

The Daily Journal

THE JOURNAL PUBLISHING CO., LTD., PUBLISHERS.
22 Prince William Street, St. John, N. B., Canada.
R. S. CARTER, Managing Director.
Telephone Numbers: Private Branch Exchange, Main 1919 and 1911.
Advertising Representatives: Henry DeClerque, Chicago; Louis Kiehn, New York.

Subscription Rates:
City—Delivered: \$5.00 a year or 50 cents per month.
By Mail—Outside City: \$3.00 per year or 35 cents per month.
To the United States: \$4.00 per year.
Foreign subscriptions: \$15.00 a year.
The Journal will not be responsible for remittances in currency.

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The Journal is sold in Montreal at Windsor Hotel News Stand; Ottawa at Chateau Laurier; Portland, Maine, by H. A. Miller, 381½ Congress St.; New York by Hotaling's Agency, Grand Central Depot; by Schultz Agency, Grand Central Depot; Boston by The Old South News Co., Boston.

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1922

NEWSPAPERS AND THE NEWS.

Thou shalt not suppress the news!
Thou shalt not distort nor garble the news!
These commandments rank in authority with the Decalogue for any decent newspaper.

Any newspaper which would wilfully break these commandments would break the other ten.

A dishonest man is a danger to his community, which hedges itself by law against his possible depredations, and if he breaks these barriers locks him up. A dishonest paper is incalculably more dangerous to its community than any single criminal. Where the actions of a dishonest individual affect only those within his limited circle, the actions of a dishonest newspaper affect tens of thousands day after day.

And there is at present no legal remedy—nothing to prevent any man with enough money and an axe to grind from buying a printing press and hiring skilled journalists and mechanics and through their services imposing upon his community any falsities that may serve his purpose or suppressing any facts that may stand in the way of his purpose.

There is no help for this at present except an awakened sense of outrage on the part of the people who have the power to refuse to buy, read or support such papers.

While there may be occasional differences of opinion as to what constitutes news, and while editors must have the right to condense what they feel to be unimportant, no newspaper has the right to print what it knows to be lies or to refuse to print what it knows to be facts and of interest to a considerable section of its community.

There are newspapers in the City of St. John which are committing both these crimes against decent journalism, brazenly and persistently.

Thursday night the Mayor of this City, at a largely attended public meeting, defended himself vigorously against the long series of attacks that have been made, and outlined the policy upon which he appeals for support not only with regard to the power question, which is uppermost in the public mind, but to general questions of taxation of keen interest to the average citizen. The matters which he discussed affect civic policy for many years to come.

In the circumstances it is quite within any newspaper's rights and privileges, having reported what the candidate had to say, to controvert as far as possible his statements and his arguments. But no newspaper with any sense of journalistic honesty, no newspaper which could be trusted in any of its own acts, statements or policies, would deliberately delete, distort or mutilate such public utterances to suit its own ends.

Yet two newspapers in the City of St. John did just that, and have committed similar offences against honorable journalism and against the public interest repeatedly for a long time.

The animating purpose of such a policy must be not only a cynical indifference to journalistic decency and to the rights of the public, but a brutal contempt for the intelligence of the people whom it wishes to delude.

MR. FISHER SHOULD EXPLAIN

Mr. C. Fred Fisher was a member of the common council in March 1920, when that council approved of a report submitted by a citizens' committee which was composed of Messrs. G. E. Barbour, A. H. Wetmore and C. H. Peters. This committee was appointed by the city, to investigate the value of the Power Company property, so that in the event of the city taking it over, a fair price could be named. That committee found a fair price would be \$3,300,000.

This amount included \$1,750,000 first mortgage bonds, \$1,000,000 first preferred stock and \$350,000 second preferred stock; it also included \$200,000 of common stock, the valuation on this latter being placed at \$10 per share.

This report was submitted to the city council, of which Mr. Fisher was then a member and it was approved by that council. Yet Mr. Fisher now announces in his platform that he will allow the Power Company only \$2,577,000, a difference of \$723,000. He raised no voice at the council meeting against the valuation proposed by the citizens' committee. The Power Company today has water power rights on the Lepreau and Magaguadavic rivers which were not included in the valuation placed by that committee. These admittedly are capable of generating greater power than the Musquash, which is valued at \$450,000. Yet, Mr. Fisher in his platform makes an offer which is in no sense a valuation but an estimate of original cost. It is about a quarter less than that which he agreed to two years ago. Some explanation from Mr. Fisher on this point is necessary.

