The Colonist.

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THE POLITICAL CENTRE.

In one sense of the word Ottawa is, and must necessarily continue to be, the political centre of Canada, but it is not and probably never will be the centre of political influence or political interest. After a census is taken it is the practice in most countries to make an estimate to show where the centre of population is. In the United States and Canada this point is marching westward, and so it must continue. So also are the politcal centres of both countries moving westward. Time was in the United States, and, it was not so long ago, that New York and the New England States dominated the politics of the Republic. That was after the war of secession had broken the influence of the South. No one now suggests that this is the case now. Westward the course of political influence, like the star of empire, has taken its way. In Canada the same process is noticeable. Year by year the influence of the West becomes greater and it is not unreasonable to anticipate that soon the country west of the Great Lakes, will control the destinies of the Dominion. This will be due in part to the increase in population but chiefly to the fact that the interests of the West will soon become vastly greater than those of the East. Territorially the West far exceeds the East. In point of natural resources the balance is enormously in favor of the former. In the nature of the problems which present themselves for solution the East is simple and meagre in comparison with the West. Whether the broader life of the West will develop men better equipped for leadership than the East is one of those things which time alone can determine.

LABOR UNIONS AND ORIENTAL IMMIGRATION.

The London Standard discusses the alleged effort on the part of the Labor Unions in British Columbia to discourage immigration in order to keep wages up and contrasts it with the Social agitation in the United Kingdom against emigration, which is inspired by a desire to keep wages down. The British Socialist feels that, if there is a large emigration from the United Kingdom, wages will advance and agitation will become more difficult. We may assume that the Standard is competent to judge of what transpires in its own country, but it is mistaken in supposing that the opposition of the Labor Unions of British Columbia is inspired wholly, or even principally, by a desire to keep wages up. The Colonist does not hesitate to criticize the course of the Labor Unions and their friends, when it thinks criticism is called for, but in this matter a great injustice has been done them. The Standard is not much to blame, because a number of persons, who might be supposed to be in a position to know the facts, have represented that hostility to the incoming of Orientals had its origin in the cause mentioned. Such is far from being the case. There is no reason for supposing that Oriental immigration has in any way had a tendency to lower the wages of white men. Some people assert that the effect has been quite the other way, for the Orientals by filling the lower and therefore more poorly paid places in the labor world have enabled white wage-earners to confine themselves to the better paid fields of work. Making due allowance for race prejudice, from which the members of the Labor Unions are not more free than other people, and for the influence of demagogic appeals, which have their effect with workingmen just as much as with any one else, the real basis of the hostility of the Labor Unions to Oriental labor is the conviction, born of experience, that the white and yellow races cannot work side by side in competition with each other, and that the introduction into Canada of races, which are alien in every respect to our institutions, is bound in the long run to be productive of mischief. We can say without flattery that in no social sphere do the great economic problems of the day receive closer or more intelligent consideration than among the members of the Labor Unions. In the ranks of these organizations are to be found some of the most earnest and careful students of these questions, and the average amount of attention paid to them by wage-earners as a class is much greater than among any other class in the community. It is true that they are apt to look chiefly on one side of the case, but we do not know that in this particular they differ materially from other people. The solution of the great economic problems of the day will rest in the end with the wage-earners, and the sooner that fact is appreciated the sooner will a satisfactory solution be reached.

THE FRANCHISE BILL.

