The Colonist.

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OUR CLAIMS ON THE DOMINION.

It has been announced, with every appearance of authority, that the Laurier ministry contemplates inaugurating a policy of Canadian development. The Minister of Railways, in a speech delivered in Ontario shortly before his visit to this Coast, declared that he could speak for his colleagues and say that their policy would not be one of "marking time," but one of progress; that while desiring to practice economy they would not shrink from incurring financial responsibilities if it could be made appear that compensating benefits would result. This is by no means a new departure in Canadian affairs, for it is the principle upon which the Conservative party has acted. There will not be a dissenting voice raised in the Dominion against the adoption of a liberal and progressive policy by the Ministry. Differences of opinion may arise over details but upon the general proposition there will be harmony, for the rank and file of the Liberal party will doubtless follow their leader, and the Conservatives will not stultify themselves and give the lie to their record by playing the role of obstructionists. The ministry has, therefore, to all intents and purposes, a free hand in this respect. On other questions party lines may be drawn rigidly enough; but in the promotion of enterprises for the general welfare of Canada the people stand ready to approve of any well considered plan.

We make this brief reference to the political aspect of the case, because in what shall be said in this and subsequent articles upon the claims which this province has for consideration at the hands of parliament, we shall endeavor to avoid any references of a partizan character. The claims which we shall present get none of their force from the fact that a Liberal ministry occupies the treasury benches; they would gain no additional force if the Conservatives held the reins of power. Their strength depends upon their inherent merit. The time has come to urge them and to urge them with all the force of which the people of British Columbia are capable. Our province in approaching the ministry and parliament does not need to stand in the attitude of one pleading for favors, but as one who claims simply just recognition, but with that claim presents indisputable evidence that justice to British Columbia means prosperity to Canada.

First we desire to enter a protest against a statement made from an influential quarter that no matter what might be done for the development of Western Canada, the burden of expense would fall upon Ontario. In the early days of Confederation, when Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were pressing for what were called "better terms," it was the custom of Ontario papers and public men to speak of their province as "the milch cow of the Dominion." We shall not take time to discuss the correctness of this claim, for it is immaterial at present; but this we do say and are prepared to maintain as beyond dispute, that British Columbia has never received out of the Dominion treasury anything like what it has contributed thereto. We concede freely that no ministry can be expected to keep tally from year to year of what a province pays in taxes and distribute the expenditure accordingly. That would be mere pettifogging. But we do say that when it can be shown by the returns of a series of years that any province is contributing far more to the revenue than it is receiving in return, and that province makes a claim for appropriations to aid in the development of its resources, the claim is strengthened thereby. This is the position which British Columbia occupies, and it is rendered impregnable by the fact that the whole of Canada is deeply interested in the opening up of our limitless possibilities. We may press our claim on the ground of justice, but we can reinforce it by demonstrating that our cause is the cause of the youth of Canada, which can find within our boundaries a scope for its enterprise and opportunities to win success. It is the cause of Canadian capital that can find here opportunities for profitable investment unsurpassed anywhere. It is the cause of Canadian progress, for as British Columbia advances the great interior will be developed and from ocean to ocean there will be established a chain of prosperous communities. It is the cause of the Empire, for this province of matchless wealth and commanding position is the threshold of the Orient. Canadian statesmanship can ask no higher mission than to prepare British Columbia, and with her Canada, for her imperial destiny.

MINERS' LICENCES.

The question of miners' licences is much discussed just now, and some difference of opinion appears to exist regarding them. The forthcoming session of the legislature can hardly pass without action of some kind in regard to them being taken, or at least proposed, and it is desirable, therefore, that there should be as free an expression of views as to what it is expedient to do in the way of making changes, if any such, on consideration, shall be found advisable We do not understand the provincial government to be at all committed to the present system, which has been handed down from the days when placer mining was the only method pursued in seeking for gold within the province, and silver mining had not been heard of. It goes without saying that a system which was entirely equitable in the days of placer mining may not be applicable to the conditions which have arisen during the last few years. We have reason to believe that the members of the government appreciate this fact quite as well as anyone else, and that they are as desirous as any one can be to devise a plan which will secure to the province as much revenue as the mining interest can reasonably be asked to contribute, and will distribute the payment in a manner that will do justice to all parties who will be called upon to make it.