THE REAL ISSUE.

In his address Thursday evening, Mayor McLellan not only laid down his policy but made certain definite charges against the interests which are opposing him. Neither his policy nor his charges were reported in the papers which are campaigning against him, but it is important that the citizens should know the one end be in a position to force an answer to the other.

With regard to the charges against the opposing interests, he severely criticized the "hidden hand" behind the vicious campaign being waged by certain newspapers. There was a possibility that Mr. Moore, in conjunction with Montreal interests, wished to buy out the Power Company and for that reason wished to have a

low valuation placed upon it. In apparent support of this charge, the point was raised that a company in which Mr. Moore is interested had made a two year contract with the Power Company at the present rates. He also attacked the methods by which Musquash had been developed, declaring that an official investigation of the whole project would be a revelation to the public.

The organs of graft ring not only failed to report these charges but they failed to make any attempt to answer them. In the interests of the public it is necessary to demand an answer.

Even more important than these charges are the planks of his platform. He favors a return to the ward system of municipal government, terming the present commission system a curse. He advocates exemption from taxation up to \$1,500 of all clerks, artisans and laborers and the substitution of a \$5 poll tax. His platform on the power issue is fundamentally the same as it was when he was elected last April. He is in favor of municipal ownership, municipal operation and the utilization of the Musquash power. The real issue has been beclouded by false issues which have been brought forward to deceive the people, but here it is in all its simplicity, however complicated certain interests have endeavored to make it appear.

Both candidates are in favor of public ownership and the only real difference is that Mr. Fisher, in the last analysis of his platform, stands in favor of the erection of a competing plant and Mr. McLellan prefers, first, to do his utmost to take over the plant of the Power Company, not as a going concern, but on the basis of its actual value. In other words, Mr. Fisher wants to commit the city to a fight which, even if successful, must of necessity entail the expenditure of a large amount of money, and must result in increased taxation. Figures show that increased taxation to the extent of \$62,875 a year must be the result of erecting another distribution system even if the Power Company were not to compete, whereas in order to meet the competition of the Power Company, it is very doubtful if the city will get off with a lesser deficit annually than \$186,875. These deficits are easily ascertained by analyzing the figures quoted by the New Brunswick Hydro Commission. Allowing the full amount of power to the civic distribution plan now distributed by the Power Company—4,100,000 K.W.H.—this brings in a revenue of only \$164,000 at the promised rate of 4 cents per K.W.H. The cost of the power to the Hydro Commission at 1.2 cents for 12,000,000 K.W.H. amounts to \$144,000, while the interest, cost of upkeep and operation expenditures on the civic distribution plan, taking the capital cost of erecting it at the estimated cost of \$663,000, amount to \$82,875 annually. The total problematical revenue deducted from the total expenditures leaves a deficit of \$62,875. With the Power Company in competition, it is doubtful if the city would sell 1,000,000 K.W.H. for the first few years and this would bring in a revenue of only \$40,000 as against an expenditure of \$226,875. This is the course to which Mr. Fisher would commit the city.

On the other hand, Mr. McLellan would exhaust every possible means of negotiation before committing the city to this course. Mr. Fisher's platform is arbitrary in the extreme. While it admits on the face of it that the proper course is to buy out the Power Company, yet it makes no effort to achieve this end. In the last analysis the real issue to be decided on November 13, is whether the city wishes to utilize the Power Company plant for the civic distribution of Musquash power or intends to build another competing distribution plant, which must necessitate increased taxation.

EXCESSIVE BORROWING.

The New York Annalist, a journal of high reputation in United States finance, is sharply criticizing the rashness of Western Canadian Provinces in the matter of excessive borrowing. It denounces the over-reaching optimism that is always looking for a "big strike" next year, and that is quite ready to make heavy financial commitments on the strength of the prospect. It believes the time has come for retrenchment, for restriction of expenditures to correct needs, and for a policy of building up the foundation of economic values.

One of the signs of the times has been a letter written recently by a prominent Western business man blaming the Canadian banks, not for being too tight, but for being too generous. He says that if the banks had not been so free with accommodation, a good deal of the rash venturing that now is a millstone around the neck of the West would not have occurred. The Canadian banks have usually been criticized strongly in the West for not giving enough accommodation. As a matter of fact, it is only the strength of the bank system that has prevented a more serious state of affairs.

