


## THOMAS WHITE

ONORABLE THOMAS WHITE, Canadian parliamentarian, journalist, and an authority on finance, was born at Montreal, Aug. 7, 1830, where he received his education and where his life was chiefly spent. He studied law in Peterboro, Ontario, but did not engage in the practice of the profession. During a number of years he was engaged in journalism in Hamilton, Ontario, and subsequently in Montreal, Province of Quebec, and was one of the most brilliant writers and platform speakers of his day. He was returned to the House of Commons for Cardwell, Ontario, in 1878, and re-elected in 1882, becoming minister of the interior in 1885; and he remained in Sir John Macdonald's government until his death in the spring of 1888. Mr. White was known and loved widely in Canada, not only as an able editor for many years of the conservative Montreal "Gazette," but for his hearty, genial, upright character. As a speaker he was fluent, graceful, and effective.

### TWENTY YEARS OF LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE ADMINISTRATION IN CANADA

DELIVERED AT THE VILLAGE OF L'ORIGINAL, MARCH 5, 1874

**W**E are here to-day for the purpose of forming a Liberal-Conservative Association. Mr. Hamilton has told you that all through Ontario a similar course is being adopted by the party. You, gentlemen, have not been alone in the absence of proper organization. Unfortunately it has been the lot of the party generally to neglect the organization of the ranks and to depend upon the great skill and statesmanship of the leader.

We have been disposed to think, because our party has been in office for twenty years, it was impossible that it could be defeated, and we have trusted to that skill and statesmanship and to the fact of previous triumphs, rather than to our strong united effort to win the contest. To-day the party is becoming more organized than I believe it has ever been, and from one end of Ontario to the other, and in the other Provinces as well, the electors who hitherto have had Liberal-

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Conservatism inscribed upon their banners are uniting, so that when the day arrives they may be ready for the contest with the certainty of success.

It has occurred to me, as we are about to organize, that if possible we should know the grounds upon which we organize. Are we as Liberal-Conservatives entitled to maintain our organization and to look forward to future party triumphs? Is the record of the past such as we may be proud of? Are the achievements of the party during its long tenure of office, such as, if we look back upon them, justify us in keeping alive our party organization, and in looking forward with confidence to the achievements of electoral triumphs in the future? . . .

I should be sorry to take from the people of Canada, in the slightest degree, the great credit which is due to them as an enterprising and progressive people. I am too proud of my country as a native Canadian to do that.

But in a country like Canada, situated as we are in close proximity to the United States, the great element of prosperity must always be confidence in the political institutions of the country. That confidence has been more than once shaken by the political agitations of unthinking men; and only by the removal of those questions of agitation, by their solution in a manner satisfactory to the public at large, can we secure that political quiet which is the best guarantee for public confidence, and the best incentive to the introduction and investment of capital among us. To the settlement of the great questions to which I have to-day referred is due the confidence of the moneyed men of the world in the future stability of our political system, and the great prosperity which has followed that confidence. And as to the

administration of the Liberal-Conservatives during the last twenty years is due the removal of those causes of agitation, to them must be fairly accorded credit for the prosperity of Canada.

During those twenty years the common mode of attack of the Opposition was to assail the personal characters of members of the government. They were called corruptionists, and I can remember that in old elections, instead of giving us the name to which we were entitled, they headed their lists "Liberals," "Corruptionists."

Where are the evidences of corruption from that time to this? Where is there a single charge made of personal corruption against any single minister of the party in the country? It is quite true that on one occasion they thought they had a case against Sir John A. Macdonald. He had dabbled in lands up at Sarnia, they said, and they thought the job would afford a good ground against him. But he made his explanation in Parliament; and what said the leader of the Opposition? Here is the report: "Mr. Foley could not let slip this the last opportunity he had in that Parliament of saying that the explanations of the honorable attorney-general met with his hearty approval."

That is the only charge of personal corruption ever brought against a member of the old government, and his vindication from that charge came from the leader of the Opposition himself.

We never heard of the Sarnia job after that day without reflecting upon the effect of assuming things upon insufficient foundation to damage the reputation of public men. Sir John A. Macdonald, at the time he entered public life, had probably the largest practice of any solicitor in Ontario, with prospects before him which could not have failed to amass

for him great riches and to have made him to-day one of the wealthy men of the country. But after thirty years' service—twenty years of which were spent in an official capacity—he is out of office literally a poor man.

Is that likely to be the case with men who go into public life for the purpose of filching the public purse, taking their share in contracts and otherwise furthering their individual interests? I have in my mind's eye one public man, at any rate, who, a year or two ago, was without visible means of support, known to be in debt at every turn. Now he is rolling in wealth—but I am inclined to think that the position public life gave him helped to it—why or how I don't pretend to say.

Thank God, in the whole record of the Liberal-Conservative administration there has not been a similar instance; our ministers have left public life without the stain upon them of having taken a sixpence of the public funds. When, a couple of years ago, Sir John Macdonald, at a public meeting in the city of Hamilton, stretched forth his arms with the exclamation, "These hands are clean," he stated what was literally true. With all the temptations of public and official life he has retired from office without a single stain of corruption upon his personal or public character.

