The Colonist.

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THE UNITED STATES SENATE.

Six of the Republican Senators have refused to enter the caucus of their party. They are, of course, silver Senators, and it is said that a seventh, who was absent, will join them. The defection of the six Senators will reduce the number of Republican Senators who can be depended upon to carry out the policy of their party from forty-three to thirty-seven. This will give the command of the Senate to the party opposed to the Administration.

In the first place it will make the passage of the Dingley bill an impossibility even if the Advisory Committee of the Caucus should advocate it. Without the support of at least eight sound money Democrats they would have no chance of success. And it would be expecting too much of Democratic disinterestedness to hope that so considerable a number of Democratic senators would unite to pull the Republican party out of the hole in which it is stuck.

It is pretty clear that the United States will have to try to get along under the Wilson tariff for some time to come. It is expected that when the new Legislatures of the States, on which the duty of selecting senators will devolve, have made their choice the personnel of the Senate will be considerably altered, and also its political complexion. Immediately after the election it was predicted that Mr. McKinley would, when the new Congress met, be able to command a majority of the Senate as well as of the House of Representatives. The same thing was said of Mr. Cleveland when he was elected in 1892, but the result was very different from what was predicted. The Senate was a thorn in President Cleveland's side from the beginning to the end of his term, and it may be that President McKinley will find that body equally wrong-headed and impracticable. What with Popocratic cranks and silver fanatics the Senate of the United States has become a broken reed for any administration to depend upon.

"IS THIS FAIR?"

No one that we know of contends that the Manitoba minority alone should have been consulted in the settlement of the much-vexed school question of that province. Neither have we ever heard it maintained that every demand made by the minority should be conceded by the majority, or those who constitutionally represent them. But there is, we submit, a very wide difference between giving the minority everything they ask for and not permitting them to have any part, direct or indirect, in the negotiations that led to the settlement. In private matters, when it is proposed to settle a dispute between two persons amicably, each of the disputants is required to choose a representative. In that case it is only fair to stipulate that both the parties shall abide by the decision arrived at. It would be an outrage on justice and fair play for one of the parties to negotiate with a third party and to settle the dispute without allowing the other principal to say a single word in his own behalf.

This, as we see it, is what was done in the proceedings that resulted in the "settlement" of the Manitoba school dispute. The parties to that dispute were the Protestant majority of Manitoba and the Roman Catholic minority. The majority, as represented by the Government of Manitoba and an outside party, the Dominion Government, entered into negotiations to settle the dispute, but the minority was not represented in the negotiations. They had no advocate at the meetings of the negotiators. There was no one present authorized to speak for them or to represent their side of the case. We have not heard that they were invited to send a representative, and had refused to have anything to do with the matter. They did not allow their case to go by default, for the very simple reason that they had never been vouchsafed the opportunity to accept or refuse.

Can the decision arrived at under such circumstances be called "a settlement"? The consent of all the parties concerned is the very essence of a settlement. Even when the proceedings are judicial and authoritative both the parties concerned have a right to be present and to say what they have to say in their own behalf. What would be thought of the fairness of a judgment in a case in which only one of the parties was permitted to be heard.

We say nothing now as to the nature of the terms of settlement in this Manitoba case. If the minority had agreed to them or had acquiesced in them there would be nothing for an outsider to say. But when the minority were not represented in the negotiations and when they are forced to accept the decision whether they like it or not, is there anything wrong in the disinterested bystander asking: Is this fair?

NOT IMPARTIAL.

It is to be presumed that the Government in undertaking an inquiry into the operation of the present tariff does so with the intention of acquiring information by which it may be guided in reforming or changing the existing fiscal system. It is not to be supposed that the Government has all the knowledge that it needs on the subject, and that it has already arrived at the conclusions on which it proposes to act. If this is the position that it occupies the inquiry is a mere sham. If the Commissioners are only looking for evidence to confirm them in the opinions which they already hold, the expense of prosecuting the inquiry and the time spent by Commissioners and witnesses in attending the sessions are completely wasted.

Some of those who have attended the sittings of the Commission are under the impression that the Commissioners do not occupy the position of either inquirers or judges. One of them, Hon. Mr. Fielding, shows by his demeanor and his remarks that his mind is fully made up, that he has prejudged the case. He does not listen to the witnesses with the air of an impartial judge His position is rather that of an advocate retained on the side of free trade. The Toronto Mail and Empire of the 11th inst. thus speaks of the attitude assumed and the spirit evinced by Commissioner Fielding:

> Instead of listening with the open mind of a judge or arbitrator, he lets himself assume too much the attitude of a prosecuting attorney or an interested party. Consciously or unconsciously he exhibits a strong prepossession against protective duties, and betrays an animus against the industries of the country. Apparently he cannot rid his mind of the assumptions that underlie the stock arguments that the Liberal press and politicians have made so familiar to the people of Canada. The stale, but threadbare, assertions that protection is an infamous policy, that the manufacturers are grinding monopolists, conspirators, robbers and scoundrels, were undoubtedly regarded by him as venerated party truths when the Liberals were in opposition. But he should understand that it is the soundness of these fundamental principles of Liberalism that is now in question. That being so, and he being one of the persons appointed to examine into their credibility, it would give an appearance of greater sincerity to the inquiry were he to comport himself less as if they were part and parcel of his very habit of mind. It should be possible for him to ask a question or to interject a remark without showing that his judgment was entirely overruled by his prejudice, and that practically he considered the investigation useless. Even if the Government intend to make it useless, and though the Tariff Commission be a mere mockery, it would surely be more discreet for Mr. Fielding to take some pains to feign fairness. But the public take it for granted that the commission is acting in good faith. It is the tribunal to which Mr. Laurier, entirely nonplussed by the trade question, has referred that question for decision. On the matter of policy, the Liberals, after believing in nearly everything, have assumed an agnostic attitude. They do not know what is right—free trade, tariff for revenue only, reciprocity, preferential trade, incidental protection, or the National Policy. They are in search of some economic moorings to satisfy the cravings, if not of their conscience, at least of their partisanship. If they are to be a party, above all a ruling party, they must have a policy, and the best policy is the one the country is most favorable to. What is that? That is for the commission to ascertain. It can find out only from the evidence placed before it, with which it must not mix any of the notions—likely to be false—that may stick to some of its members by virtue of their original errors.

It may be said that the Mail and Empire is not an unprejudiced observer. Admitting this to some extent to be the case, Mr. Fielding should know that there are in Ontario and the other provinces many such observers, men who are quick to discern any bias on the part of the Commissioners. If Mr. Fielding is as able and as discreet a public man as his friends give him the credit of being he would be particularly careful to give no protectionist journalist or politician ground for concluding that he is one-sided, that he assumes an attitude of antagonism towards protectionist witnesses. He should not give the protectionists who attend the sittings of the Commission—and it is evident that the great majority of those who do attend them are protectionists—an excuse for saying that the tariff inquiry is a sham and that it is folly for protectionists to expect anything like justice from the Commission or the Government which it represents. He should assume the virtue of impartiality though he has it not.

"ANNEXATION."

We have seen how influential inhabitants of Honolulu felt about annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States. We have also seen that all proposals for annexation have been hitherto coldly received by the Government of the United States, and by men whose opinion has weight with that Government. But public opinion appears to have been lately undergoing a change in the United States with respect to the annexation of Hawaii. Proposals for union are not nearly so emphatically rejected as they were some time ago. The United States has become coy and almost half accepts proposals which she would not listen to a few months ago. This may be inferred from the tone of an article in the New York Commercial Advertiser, of which the following are the concluding paragraphs:

> Lying as it does directly in the path between San Francisco and the Orient, affording excellent harbors, and forming, both for the purposes of peace and war, the key to the North Pacific, Hawaii possesses an importance altogether disproportionate to its population and natural wealth. Our trade with Asia is yet in its infancy, largely because of the lamentable lack of enterprise on the part of the people of San Francisco; but it is certain ultimately to develop into vast proportions. The Nicaragua Canal may not be constructed for a generation, but there is little doubt of its eventual completion. When the great ditch is finally dug, and when we shall have finally gained our just share of commerce with the swarming millions of China, Japan and other Eastern countries, the surpassing value of Hawaii will manifest itself. Its control as a coaling station must be in the future alike indispensable to our navy and our rehabilitated mercantile marine. We do not desire to control it for the purpose of assailing the rights of European nations, but for the purpose of making it what nature apparently intended it to be—an outpost of civilization in the immense ocean which will some time rival, if it does not eclipse, the Atlantic in the amount of commerce which it bears.
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> It is entirely practicable to assert our rights over Hawaii, without hastily annexing it and without giving offense to other powers. A dignified, courteous declaration of our position by the McKinley Administration, supported by the passage of a joint Congressional resolution reaffirming our historic policy, will assure the independence of the Hawaiian Government and leave the problem of final annexation to be decided when it begins to press urgently for a solution. Republican leaders will make no mistake if they adopt this course. It is just, reasonable and statesmanlike.

It is hard to understand what the Advertiser means by "our just share of commerce with the swarming millions of China," etc. If the Americans do not possess their "just share" of that commerce the fault is their own. If they have been beaten in the race they have no one to blame but themselves. Having a half-way house to China may give the Americans advantages as regards trade with China which other nations do not possess, and then, again, such a possession may lead to complications and embarrassments which might be found to be very troublesome.

MUNICIPAL ACT OF 1896.