A number of suggestions have been made as to how the law should be amended, and they all have more or less merit. It must be remembered in discussing this matter that there is really no abstract principle of right or wrong involved in it. How a revenue can be best raised is simply a question of expediency in any case. More than one of our mainland contemporaries has pointed out what seems on the face of it to be an injustice in requiring a man, simply because he works in a gold or silver mine, perhaps only as a teamster or a carpenter, to take out a miner's licence. On the other hand it is alleged that such people are in many cases residents of the State of Washington, who come here without their families and send most of their earnings out of the country. As every such person deprives a Canadian of a chance to work, and as the Canadian would spend all his earnings in Canada and thus contribute his quota to the revenue of the Dominion, while his family would swell the per-capita allowance which the province receives from the federal treasury, it is right that the foreigner should pay something towards the maintenance of the government of the country where he earns his living. The miners' licence was not designed to cover such cases, and its imposition specifically to cover them could hardly be defended, and yet if the foreign workmen who comes to this country, works in a mine and sends his money abroad to his family, is to be exempt from the miners' licence, it seems as if he ought to be required to contribute his quota to the provincial revenue in some other way. Every dollar's taxation of which the non-domiciled workman is relieved must be added to the taxes of the resident taxpayers. The COLONIST is simply expressing its own views in saying that the necessity of granting relief to these people has yet to be shown, and it is not very sure that they will not meet with approval of most of the very people referred to. Many of the American residents of this province gladly pay the small amount asked of them, so well are they satisfied with the manner in which the country is opened by roads and trails, and in which justice is administered.

The suggestion has been made that mining companies, whether foreign or domestic, should be required to pay annually a substantial licence, in order to acquire a legal status in the province. This is a perfectly legitimate source of revenue. There are hundreds of such companies doing business or preparing to do business in this province. If a licence fee of, say, $100 annually were exacted, it would not be regarded as worthy of a second thought by a company of any standing, and any company that could not afford to pay it would not be entitled to consideration. Perhaps with such a charge on the company it might be well to relieve the employee of a mine of the necessity for taking out miner's licences, unless they desired to prospect or own claims in their own name, and in such case to grade the company's tax in proportion to the number of men employed.

We offer these matters as subjects for discussion, premising, so as to avoid all misunderstanding, that the views expressed are simply those of this paper, and as such are advanced tentatively and as a contribution to the more thorough understanding of an important question. So great are the demands of the people for public improvements that every proper means of increasing the revenue, without entailing burdensome taxation, must be looked into.

The Columbian should not lose its temper. Neither should it make itself rediculous by professing to believe the provincial government to be responsible for the opinions of the COLONIST. Nor should it deceive its readers by endeavoring to fix upon the government the responsibility for the rates of interest on mortgage loans. As to the particular matter which has aroused the ire of our contemporary, namely, the suggestion that the relative cheapness of money in boom times tempted people to borrow more than they should have done, we have only to say that the fact of so many loans remaining unpaid proves that this was the case. Whether an era of cheaper money would lead to larger borrowing is a matter of opinion, and the suggestion that it would do so is in accordance with the experience of every country under the sun. Possibly a means can be devised for providing the people with money at lower rates than must now be paid. Some successful experiments in co-operative banking have been tried in Europe and elsewhere, and we shall take pleasure in a future issue in giving some facts bearing upon them. For the present we wish only to protest against the silliness of making an attack upon the provincial government because of views expressed in this paper upon an abstract proposition in finance—a subject with which under the terms of the British North America Act the provincial governments have nothing whatever to do. In order, however, that our esteemed contemporary may not run short of ammunition against the government, "not of the sort that kills," we will mention that in the opinion of the COLONIST nobody in point of fact ever did strike Billy Patterson.

ACCORDING to the Times of January 23 the government some time during the last session "agreed" to "appoint immediately" three commissioners to revise the statutes. By the same authority under date of January 27, what happened was that "the government led the house to understand that immediately after prorogation the work would be placed in the hands of three commissioners." Last night it told us that "Premier Turner hinted that the government was about to substitute three commissioners for one in the revision." This latter statement our contemporary says is "the fact." Would it not have been well to have told "the fact" in the first place? But the Times must sing a little smaller still. Not only did the government not "agree" or "lead the house to understand" anything of the sort, but Premier Turner did not even give the "hint" suggested. Why does not the Times own up that it has mixed up the gossip of the lobby with the proceedings of the house?

REFERRING to the claim that pelagic sealing will lead to the extermination of the Pribyloff herds, Mr. Gerald Barrett Hamilton, who has investigated the matter on the grounds, says a census of the Pribyloff seals taken last summer shows there were 143,000 females on the islands. There were about 11,000 dead pups, that had been killed by overcrowding, and later on in the season about 10,000 more died; but that the death of the latter was due to their dams being killed sixty miles off shore was by no means established.