As we have all along anticipated, a solution has been found for the difficulty arising out of the proposed amendment to the Franchise Act and there will be no dissolution on that account. The Colonist was one of the few papers in Canada which refused to believe that a settlement was impossible. While strenuously opposed to the Bill as originally introduced and foremost among those who demanded that its passage should be opposed by all legitimate parliamentary expedients, it recognized that there might be some amendments necessary to facilitate and render less liable liable to abuse the preparation of provincial lists in Manitoba and British Columbia for use in federal elections. As to the fairness of the lists in this province—and we have confined our observations to British Columbia—we have never held but one opinion and that is that they are as fair as is humanly possible, because partisanship plays no part in their preparation. We realized, however, that when it came to allocating names, on the lists to the several constituencies in which they belonged for federal purposes it might be easy to devise some better plan than to leave it in the hands of the returning officers, who are pretty sure to be partisans of the party in power. Hence when Sir Wilfrid Laurier intimated that the original proposition would not be pressed, but that the provincial lists would be accepted and the county court judges would be assigned the duty of preparing the lists for the federal elections, we saw that there was a way out of what otherwise would be an absolute deadlock. That, or something like it, seems to be the solution upon which the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition have agreed and with this the whole country will be satisfied.

But the fact that a settlement has been reached ought not to blind the eyes of the public to the infamous nature of the original proposal. We use the word "infamous" of deliberate purpose, for the original bill proposed that officers should be appointed to prepare lists specially for the election then pending; that they should follow in a general way the provisions of the provincial laws, but should be subject to such directions as might be given them by order in council. In fact, the lists were to be prepared by partizans, under directions not embodied in any statute, but prescribed by a government on trial before the electorate. The framers of the original bill must have been taking a leaf out of Russia's book. In that country the first electorate chose a Duma, which was too difficult for the administration to handle. The Duma was dissolved, new election lists were prepared, and a new body was elected, but proving intractable, it was dissolved and a third revision of the lists was made, which proved so much to the liking of the Czar's ministers that Mr. Stoylpin exclaimed: "Thank God, we have no parliament in Russia". This seemed to be the object of the Aylesworth Bill—to secure, so far as British Columbia and Manitoba were concerned, a body of representatives who would not be members of a parliament, but simply so many puppets to register the will of the government. It was against such a measure as this that the Conservatives protested; it was such an unjust measure as this that they proposed to defeat, if they had to stop supply, prolong the session indefinitely or compel Sir Wilfrid Laurier to choose between a surrender and a dissolution. He has chosen the former course, and the result is a notable victory for Mr. Borden and his supporters.

UNITED STATES PRESIDENTS.

It is a singular thing that so few of those, who have been chosen for the exalted office of President of the United States during the last half of the history of that nation, have been men who were conspicuous for their ability or for achievement in any department of life, before their elevation to office. The two conspicuous exceptions are Lincoln and Grant. Abraham Lincoln became president because of his splendid mental equipment for the office at that particular time in his country's history. The more his career is studied the more amazing it appears. He exhibited the qualities which the nation needed at that momentous hour and his fellow-citizens turned instinctively to him. Grant was a man who showed on the battle-field that he was capable of great things. While it would hardly be right to rank him with the greatest of military geniuses, he was a man who achieved success and by achieving it saved his country from disintegration. Lincoln and Grant were the logical presidents, the one because of his mental equipment, the other because of his peculiar executive ability. But nearly every other president, even going back for some time before Lincoln, has been chosen more as a compromise than for any other cause. In office they have displayed greater or less ability, but it has been expediency that has singled them out for office rather than conspicuous talent. Among the gentlemen now named as candidates by either party, not one of them, except possibly Mr. Bryan, can be characterized as one to whom any large number of the American people would instinctively turn as a leader, and even Mr. Bryan's only claim to eminence consists of a speech made at a psychological moment. Unless the Republican convention should be stampeded for Mr. Roosevelt, which we observe some high authorities in the United States continue to regard as possible, the next President of the United States will be Mr. W. H. Taft and it would puzzle most people to give any valid reason why he out of the eighty odd millions of people living in the Republic should be chosen for the highest office in their gift.

BRITISH CURRENCY.

The amount of money in the United Kingdom is not nearly as large as might be supposed by those persons who very properly look upon that country as the financial centre of the world. The Royal Mint estimates that of gold there is:

In circulation	$420,000,000
In the banks	160,000,000
Total	$580,000,000

The amount of silver coin is estimated as follows:

In circulation	$ 90,000,000
In the banks	25,000,000
	$115,000,000

The Bank of England and other notes held without any specie to represent them is $145,000,000.