BRITAIN'S PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY.

The belief that nations like Great Britain are necessarily poorer after the war is so prevalent that Sir William Schooling's contrary opinion, expressed in a recent address before the Ottawa Canadian Club, should help to encourage the nations in the task of freeing themselves from war debt. Sir William can speak as one having experience. He is at present engaged in writing the history of the Hudson's Bay Company in Canada, but during the war he served in Great Britain as vice-chairman of the National War Savings Committee.

When the British debt is considered only in terms of money, possibly \$9,000,000,000, it can be made to appear formidable. But Sir William advanced the point of view at the Canadian Club that the money cost of the war to the national Treasury is a relatively unimportant matter. The factor which has the real bearing upon the economic problem, he said, is the real cost—not the money cost—to the Treasury, but the Nation as a whole. When the problem is considered in that way, "when, looking below the surface, in behind the symbols, we think in terms of goods and service, material and labor, instead of in terms of money," it can be seen that the Nation is far from being impoverished. Actually, tested by capacity to produce and deliver goods and services, Great Britain is wealthier than before the war.

When the question of payment of war debt is considered in terms of goods and services, the solution may be found to rest with the creditor nations as much as with the debtor nations. There is responsibility upon the creditor nations to make it possible to receive payment, as well as upon the debtor nations to pay. Sir William expressed the opinion that Great Britain's war debt to the United States, about \$1,000,000,000, could be paid in a very short time and without any strain on British resources.

THE PROBLEM

By Berton Braley.
Gillette and Durham-Duplex, Gem,
And Ever-Ready, all are fine;
We slip their meed of praise to them,
They work according to design.
They shave the young, they shave the old,
They mow thick beards of many shades;
But here's the thing we would be told,
Where are we gonna put the blades?

Not in the ash-can may they go,
Nor in the garbage, nor the street.
Where motors ramble to and fro,
And people tread with hurrying feet;
They will not burn, they won't decay,
Until the sun in heaven fades,
And so they pile up, day by day;
Say, where we gonna put the blades?

You cannot keep them safely hid
In any chest, on any shelf
But what some energetic kid
Will find them there and cut him.
Dropped in the sea, the surging tide
Bears them where some bilious bather wades;
The world, it's true, is very wide,
But where we gonna put those blades?

Oh, Einstein, use your master-mind,
Call in your scholars and your aids,
And solve this problem of our kind,
Where shall we put our razor blades?
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Reminiscences of New Brunswick

BURGAN THE BURGLAR

The premises of John B. Smith were at the corner of Union street and Drury lane, on the west side of the latter, and he was known as "Ginger Beer Smith." This was not because some wit of that day constructed the initials "J. B." to stand for "Ginger Beer," but because it was the custom of the time to distinguish men of the same patronymic by prefixing the name of their occupation. Thus it was that William Smith, the first man to introduce day garments into St. John, about 1820, was known as "Ready-made Smith." The modern convenience of a hyphenated name was not then in vogue, otherwise the beer man might have assumed the name of, possibly, J. Bollingbroke-Smith, while the clothing man, with equal propriety, could have handed his name down to posterity as Mr. W. Shoddy-Smith.

J. B. Smith owed his designation and his fame to a particularly good quality of ginger beer which he had made and sold, and often when John B. Marshall, passing, Paddy Burman would call him in and treat him. The two thus became very well acquainted. Burman was two or three years the elder of Marshall, and at the time of the burglary was a man as far as strength and stature were concerned. He was quiet and inoffensive in respect to disposition, and appeared to be the only one of his family in St. John, as Mr. Marshall does not remember that he had any known relatives.

Mr. Coss lived on Union Street, nearly opposite Smith's place, and kept a sailor's boarding house, on a part of the property now occupied by the works of the Consolidated Electric company. Burman, therefore, merely crossed the street in his attempt to atone for the disappointment he felt at not being able to rob Mr. Smith as fully as he had intended. Mr. Marshall remembers that he took two pairs of boots from the house of Coss and this would imply that he did not steal to supply his own needs, but to make something by disposing of the plunder. According to Mr. Marshall, Burman stole at least three or four dollars' worth.