The truth is, sir, that the charges of political vice, of official corruption, were made by the Clear Grits in order to conceal their own practices as a party. During the last session of Parliament we had one rather remarkable case brought forward by Mr. Mackenzie, upon which he asked the sense of Parliament, and put on record his own opinion to show how terribly reckless the old government was and how pure he was in comparison with them. Mr. Griffin, in 1872, was a post-office inspector, and he wrote a letter to a postmaster

in the county of Welland, in which he simply said this: "If you cannot support Dr. King, who is the ministerial candidate, take no active part against him and give no ground of complaint against yourself."

That was a suggestion made by an officer of the government to his brother official; but it so shocked Mr. Mackenzie that he got up in the House and moved this resolution:—

"That it is highly criminal in any minister or ministers, or other servants under the crown, directly or indirectly, to use the power of office in the election of representatives to serve in Parliament; and an attempt at such influence will be at all times resisted by the House, as aimed at its own dignity, honor, and independence."

Well, gentlemen, we have just passed through a general election, and let me ask you how this has been observed. These gentlemen had scarcely obtained seats when the Ottawa mayoralty election came on. And what occurred? The deputy head of at least one department went round to his subordinates and said, "If you cannot vote for the ministerial candidate you must not vote against him."

Why? These men were paying taxes, and had as much interest in the proper management of the city of Ottawa as the government themselves. But the Liberals made a political contest out of a municipal election, and the government were found saying to their employes, "You must not vote at all unless you vote for the ministerial candidate!"

Then, in the Kingston election the finance minister visited the post-office and custom-house and told the employes to vote for Mr. Carruthers, or not to vote at all. Then, again, in the Argenteuil election letters were sent to postmasters of the county telling them to vote for Mr. Cushing, or not vote at all. The case of the Central prison at Toronto is

another beautiful exemplification of the manner in which these pure ministers, these liberal-minded ministers, these ministers who record it as an offence against the dignity and honor of Parliament for members of a government, or even subordinate officials of a government to attempt to exercise influence in an election, carry out their Opposition principles when they obtain office. Mr. McKellar with his own hand wrote to the superintendent of those works ordering him to send the men to the nomination for West Toronto in order to increase the apparent majority for Mr. Moss, the ministerial candidate. In this case, not only was official and ministerial influence used, but the public exchequer was mulcted to the extent of the half day's pay of each of these men, in order to provide a party triumph.

Even in this very county we had, during the last election, some illustrations of how ministerial influence was used.

We saw here an old contractor who in times past, when the Conservative party had contracts to give, was a Conservative, traversing the country in the interests of the ministerial candidate and endeavoring by dint of his old Conservative associations to win Conservatives from the cause. If rumor be true he did not come altogether empty-handed, and he soon after received his reward. The election was scarcely well over when a contract for the Ottawa booms, awarded to one gentleman, and the work by him actually commenced, was cancelled on the technical ground that the tender was a few minutes late, although its deposit in the postoffice within the specified time was attested by the postmaster, and the work was given to new contractors, one of whom was understood to be our old friend, the renegade missionary to the county of Prescott.

I have the information from undoubted sources that in

New Brunswick and Nova Scotia the most unblushing use of ministerial and official influence was made in the elections. Mr. Mackenzie has boasted in his address that he had voluntarily given up on behalf of the government the great advantage of so arranging the days of election as to make the result of one influence that of others. But what was the fact? With the influence of the two governments at his back he felt tolerably confident of Ontario, and he did fix the elections on one day in Old Canada. But in the other Provinces, where the influence of success was likely to be greatest, he deliberately so arranged them as to secure the greatest advantage.

In New Brunswick they were arranged so as to leave the elections where the Opposition was supposed to be the strongest to the last, in order that the influence of success elsewhere might have its effect in favor of the government candidates. And in Nova Scotia, where by the local law the elections must be held on one day, he so arranged that they should all take place a week after the result in Ontario and Quebec became known. And what then was seen? Why, from every hustings the most unblushing use was made of the argument that the influence of the constituency with the government would depend upon the fact of their sending a ministerialist to represent them.

The administration, it was urged, had already secured a working majority, even though the Province should go as a unit against them; and was it wise that they should voluntarily range themselves for the then coming Parliament with the ranks of a hopeless minority? Such was the cry, and its effect is unfortunately but too well known. Even the local premier, acting for and speaking for his friends in the Dominion government, went from platform to platform re-

minding the constituencies that their chances of ministerial favors depended upon their granting ministerial support. And by means of those influences and arguments, by means of this prostitution of official and ministerial power and patronage, in violation of the doctrine I have quoted to you as enunciated by Mr. Mackenzie in the case of the Griffin letter, a large majority of supporters was obtained for the government from the maritime Provinces.

Coming again nearer home, we have the illustration of the influence of the vacant shrievalty of this county. We know there were gentlemen who in times past had worked in the ranks with you, and who were found working on the other side.

It was said of them that they had this office dangled before them and were looking forward to the occupancy of the coveted place. The late sheriff had died some months before. Under ordinary circumstances it was the duty of the government to fill the office promptly. But it was more convenient to keep it as a bait for aspirants during the elections. We had rumors in every direction as to who the fortunate man would be, and we had either passive or active resistance on the part of some gentlemen, accounted for by the fact that they had received this much encouragement, at least, that the vacant office must be filled, and they were wonderfully clever fellows and wonderfully well qualified for the position.

Well, the election was scarcely well over and the necessity for this means of using ministerial and official influence past when a gentleman was appointed—who had at least this merit, that he had not deserted his party for the chance of an office; and I am inclined to think there are a good many sore heads in the county of Prescott to-day on account of this