This gives a total of money in circulation in the United Kingdom amounting to $840,000,000, which is somewhat less than $20 per head of the population. Such a sum would be wholly inadequate for the needs of business if it were not for the remarkable extent to which credit transactions have been expanded, or in other words the part which checks play in the ordinary business tranactions of the country. During 1907 over $60,000,000,000 in checks passed through the London Clearing House alone and it is estimated that the total check circulation of the United Kingdom during the year was nearly $100,000,000,000. Over $400,000,000 in bills of exchange, checks and similar evidences of indebtedness are in circulation all the time. Therefore the currency of the United Kingdom may be put approximately at $1,240,000,000, which is a pretty tidy sum. It appears from the above figures that the annual turn-over in checks is equal to two hundred and fifty times the value of the checks in circulation at any one time. The annual turn-over of coin and bank bills must be very much greater than this in proportion. Therefore, if the annual turn-over of checks represents $100,000,000,000 of business, the turn-over of the $655,000,000 of coin and bank notes in the hands of the public must represent an immensely larger sum.

These figures have more than a curious interest. Such amounts as those above stated necessarily convey no definite idea, but we learn from them the very important part which credit plays in business tranactions. Fancy what enormous trouble would be caused if the $100,000,000,000 of business, represented by the annual circulation of checks, were carried on with coin. As a matter of fact the labor of counting it and of transporting it would be almost paralyzing to trade. But the checks do not represent all the vast part which credit plays in business transactions. In thousands of cases accounts are set off against each other and transactions involving millions are disposed of simply by a few entries in books. When, therefore, we speak of British currency, or for that matter any other currency in civilized countries, we have to regard it as four-fold: The off-setting of accounts; the issuance of checks or other private evidences of indebtedness; the use of bank notes and other public evidence of indebtedness, and coin. Coin is the circulatory medium of retail business. Hence also we see how ill-considered are those plans for the revolution of financial matters by the abolition of banks and the adoption only of metallic currency. The wheels of business would almost stop immovably if such an expedient were resorted to.

THE FRUIT CROP.

We have an interesting interview this morning with Mr. W. J. Brandrith, in which he speaks very hopefully of the prospects of the fruit crop. The increase this year is about twenty per cent, and, gratifying as this is, we suppose it is not nearly as great as that of the next few years will be. Very large areas have been set out to fruit during the last two years, and when these come into bearing the yield of fruit will be very greatly augmented.

The markets are very promising and are far from being fully supplied as yet. Mr. Brandrith speaks of a standing order for 80,000 boxes of apples from Australia, which cannot be supplied at present. In regard to the British market, he points out that before we can avail ourselves of this to any great extent it will be necessary to make shipments in cold storage, and this, he thinks, cannot be done satisfactorily until after the Panama canal is completed. However this may be, there does not appear to be any special reason for reckoning on the demand for our fruit in Europe at the present time, for the expanding demands of the prairie provinces will for some years to come take all we have to spare. By the time we have caught up to them, and have filled the requirements of the Australian market, the Panama canal will doubtless be open for business.

It is very satisfactory to know that the general prospects of the crop are excellent, and that labor conditions are quite satisfactory. There is no room for doubt that in its orchards and berry fields British Columbia will have a source of permanent wealth of incalculable value. We doubt if a better investment can be suggested for the amount of money involved than an orchard anywhere in Southern British Columbia or on Vancouver Island.

THE BRITISH FLEET.