A communication in another column by "An Interested Voter" calls attention to an article in the Times of Monday last, under the title of "Masterly Inactivity," and asks for information regarding the validity of the statements it contained. The correspondent makes some pertinent remarks, and, as will be seen, has hit the mark in suggesting that there is a good deal more smoke than fire. The truth is that the Kamloops Sentinel, which furnished the material for the Times, has discovered a large-sized "mare's nest."

A concerted attempt is being made by a section of the Opposition press to attach blame to the administration in respect of certain alleged defects in the municipal legislation passed at the last session. As a matter of fact, the Municipal Acts of 1896 were not Government measures, and were not carried on party lines, being introduced by a private member and referred for consideration and revision to a select committee chosen on account of its skill and experience in municipal matters. A perusal of these statutes will convince anyone at all versed in municipal affairs that they were carefully framed, with due regard to the public interests, and that the committee and the Legislature took every precaution to preserve the corporate rights of existing municipalities. The only interest which the Government have in maintaining these acts is to secure the best possible form of municipal government, and should it appear that amendments may with advantage be made, there can be no doubt that the Government, with the aid of the members of the Legislature, irrespective of party adherence, will give the matter careful attention and adopt without delay, any measures insuring desirable results.

To fully understand the question it would almost be necessary to review the history of municipal legislation in this Province; but for present purposes it will probably be sufficient to state that it was deemed advisable by the Legislature, owing to the transition state of municipal development in a new Province, which requires continual amendments to the act, as unforeseen exigencies arise, to deal with certain matters in separate acts, instead of as an entire statute consolidation. For this purpose, as stated, a special committee of the House or commission was appointed, of which Mr. Kitchen was made chairman. For the work of the Legislature in this respect, whether faulty or otherwise, the Government, as already intimated, was not specially responsible.

As a matter of fact, however, there are no grounds of complaint as alleged, the gravamen of which is thus stated in the Times: "One section of the new Act makes special provision for the constitution of the civic government of Victoria and Nanaimo, and another section takes care of city municipalities hereafter incorporated; but no provision is made for the cities of Kamloops, Kaslo and Vernon, which have been incorporated for some time."

The hysteria exhibited by the Kamloops Sentinel, and to some extent shared in by the Times, arose out of a misunderstanding, or an inability to properly read the Act. Sections 1, 3 and 14 of the Municipal Clauses were considered without reference to sections 6 and 7. There is no foundation for the fear of disfranchisement of Kamloops, Kaslo and Vernon, which were incorporated under the Act of 1892.

By sections 6 and 7 of the Municipal Clauses Act, the maintenance of existing corporations and the continuance of their corporate rights, powers and liabilities as vested in them by their letters patent are more carefully provided for. These letters patent, in every instance, define the constitution of the Municipal Council and fix membership, power being given by section 15 of the Municipal Clauses Act to increase the number by a unanimous resolution of the Council. The Municipal Elections Act applies as well to existing as to municipalities hereafter to be incorporated, and not the slightest doubt or difficulty can exist in electing the Councils of 1897 in the municipalities to which reference has been made.

Complaint is also made in regard to the disqualification of non-residents who were formerly permitted to vote in respect of real estate holdings. There would seem to be no doubt that this is a somewhat radical change, and in certain municipalities will lead, at the ensuing elections, to some degree of inconvenience. On the other hand, it may be depended upon to reveal a somewhat surprising state of affairs in regard to the number of non-resident electors, and the complete control by them of municipal affairs in certain municipalities. As one of the most important factors in the success of any system of municipal government is the interest in their welfare of the home community, and the care which will be given to matters intimately connected therewith, as distinguished from the manner of dealing with outside or purely speculative investments, it will be seen that the question of non-resident electors is one calling for the most careful consideration, and needing adequate safeguards against rash speculation, and trafficking on the strength of the credit which has been gained for our municipal institutions by the financial methods of the older corporations.

Undoubtedly the immediate effect of the non-resident clause in such municipalities as North Vancouver, where there is only one actual resident, was not foreseen or it might have been specially provided against or modified, although the anomaly and the liability to abuse in the case of a municipality without resident voters are quite apparent. The onus, if any, should attach to those whose residence in the district affected should have made them acquainted with the special conditions existing there. Should the matter be discussed in the Legislature, as it undoubtedly will be, it will be the means of opening the eyes of the members to a state of affairs that really should never have been permitted to exist.

Immigration to Canada.

OTTAWA, Dec. 17.—The Department of the Interior has prepared an official statement of immigration arriving in Canada for the past season. There were in all 21,341 compared with 21,338 for the year previous. The number of those who settled in the Dominion or announced their intention of remaining was 14,127, and last year 16,019.

Those en route to the United States numbered 7,124, and last year 5,319. The number of those who announced their destination to be Manitoba and the Territories or British Columbia, were 5,120 against 4,603 last season.