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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Montague Man Has Good Political Yarn

By NEIL A. MATHESON

JOHN A. STEELE, Montague gave me the best Easter egg story I've ever heard, now he's back with a better than average political yarn. I've heard different versions of this yarn several times, but it's still good enough to use.

John locates the incident in Third Kings and relates it as it was told to him.

"There was an election in May and Frank MacPhee and Leslie Hunter were contesting for the Conservatives; Hessian and Mustard were for the Liberals. (Hessian was Steve Hessian and Mustard is John Mustard.)

"The week before the election MacPhee and Hunter were canvassing and they called at a house where the lady was out at the woodpile, getting some wood. So they jumped out of the car and said "We will get some wood for you."

The lady said "Allright, I'll go in and get some tea."

So the politicians – Hunter and MacPhee, Conservatives – rolled a log onto the saw horse, took a cross-cut saw and sawed it into blocks, then each took an axe and split it into wood that could be burned in the stove.

WHEN THEY had finished the lady of the house came to the door and said "Come in boys, the tea is ready."

When they reached the door, though, she told them "You will have to wait a few minutes for Hessian and Mustard. They are down behind the barn shearing sheep."

The story, of course, is pure fiction, though similar yarns have been told about other political candidates. John Steele's story is fairly impartial, but some other stories threw it on to one or another of the parties without any trace of impartiality.

So far as I personally am concerned I want to say that I have no thought of casting any aspersions on any of the men mentioned in this story.

Mr. Hessian is dead, Leslie Hunter is a man I've regarded as a personal friend for many years. I know John Mustard personally and I always did have a strong admiration for Mr. MacPhee.

I recall one hot election night at Montague where the candidates for two districts gathered for a debate in one of the colorful old joint meetings. It was so warm that the candidates took off their coats, something I never recall seeing at any other place, and newspapermen followed the meetings regularly in those days.

A Masterly Job

THIS WAS back in the days when Conservatives were almost a bad word in this province and there were always hecklers. This time the heckling was general and the Liberal speakers also got the raspberry at times.

Everyone had trouble, especially the Tories, but Frank MacPhee used his ability so well that he never did allow the hecklers to break in on him. He marshalled his arguments so effectively, and kept throwing them at his audience so skillfully that he completely baffled the would-be hecklers.

It was one of the most effective examples of public speaking I have ever seen. I was reporting then for the Patriot and it was violently Liberal but I remember vividly the admiration I felt for Mr. MacPhee as I walked out of the hall and drove home.

I remember something else about that meeting. The Guardian reporter at that meeting had taken a well-known Montague man to task several days previously; had blamed him indeed for leading the attack of name-calling and other abuse hurled through an open window at Dr. W.J.P. MacMillan – I believe he was premier at the time. The meeting had been held at High Bank. The man's name was actually mentioned in the Guardian and was charged with leading a gang of hoodlums, or words to that effect.

When I came out of the hall I saw what looked like a threatening situation, with perhaps a half dozen men on one side and one lone man beating a careful, rather slow, retreat on the other.

The accused man – the man the Guardian reporter had accused – was pouring on the criticism. The Guardian chap was trying as best he could to get out of the situation with as little loss of face as possible. At least that was the way I assessed the situation.

I knew the man who had been accused, thus I felt that I could have stopped anything that might develop; so I watched from a distance of perhaps 40 to 50 yards. Nothing did happen, as the development gradually faded out.

#### Would Have Given' More Lip'

NEXT MORNING I met the Guardian man on the street – I knew him well; indeed I had played football on the same team.

"How are you feeling this morning?" I asked him.

When he said "I feel fine, there's nothing wrong with me", I retorted "You didn't look so good last night on the grounds of the Montague hall".

When he heard that I had been nearby all the time, he blurted out "Gosh, I wish I had known you were there. I would have given those fellows a lot more lip."

To get away from political reminiscences, the ship "Victory Chimes" was put out of action some years ago. I have that from Dougald MacKinnon, the Mt. Buchannan man who was a member of the legislature for many years, and still could be winning elections in Fourth Queens had he not retired some 10 years ago. I'll tell you the story in a future column, as my friend Dougald told it to me.

I wrote this column on election day. You will have heard the results long before you read this. But one of my colleagues, Walter MacIntyre, took a poll of chaps in this plant for their predictions in Canada.

The estimates ranged from 180 Tories to 177 Grits. The ones on the losing side took a beating the next day. My own estimate was 150 Grits, or more.