The presence of the United States battleship fleet in the Straits has led to many inquiries regarding the relative strength of the British Navy. The effective fighting fleet of the latter on March 31, 1907, was as follows:

Battleships	60
Armoured cruisers	30
Protected cruisers	82
Scouts	5
Torpedo vessels	20
Torpedo boat destroyers	145
Torpedo boats	89
Submarines	37
Total fighting strength	468

The strength of a navy lies in its battleships, so it is interesting to compare the British and other navies in this respect:

	Built	Building
United Kingdom	60	5
Germany	32	8
France	31	10
United States	23	7
Italy	15	5
Japan	15	2

These numbers do not convey an accurate idea of relative strength. While the United States has a smaller number of battleships than either Germany or France, it is a question among naval experts if her navy in point of efficiency should not be placed second on the list, and there is very considerable doubt as to where Japan would come if tried by the same test. Moreover, each of the six British vessels of the Dreadnought class would be more than a match for any two or three vessels of any foreign power. The fleet now over on Puget Sound is a very formidable affair, but one or two Dreadnoughts might hammer it to pieces and yet keep out of the range of its guns. Our neighbors make a magnificent showing. Their progress towards naval eminence is very remarkable. Their ships are well manned. Their gunnery is excellent. In every respect the battleship fleet is a tremendous force and with Britain out of the way, it could perhaps assert for the United States the right to be called Mistress of the Seas in comparison with any single competitor.

WHAT IS NEWS.

Speaking at the Canadian Club banquet in New York, Ambassador Bryce laid a good deal of stress upon what Canada and the United States could do for each other as well as on the efforts that are being made to settle all outstanding differences between the two countries. He added that there are so many baseball games to report and so many murders that the papers seem to have no room to tell of the diplomatic arrangements, which play such an important part in determining the future of nations. This is one of the most conspicuous facts of the time, and there is not much use in blaming the newspapers by saying that they pander to the tastes of those who take no interest in the greater affairs of the day, because, as a matter of fact, the things to which Mr. Bryce refers are read by everybody almost. With all our Twentieth Century refinement, men have a fondness for the brute side of life, and even lovely woman is not exempt from the criticism. The other day a Seattle paper said that the town had gone crazy over wrestling. Wrestling is the talk of the clubs and drawing rooms as well as of the saloons and street corners. The reason of it is that a young Seattle physician has been exhibiting remarkable skill "upon the mat." The chances are that ninety per cent of the Seattle people, if they saw on the same page of a paper an account of how Dr. Roller was preparing for his match with Gotch and an account of how President Roosevelt was preparing to settle the outstanding differences with Canada, would read the first—every word of it—and content themselves with a glance at the head lines of the second. Ambassador Bryce is a master of the King's English, but if, in his most scholarly fashion, he should contribute to a paper a column article supplementing his great work on "The American Republic," he would not have one quarter as many readers as would peruse the sporting reporter's lurid description of a ball game, written in a language for which there is no dictionary. All this is no doubt very reprehensible, but we have a notion that if some one should write a graphic article on mountain-climbing, which is the Ambassador's amiable weakness, he would read it in preference to the most learned treatise on the evolution of democracy. Down away on the inside of us all there is a good deal of the animal, and that is why things that deal with force, even though accompanied by brutality, are regarded by so many people as the only real news.

FLYING THE FLAG.

Under the head of "Note and Comment" will be found some extracts from a debate in the Senate in regard to flying the flag on Empire Day, and it is said that Premier Asquith has declined to make any such order in regard to public buildings in the United Kingdom. To many persons this information will come as a sort of shock but it is to be remembered that the frequent display of the National flag is quite a recent innovation. We are inclined to think our neighbors in the United States responsible for the growth of the practice. An Englishman or a Canadian of fifty years ago took it for granted that his loyalty to the flag was unquestioned. Our neighbors, whose nationality is newer, have adopted a sort of flag-warship as a test of true citizenship, but even they have only done so in very recent years. The practice of our neighbors has almost compelled us to follow the same course in order to avoid unfavorable contrasts. We think it a very excellent practice, and are very glad to know that there is a prospect of its general adoption in the United Kingdom in connection with the schools. Yet it is perfectly true to say that as robust a patriotism as the world has ever seen was developed in the Mother Country at a time when the display of the flag was common only on very formal occasions.

