

BUSINESS MEN IN THE CABINET.

WHY is it that Governments in Canada have so few business men in their membership? Both federal and provincial administrations are almost wholly composed of lawyers. The Dominion Government is largely made up of professional men, and the result is that a practical, business-like control of public affairs is hard to get.

There are at present fourteen Ministers actually in charge of departments, and of these ten are lawyers and only two business men. The ten legal gentlemen are: Messrs. Tupper, Angers, Oummet, Caron, Daly, Dickey, Costigan, Curran, Ives and Wood. Mr. Foster has been a college professor and temperance lecturer. Mr. Montague is a practising physician. The only two who can fairly be termed business men are Mr. Haggart, Minister of Railways, and Mr. Wallace, Controller of Customs. The Premier, Sir Mackenzie Bowell, who was in the publishing business for many years, is President of the Council, and therefore without a portfolio.

Mr. Foster is certainly able, and his tariff labors have brought him fortunately much in contact with commercial men of the country. But how valuable a personal knowledge of business interests and methods would have been to him, he would probably be the first to acknowledge. Necessarily, his information, however quickly acquired and aptly assimilated, is second-hand.

Mr. Haggart at once showed the superiority of business knowledge over legal training, when in charge of a great spending department, by putting the Intercolonial Railway on a paying basis.

Mr. Wallace, a successful general merchant and miller, was placed at the head of the Customs Department in 1892, and from the outset introduced business methods into its control. He has tried to meet the wants and wishes of business men. Tariff administration at all times gives rise to inconveniences and grievances, and there will always be persons who are not satisfied, but Mr. Wallace's accessibility and attention to complaints are appreciated by merchants. The Controller is not perfect, but he is a business man. That qualification covers fully two-thirds of the requirements of a Minister.

Sir Frank Smith, an experienced and capable merchant, has no portfolio. When for a few months in 1891 he consented to take charge of the Public Works Department, his administration was admitted to be a distinct success.

When Cabinets are being made up, Board of Trade and business men generally should see that the whole work of government is not passed over to professional men. The most disastrous errors made in public policy during the past fifteen years have been due to mispent money and loose business method.

It is an utter farce that Canada, whose whole prosperity rests upon agriculture and trade, should be administered by lawyers. Some Deputy heads are capable and energetic, but their powers are limited, and the tendency with permanent officials is to get into ruts and to surround themselves with dry-as-dust methods. There is more red tape and sealing wax in public administration than sound sense and promptitude.

Our business men are much to blame for allowing affairs to pass under the control of wirepullers, both in the federal arena and in the provinces. As matters stand, when egregious busi-

ness mistakes are committed by Governments, an appeal to party fealty is made on behalf of the offenders, who, often through sheer ignorance, proceed to make more blunders.

If this sort of thing is to stop, the business men must wake up and insist that public affairs be regulated by the same principles that govern every successful private concern.

BANKRUPT STOCK DEALERS.

A BILL of considerable interest to merchants throughout Ontario passed the Legislature during the recent session. The bill was to amend the 'Transient Traders' Act, and itinerant dealers in bankrupt stocks will have to pay dearer than they have hitherto done for the privilege of disturbing trade in towns or villages throughout the country. And not only will they have to pay more for this privilege, but they will not have as much latitude as hitherto for escaping payment of the tax imposed.

Under the law now in force it was possible for dealers in bankrupt stocks to evade payment of the license fee by professing their intention of settling permanently in the municipality. With the proposed new law in force it will be necessary for them to reside at least three months in the corporation before they can start into business without taking out a license. The license fee is \$250 instead of \$100, as at present.

The adoption of the new law is, of course, optional with each municipality, but there are not many municipalities which will refuse to exercise the power which the Legislature proposes to give them.

In self-protection it is right that the fee should be a substantial one. These dealers in bankrupt stocks, during the time they are located in a town, not only deprive the legitimate merchants of business and profits, but cause a demoralization of trade, from which it often takes a long time to recover, while failures have sometimes in the meantime been caused.

With a tax of \$250 to come out of the profits, the transient trader will naturally be compelled to sell his goods at a higher figure than he otherwise would, a fact that will naturally tend to lessen his power to harm the regular merchants of the place.

The amendment in question is a step in the direction of a solution of the bankrupt stock evil and it is to be hoped that the one enterprising merchant which each town in Ontario is sure to possess will agitate for the immediate passage of a by-law to give this amendment effect.

The full text of the amendment is:

21. Sub-section 9A of section 489 of the said Act (45 VICT. c. 42) is amended by striking out the figures "\$100" in the eighth line thereof, and substituting therefor the figures "\$250," and by striking out the figures "\$50" in the said eighth line, and substituting therefor the figures \$100.

22. Section 489 of the said Act is amended by inserting therein the following, as section 9A:

9A. The words "transient traders," whenever they occur in sub-sections 9 and 1A of this section shall extend to and include any person, commencing the business in the said sub-sections mentioned, in any municipality, who has not resided continuously in the municipality for a period of at least three months next preceding the time of the commencement of such business therein.

Merchants in the other provinces will find a lesson in what Ontario has done towards preventing dealers in bankrupt stocks going into a strange town and ruining the trade of regular merchants.