largely today from my administration, whatever its character may have been. I thought the province was well governed, and it appears that the people were of the same opinion.

I cannot discover from anything I have seen or heard that the gentlemen who are now administering the affairs of the province are failing to give good government to New Brunswick. (Cheers.) I do not suppose that anyone imagines that any government which exists is absolutely perfect, any more than that humanity is perfect. Mistakes will be made. The judgment of human beings is liable at any time to be at fault; but these, if they are not serious—and I have nothing in my mind when I am making these references—should neither make nor unmake a government. These things are too trifling to justify an actual withdrawal of public confidence, because you may be absolutely sure that the men whom you would put in their places would not be likely to do one whit better.

"You would not wish to put in a new set of administrators simply because it would be agreeable to them. You would rather have in view your own interests. You would view the administration of local affairs as you would the administration of dominion affairs, and as common sense men you would say that unless these people, by the results of their administration, have shown themselves to be dishonest and inefficient you would not take the government out of their hands.

WHY THE MINISTER IS HERE.

"I am not going to say a word as to the merits of the local government, or of the attacks which have been made upon

them. They are well able to defend their acts and to take care of themselves. I am here from another point of view.

"I am here because I believe it is in the interests of the Canadian people, as it is in the interests of the people of St. John and this province, that they should not at this juncture, at the height of our glorious prosperity and with promising results in view, strike a blow or do an injury to the Government which obtains at Ottawa at the present time. (Cheers.)

"I frankly acknowledge that I am speaking to you chiefly from that point of view. And why? Because there cannot be a question in anybody's mind that, should such a calamity occur as the defeat of the local government, the cry would be sent out over Canada that the people who had given a majority of 1,000 to the minister of railways a little over two years ago had found cause to change their minds and had withdrawn in a measure their confidence from him and from the Liberal party. (Hear, hear.)

"You could not strike down the minister from New Brunswick without weakening the Liberal party. The battle has taken that line.

Liberal vs. Conservative.

"We have the evidence on every hand, and our own common sense tells us, that the people who are opposed to the local government are the Conservatives. There may be some who claim to be Liberals, some of them lifelong Liberals who are giving confidence and encouragement to our opponents; but it is the Conservative party all the same. (Cheers.) What do they say? They say that Mr. Tweedie is not a good enough Liberal for them. They say he was a Conservative. I do not consider that because a man identifies himself with a political party, and that political party happens to be Conservative, anybody is to hold out no hope of redemption for him in the future. (Laughter.) I do not think that it is in the interest of any government or party to shut the door and deny to anybody a chance to return or come to the true fold. Where would the Liberal party have been if they had attempted to live up to such a doctrine? In dust and ashes, as they were for eighteen years.

"Was it not by the help of dissatisfied Conservatives that the Liberal party gained their success in 1896? I say that is a mistaken policy, which I have never believed in and do not believe in today. I believe in leaving the door open so that the vilest sinner may return. (Laughter and cheers.)

"I believe in mercy rather than vengeance. If I were to cry out for judgment, or if you were to do so, where would you and I be? It is mercy we want. We may safely ask all who are outside and who may have opposed us in the past to come into our ranks. We will not kill the fatted calf for them. (Laughter.)

(CONTINUED ON SIXTH PAGE.)

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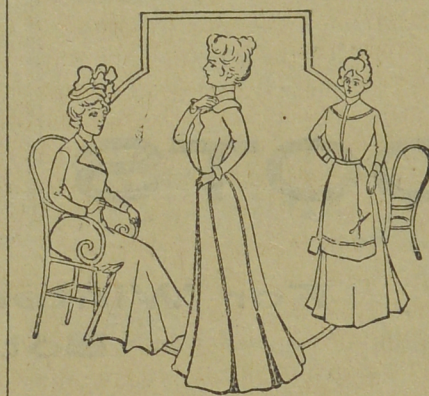
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