We are interested to learn why Mr. Asquith objected to the display of the Union Jack on public buildings on Empire Day. He himself is looked upon as a thorough imperialist, and it is not to be supposed that his decision has been in any way influenced by any opposition to the sentiment to which May 23rd is dedicated. Possibly we shall have the explanation later, and it may be quite satisfactory. Meanwhile he is entitled to the benefit of the doubt. But whatever may be thought advisable in Great Britain, there can be no question as to the desirability of marking Empire Day in Canada by a display of the Union Jack. There may be some people who think that Empire Day is a needless occasion, that we were progressing well enough in the development of the Imperial sentiment, that the Empire was becoming consolidated with sufficient rapidity without one day being set apart especially in its honor—and perhaps this is true. Nevetherless as it has been deemed desirable that May 23 shall be devoted to recognition of the Imperial idea, the observance of it cannot be too general. Therefore we hope that tomorrow flags will be flying to the breeze from every flagstaff in the city.

THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

Mr. Armaud Lavergne, a youthful member of the House of Commons, who is the most intense of all French Canadians, has presented a petition signed by nearly half a million residents of Quebec, praying for greater official recognition of the French language in Canada than it now receives. One may easily sympathize with Mr. Lavergne and the petitioners without being in favor of granting the prayer of the petition. The right to use the French language officially has been secured to the people of Quebec by the British North America Act. Probably Confederation would have been impossible without such a concession, which, however, was not new, it having been provided for in previous Acts of the Imperial Parliament. It was too late in 1866 to go back, and it is too late now; but it ought to be possible to keep from going any further forward by giving the French language any greater recognition than it now receives. We do not see what is to be gained by so doing. All people will appreciate the sentiment which makes their language so dear to the French people of Quebec, but even Mr. Lavergne must see how hopeless it is for Quebec to continue an imperium in imperio in respect to language. Why should that province lag behind Japan? That country recognizes that English is the dominant speech of the world and hence its study is obligatory in the schools. Why ought not the boys and girls of Quebec to be instructed in it, so that it will cease after a time to be necessary to use it as an official language? Singularly enough when the British Parliament made the first provisions for the government of Quebec a very large proportion of the people were content to adopt the English language. A little firmness on the part of Lord North, who was then Premier, would have brought about that result. But he was unappreciative of the great issues involved in the government of the American Colonies, and so he drove thirteen of them into rebellion, and settled the French language and the French Customs of Paris upon Quebec. It is true that the clergy to whom he made this concession repaid it with loyalty to the crown; but they would have been just as loyal if they had been secured only in their ecclesiastical privileges.

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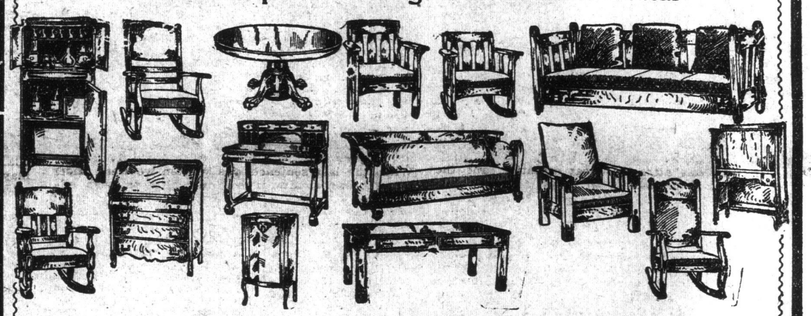

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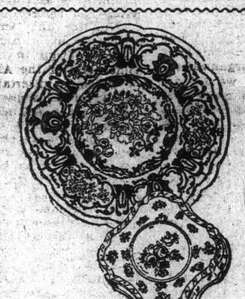

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