

AN APPEAL

TO THE

Electors of Canada

In view of the Federal Elections on 21st September, 1911, this appeal is issued; with the suggestion that a special sermon on Political Purity be preached on the Sunday previous to the election.

No more important issue can command the attention of the citizens of our country than this. Democracy will be slain in the house of its friends unless its citadel, the ballot box, is defended. The country is ready and waiting for this crusade. Party organs, though handicapped by the necessities of partisanship, are endeavoring to unshackle themselves that they may sound a true and ringing note in this great crisis. Political candidates feel sore at the veritable blackmail laid upon them. Our public men are disgusted with the corruption that pushes itself upon them at every turn.

"The crowning fact,
The kindest act
Of Freedom is the Freeman's vote."

The practice of buying and selling votes in electoral campaigns in our country has grown to so great an evil that it has awakened alarm among right thinking citizens and has led to the organization of Political Purity Leagues at several points in Canada. The object of the organization is to provide means for the detection and prosecution of violators of the election law and to conduct a campaign of education on the duties of citizenship.

The common use of money for corrupting the electorate for so many years as a necessity of party warfare has educated a large number of our citizens to see but little harm in the various forms of intimidation and bribery. We therefore appeal to all those who have the higher interests of our country at heart to help in this campaign to put an end to a state of affairs which has grown to be intolerable in that it is both a disgrace and a danger to our country.

The gift of the franchise to the common man, won for him by many years of struggle in legislative hall and battle field, has put into his hand the power of kings. He now has a voice in the government of his country. On election day he can measure his power with that of the wealthiest man of the land, whose vote will count no more than his. He is made a judge to decide between rival parties and policies. He with his fellow electors form a great jury who on election day pronounce their verdict. Before him the great parties lay their case and plead for his judgment.

The ballot is the great weapon by which the poor man may protect his interests and guard against oppression. When he sells his vote he sins against his class, for he throws away their great safeguard. Were all men to do as he does neither his life nor his property would be safe. Good government and the faithful administration of law would become impossible. Let judges and jurors sell their verdicts as a voter sells his, and what can save the poor man? His cause is lost. He has no check upon what wealth and power in the hands of unscrupulous men may do. Electoral corruption is a crime against himself and against his fellow citizens. Therefore above all the privileges of his citizenship he should sacredly guard his ballot. Whittier puts these words into the mouth of the poor voter on election day.

"To-day shall simple manhood try
The strength of gold and land;
The wide world has not wealth to buy
The power in my right hand.
Where there's a right to need my vote,
A wrong to sweep away,
Up! clouted knee and ragged coat!
A man's a man to-day."

1. Not only does political corruption sap the foundations of order and popular government, but it degrades the manhood of the electorate, by destroying any healthy sense of political responsibility. Men come to regard the high privileges of the franchise as a mere matter for barter instead of exercising it as a most important public trust.

2. It creates a demand for large campaign funds, and this puts an injurious and unjust burden upon candidates for political honors and their friends. It thus shuts the door to political preferment upon the sons of the poor, and leads to the choice of men as candidates simply because of their wealth.

3. It puts a stain upon honors won in political life and renders the victories of parties inglorious. When won through corrupt practices, they are the prizes of shame, for they are won in violation of the laws of our country and through the degradation of its citizens. It causes many of our best men whose services the country greatly needs, to turn in disgust from political life.

4. It leads to the "rake off" in public contracts, the evil use of public patronage and the lamentably expensive results to the people of "graft" in the public service. The collapse of Spain and Russia like hollow shells at the touch of war, and the astounding revelations of wasted millions as the effect of graft in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and San Francisco (not to speak of cases nearer home), have provided examples startling enough to make the most careless citizen awake to the fact that the grafter is "the costliest unclean beast" of political life.

5. It is an evil whose dangerous contagion may spread from the polling booth to the legislative hall, and when our

legislators will sell themselves neither our public moneys nor our liberties are safe.

6. It makes it possible in any election for a strong combination of wealth, native or foreign, through the purchasable vote, to exert undue influence upon public policy and to endanger our political freedom by over-riding the will of the people through the evil use of money. If constituencies can be bought, then venal legislators can be elected. Men may sit in Parliament with "a golden muzzle upon their mouths" because they are under obligation to those individuals or corporations which have subscribed liberally to their campaign funds, or whose money has directly purchased their parliamentary support.

7. Political corruption often assumes a most vicious form when intoxicating liquors are handed out to men about to exercise the kingly right of the franchise. If ever the clear head and the sober spirit are called for, it is on those momentous days when in their ballots the sovereign people record their will, and thus decide the destinies of their country.

8. It sometimes takes the form of intimidation of employees and of debtors by corporations and others. Were our sentiment of citizenship of a more robust and noble kind the mere fact of any man being threatened with foreclosure of a mortgage or loss of situation unless he voted to please another, would arouse so much popular indignation that it would not be attempted a second time. Such acts belong to the dark days of tyranny.

9. It defrauds the independent and incorruptible voter of his due influence on public policy, for the expression of his opinion as registered in his ballot (often his sole means of influencing the government of his country) may be nullified by a purchased counter vote. He is the man whose protest should be most loud and persistent against the action of any political managers who in collusion with venal voters do him this grievous wrong.

Surely we may expect to see all good citizens join our ranks, when the evil to be fought is so great.

We appeal to the independent voters for their unbiased influence. They hold the balance between the parties, and are often called upon to be the saviours of their country.

We appeal to the men of both parties to do all they can to clear their own party of complicity in the crime against our citizenship.

We ask old political workers, whose better instincts must often have recoiled from some of the base methods of politics, to help us to conquer in the struggle for purer politics. We urge all to exercise care lest in the height of political feeling anyone should allow himself, by veiled contract, bet, threat, signal or promise to come, even technically, within the grasp of the law.

We appeal to the young voters to cast pure ballots and keep their citizenship unsullied. Hold not "lightly a right which brave men died to gain." Show yourselves worthy of the nobler citizenship of the future. Prove yourselves worthy of citizenship in a great country. No free nation can grow great on bribery.

We appeal to the rich and influential classes in our community to see that no funds of theirs are used for other than legitimate campaign purposes. See that no temptations to barter their citizenship are held before the poor. Why should not the political purity movement acquire as ample support as has hitherto been at the service of "the dark lantern brigade" of corruptionists?

We appeal to the poor, for this cause is theirs. The poorest man does not ask pay for his day when he takes a holiday, or attends to the sacraments of his religion, or pays the last sad tokens of respect to a friend. Is it too much to ask that without looking for pay he will give a portion of a day for the exercise of the highest privilege of citizenship in a great and free country.

We appeal to the Christian men, in the name of Him to whom you have sworn allegiance, who refused to stoop to evil, though the bribe was "the glory of all the kingdoms of the world," and the power they would give Him to aid His good cause, to help us to bring nearer the coming of that kingdom for which you have prayed. Why should you be so anxious for the success of your party when if its victory be won by corrupt methods, it but heaps added dishonor upon its head? The claims of the cause of righteousness are above all claims of party. Christ can never be King of the world till He is King of its politics. If we can have in the pending election a clean and manly struggle, in which not ignorance and venality, but intelligence and patriotism shall decide the fortunes of the day, we shall have done something to crown Him in this Dominion.

No more important issue can command the attention of the citizens of our Country than that of Political Purity.

Let every citizen do his duty in such a time as this.

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