Thus it will be seen that the crime committed was no mere robbery of a bill, but a breaking and entering at night, or a burglary in both the legal and popular sense of the term. Though the penalty has of late years been mitigated, burglary is even now a very serious offence, and is severely punished when the law is properly enforced. In those days, while the penalties could be modified for petty larceny, such as the mere stealing of a quarter of a dollar would be of itself, burglary was punishable by death without benefit of clergy. Whether the law was a just one is not the question. It is enough to know that it was the law and that the duty of the courts and of the king's representative was to enforce it. In those days, in a community like St. John, when the first bank was a new institution, citizens were accustomed to keep their goods at their stores and houses, and it was necessary for the common good that an example should be made of any burglar whose guilt was clearly proven. The offence in Burman's case was as great as if he had secured a thousand pounds. The amount he actually got was not in issue, and it would seem very probable that he had the intent and purpose to take all he could secure.

Burman had a fair trial before a jury composed of good citizens, the names of some of whom are held in honorable memory to this day. They were John Cunningham, foreman; William Cormick, Amos Robertson, David Schurman, Gilbert T. Ray, M. J. Lowrey, William Stout, James Rankin, Isaac Flewelling, Nehemiah Vail, George Hutchinson, and William B. Cox. He had William B. Kinnear for his counsel, assigned to him by the court, and the prosecuting officer, John T. Murray, clerk of the crown, had merely to establish the undisputed facts in order to secure a conviction.

That the jury should recommend the prisoner to mercy meant no more than it means in many cases in these days. There was probably a desire that the young man should not be hanged, just as there may be now a reluctance to see the dread penalty inflicted on a murderer who is undoubtedly guilty. Judge Chipman, however, did no more than prove himself a sound jurist when he told Burman there was no hope for mercy and warned him to prepare for death. What else could he have said to a man who had rendered himself liable to the extreme penalty twice in the course of one night? It can be well understood that a petition for a commutation of the sentence was got up and forwarded to the governor. Burman was young, and had previously borne a good character, and these facts would be sufficient to enlist sympathy without at all assuming an injustice in the sentence. I have known of a largely signed petition in more recent times when the object of sym-

A THOUGHT

In that day a man shall
cast his idols of silver, and
his idols of gold, which they
made each one for himself
to worship, to the moles and
to the bats.—Isaiah 2:20.

A man who does not know
how to learn from his mis-
takes turns the best school-
master out of his life.—
Henry Ward Beecher.

THE LAUGH LINE

Getting Even With Him.
The Man—Fardon me, madam, but your
face seems strangely familiar. Have we
not met before?
The Lady—Yes, I stood in front of you
in the street car this afternoon
an hour while you sat reading your
paper!

After the Spanking.
Nellie—Well, I just said my prayers, and
did you notice I didn't put you in it?

Care is no cure, but rather a corrosive
for things that are not to be remedied.

Most Useful.
Mrs. Smith—What on earth is that?
Mr. Smith—That's a barometer. Billy
just sent it from college.
Mrs. Smith—Oh, I've heard of them.
Isn't the dear boy thoughtful? Which
way do you turn it when you want the
weather to be fine?

'Tis meet that noble minds keep ever
with their like.

pathy was the perpetrator of a delib-
erately planned, inexcusable murder,
and so it will be as long as men have
hearts and capital punishments exist.
Sir Howard Douglas did not bear the
character of a hard-hearted or unjust
man, and it may well be assumed that
could he have exercised the prerogative
consistently with his oath, he
would have done so. As it was, the
facts of the case precluded any inter-

ference.
There is another bit of history
which has been overlooked by those
who have helped create the current
belief in regard to the case. In the
Nova Scotia of the 13th of Febru-
ary, 1828, is an account, from the
New Brunswick papers, of an attempt
of this alleged martyr to secure his
freedom by burning the St. John Jail,
after his trial and sentence. About
11 o'clock on Sunday night, the 3rd,
the jailor, Mr. Nowlin, found the hall
full of smoke, and on investigating
found it coming from Burman's cell, in
the lower story. The prisoner had
taken the wood left to keep him com-
fortable during the night, and placed
it all at once on the fire. After it had
become sufficiently ignited, he took
all the fire off the hearth and placed
it, together with the blazing wood,
against the wooden door of his cell,
in order, he admitted, to burn a hole
by which to escape.

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