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D. M. CARLEY EDITOR IN CHIEF
L. G. HENDERSON . . . BUSINESS MANAGER.
Office—No. 77 Johnston Street.

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THE PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

The Provincial Government has, in its wisdom, seen fit to have the public buildings in Victoria put up by contractors and not in such a way as, we think, would have secured more work for British Columbia people the scarcity of employment among whom was urged as one of the reasons why the work should be proceeded with at once. Indeed, that argument was a very potent one among the members and prevented no small amount of opposition which had not unnaturally been aroused by Col. Baker's ill-timed declaration that the public buildings must be anchored in Victoria. We notice that tenders are now asked for, to complete the necessary structures, to be in by the first of November prox. This means, apparently, the importation of a considerable amount of alien labor, probably the award of a contract or contracts to strangers and the bringing in and employment here of numbers of Chinamen for whom the United States have declared they have no use.

CONCERNING BANKRUPTCY.

The tenth annual report of proceedings under the English Bankruptcy Act shows that during the year covered there were issued 1,635 receiving orders, representing liabilities amounting to £8763,031, with assets of \$3,078,333. There were also during the year 3,333 deeds of arrangement, showing liabilities amounting to £5,957,022, and assets aggregating £2,937,315. The total receipts amounted to £153,081, while the expenditures amounted to £165,330. According to the report the number of failures and the estimated loss to creditors materially increased during the year.

Commenting upon that report the *Westminster Gazette* says that the increase in the number of failures and in the estimated loss to creditors is hardly to be wondered at when regard is had to the various causes of commercial and agricultural depression which have prevailed during the past two years, and adds: "In fact, it would probably have been considerably greater but for the fact that some portion of the insolvency which would formerly have appeared in the bankruptcy statistics now appears in connection with the winding up of limited companies, in consequence, on the one hand, of the facilities which exist for the conversion of insolvent business into that form of enterprise, and on the other of the pressure of recent bankruptcy legislation, which has driven insolvent

debtors to avail themselves more eagerly of such facilities in order to escape from the more stringent provisions of the bankruptcy law."

"The main causes of the depression are sufficiently obvious. The extremely low prices of agricultural products, the operation upon many of the manufacturing industries of the country, of foreign tariffs and competition, the collapse in South American finance, the fluctuations in the value of silver, and of the exchange with silver-using countries, the recent failures of a number of building and industrial societies, and the reaction from the recent inflation of land values in Australia, present a group of influences sufficiently wide and sufficiently disastrous in their effects to account for even greater losses than those which are disclosed by these statistics."

FIRE UNDERWRITERS.

The Victoria Fire Underwriters have recently held their annual meeting in Victoria and have elected the following committee: R. Hall, J. C. MacLure, H. F. Heisterman, B. Baggis and W. Monteith, who will elect officers at their first meeting. In their discussions, the Board protested against the \$300 tax levied by the city of Victoria on each of the companies doing business here, the cold fact staring them in the face that the business here has been carried on with only nominal profit, taking the average of several years past; that last year's operations resulted in a substantial loss, and that this will be the case every year in which there is an important fire. They decided to hold their meetings in future during the second week after the close of the insurance year, which ends on September 30, and to call their organization "The Victoria Board of Fire Underwriters." The annual statement of claims paid shows that in the insurance year ended September 30 the total for Victoria city and the immediate district was upwards of \$25,000, which, though less than 40 per cent. of the total of the preceding year, is nearly three times as much as the average of the few years before that.

THE TRADES AND LABOR COUNCIL.

The Government organ in Victoria, as we suppose, in duty bound, censures the Victoria Trades and Labor Council for declining to assist the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "because the interests of labor have not been recognized in an official capacity," and, we may add, in no other way has it recognized the interests of British Columbia labor. Our contemporary thus lectures the local labor people: "The members of the Trades and Labor Council know very well that those who are endeavoring to promote good causes cannot always have everything their own way. They have often to struggle long against adverse circumstances, to put up with unreasonable opposition and even to bear patiently slights and injustice."

But what need, we ask, was there for the labor element to put up with "unreasonable opposition,"—we quote the *Colonist's* words—"and even to bear patiently slights and injustice"? Was it necessary to appoint the present chief of

the Department and also to fill one or more of the remaining offices to the utter ignorance of one of the parties most directly interested? What reason has the labor element had to know that "Col. Baker, the head of the Department, is heart and soul a friend of labor, and that he is working hard to establish the Bureau of Labor Statistics and Council of Conciliation and Arbitration, and to place it on a good footing."? We notice that the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council have partially met the Government by consenting to act in the collection of statistics, but its members are no better satisfied than are those of the Victoria Council.

THE MIDWINTER FAIR.

Notwithstanding the discouragements which San Francisco's Midwinter Fair project met at the outset, the indications are that it will prove to be a success, that is if the enterprise and energy of the people count for anything. They have not only begun to build, but the various structures in which the exhibits are to be placed are in an advanced condition, so that by the time they are received there will be ample accommodations for them. Not only so, but funds have been liberally subscribed towards meeting preliminary outlays and guarantees given for the payment of any deficit should it unfortunately happen that such should exist after the accounts have been straightened out. There was a time during the Chicago show when matters looked pretty blue and when a serious loss stared its promoters in the face; but we are glad to note that not only will the great undertaking of the people of "the windy city" have been successful as having brought together probably the finest collection of the world's products and people that were ever got together, but all expenses will be met with a balance to spare. Moreover, in that thorough manner which has characterized the undertaking its promoters having got together all nations and peoples and kindreds and tongues through the congresses that have been held secured an exchange of opinions upon many of those great topics that are of world wide interest and importance, and their record when it is collected in convenient form will prove to be matter of profitable perusal.

The San Franciscans do not appear to have aimed at holding "congresses" as those which had their headquarters in Chicago, but they anticipate having a congress of nations such as will do them credit and at the same time tend to promote the trade of the Pacific coast. That trade is bound to be an immense one. Of its extent and possibilities, few can have an idea. One is accustomed to speak of the trackless ocean; but if any one of the great seas is more trackless than another it is the great Pacific. The Atlantic is almost like a highway so constantly is it traversed and so familiar are the steamship routes. Not so with the Pacific—its islands and the lands beyond its seas are but slightly known, still they may with a proper understanding of the situation prove to be avenues of trade whose extent will surpass all possible conception. All honor we say