THE Nanaimo Free Press urges that in any plan adopted by the federal or provincial government for the subsidizing of railways provision should be made that "the iron and steel structural works shall be manufactured in the Dominion and from native materials." Whether such a suggestion is practical or not, we venture no opinion; but it is an interesting one, especially as it has enabled our contemporary to give a masterly presentation of the importance of developing our great resources.

THE Calcutta Englishman quotes the Governor of Bombay as saying, that whereas in the last Indian famine tons of grain lay unused on the wharves of the seaports for lack of facilities for transportation into the interior, now all provisions can be promptly forwarded to the suffering districts. This will greatly facilitate the work of relief.

THE plan proposed by the Chairman of the Park Committee for the summer's work seems reasonable. Of all the attractions of this very attractive city, the Park takes the first place, and the taxpayers will not begrudge any moderate outlay to improve its appearance.

"DOWNING street" will soon be no more. The street will remain, but the historic edifice that every one meant when he used the name, is to be pulled down and a palatial structure erected in its place, to be used for the same purposes as the present building.

THE CANADIAN PRESS.

FOR DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT.

If the people of Canada are to be called upon to provide aid in the construction of railways to the extent of millions of acres of the public domain, and millions of dollars from the ratepayers of the Dominion, it is only right, just and proper, that the alienation of these vast amounts of land and coin should be made conducive to the upbuilding of the Dominion, instead of enriching the people of other sections of the British Empire or perhaps some foreign state. To apply this suggestion nearer home should be the energetic and united aim of the people of Nanaimo. Nature has lavishly placed the raw materials at our very doors, and it only requires the energy, perseverance and enterprise of our people to convert them to practical use in the construction of railways and kindred undertakings.—Nanaimo Free Press.

BY WAY OF VARIETY.

A young Irishman in want of twenty-five dollars wrote to his uncle as follows:

"Dear Uncle—If you could see how I blush for shame while I am writing, you would pity me. Do you know why? Because I have to ask you for a few dollars, and do not know how to express myself. It is impossible for me to tell you. I prefer to die. I send you this by messenger, who will wait for an answer. Believe me, my dearest uncle, your most obedient and affectionate nephew.

"P. S.—Overcome with shame for what I have written, I have been running after the messenger in order to take the letter from him, but I cannot catch him. Heaven grant that something may happen to stop him, or that the letter may get lost."

The uncle was naturally touched, but was equal to the emergency. He replied as follows:

"My Dear Jack—Console yourself and blush no longer. Providence has heard your prayers. The messenger lost your letter. Your affectionate uncle."

THE DEADLY PARALLEL.

Times, Jan. 27, 1897.

"It is the fact notwithstanding anything the inspired organ may say, that the government led the house to understand that immediately after prorogation the work of revision would be placed in the hands of three commissioners instead of one. This was the plan most distinctly agreed upon."

Extracts from the Journals of the Legislative Assembly dated Feb. 27, 1896.

"Mr. Semlin moved, seconded by Mr. Kitchen":

That in the opinion of the House more than one commissioner should have been appointed for the revision of the Statutes. That any changes from the law as it at present stands, suggested by the commissioner, should have been first submitted to this House, and should not have been included in the revision itself until, and only so far as such proposed changes had been adopted by the House, and that proper precautions should be taken by the Government to ensure the work being done at the least expense compatible with the importance of the work."

"Negatived on division, as follows:" (Here follow the ayes and nays.)

Times, Jan. 27, 1897.

"As to the quality of the revision so far effected, no further evidence is needed than that which the COLONIST itself supplies in the admission that the adoption of one part of the revision has led to serious confusion in a part of the municipal machinery. It was to prevent trouble of this sort that the government agreed to have the work done by three commissioners instead of one."

"THE SO-CALLED ADMISSION."

Extract from the Colonist article, Jan. 27, 1897.

The Attorney-General informed the House that he "could firmly state his opinion that the Act was in keeping with the law now on the Statute Books, and that the Revision had been correct in every particular." * * * * No exception was taken to the Attorney-General's statement, and that was the end of the matter.

Another statute was taken up by the House, and after days of fighting, and amendment after amendment being offered, was passed practically as introduced by the Commissioner, whereupon the House seems to have gone to the other extreme, and to have passed statutes reported by the Commissioner, and to have adopted his revision, without apparently even considering the import of some of the changes recommended by the Commissioner. * * * In one instance, at least, a change was adopted, which, advisable though it might have been if publicly understood, was mischievous in the extreme when passed without the public being warned of the change. We allude to the "Municipal Elections Act." * * *

Comment with the intelligent reader is unnecessary."

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