

small. To find a similar case to that of Toronto, where a vital factor of commercial development is being sacrificed, seek far. Every year lost makes reformation more difficult. The growth of the city, of the province, of the whole country, calls for determined action. Toronto's waterfront and harbor will some day evolve from a swimming pool to a shipping basin.

POLITICS AND RAILROADS.

The best way to silence a critic is to steal his thunder is evidently the opinion of Premier Rutherford, of Alberta. Politics born of the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway have caused an electrical storm in the provincial legislature. In these columns last week the story was briefly told. Since then a vote as to want of confidence in the Rutherford government has been taken in the House. The result was twenty-three to fifteen in favor of the Cabinet. In the meantime railway commissions and investigations have been talked. And definite opposition action was forestalled by a resolution on Monday naming a railway commission, consisting of Premier Rutherford, Deputy Minister of Public Works John Stocks, and Government Engineer Jones. This board would pay the bond guarantee to the railway builders when satisfied that each portion specified was completed. Mr. Stocks refused to act. He will have none of Alberta's transportation deal.

That adds new interest. Mr. W. R. Clark, of Kansas City, has promised in writing to construct the road better than stipulated in the specifications. A glance at these shows room for the promise. For instance, fifty-six-pound rails are to support Great Waterways locomotives. Our leading companies are laying to-day eighty and one hundred-pound rails. As an afterthought, Premier Rutherford names a railway commission with an Opposition member in the personnel. All this would seem to indicate that in the anxiety for transportation facilities. Alberta will get a much cheaper kind of road than it need have had. The Kansas City promoters noted that the provincial government hungered for steel. A bite was offered and accepted. Will it leave behind a bad taste or a later desire for more substantial fare?

That is not all. Yesterday Premier Rutherford found himself without a Cabinet. The desertion was something like a sheep flock seeking fresh pastures. They ran this way and that, some hesitating when the shepherd called. Indeed, it once looked as though Mr. Cushing, who practically precipitated the political broil, would actually come back into the fold. If all these events had happened in London, or Paris, or Berlin, we should have seen stocks heading for zero, bank rates rising, confidence undermined, and finance too nervous to tremble. But Edmonton has not yet entered the hypersensitive circle. The whole affair smacks of the West. One day it was Rutherford, the railroad hero, and then Rutherford, the railroad rascal.

Steel was to make or break the government. In breaking it some spelled steel the other way. In such matters railroad, finance and politics should be the order. This time it was politics, finance—maybe high—and railroad. The Alberta and Great Waterways line seems to have been tied to several dogs' tails. In the unanimous attempt to wag the can there came grief. Premier Rutherford has been sacrificed at the altar of a cheap railroad. Had he thought more of actual construction and less of Albertan possibilities, he might still be basking in premierial sunshine. A more carefully handled railroad would have blunted the political knife.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

Leave not the desk, lest you be accused of amalgamation. Combine not, or you will be daily interviewed. Step silently, or perchance the noise of footfalls will make

music for the sleuth of Dame Rumor. Individuality is in danger. Combination is marching.

* * * *

Paper railroads will no longer find a home in Ontario. The provincial legislature realizes that juggling and peddling charters is inimical to legitimate development and clean finance. Here is the clause which will likely be incorporated in all bills granting or extending charters: "The railway authorized by this Act shall be commenced within two years and completed within three years after the passing of this Act, and if the construction of the railway is not commenced and fifteen per cent. of the amount of the capital stock is not expended thereon within two years after the passing of this Act, or if the railway is not completed and put in operation within three years from the passing of this Act, then the powers granted to the company by the said Act shall cease and be null and void as respects so much of the railway as then remains uncompleted." In future, it will be paper and steel or no paper. British Columbia, too, has decided likewise.

* * * *

The suggestion of Professor H. H. Turner, an astronomical sage of Oxford, that the air in the tail of Halley's comet should be bottled, will doubtless receive the serious consideration of company promoters. On May 18th the earth will run into the back of the comet, and astronomers desire to know what is in the tail. The bottling scheme would make excellent basework for an up-to-date incorporation. Rubber and oil fakirs should prove suitable captains for this aerial promotion. Shares might be sold at fifty cents, with a bonus of glassware, the price to be advanced automatically as the comet approached. Only one hundred thousandth part of the air will actually be comet's tail. This enhances the speculative interest. Successful bottlers should have their money returned. Those failing to capture any Halley would be allowed to retain the bottle and put their stock certificates with forgotten others.

* * * *

The rapidity with which Canadian industrial combination has spread makes the judgment of Chief Justice Falconbridge of unusual interest. The Wholesale Grocers' Guild were prosecuted by the Crown in 1907 and charged with alleged conspiracy connected with trade and commerce. Actually the charge was fivefold. The defendants were accused of unlawfully conspiring during certain years with more than 200 individuals and firms to limit unduly facilities for manufacturing and dealing in various articles of trade. The restraint and injury of trade and commerce, the undue prevention limiting and lessening of production, competition, purchase and sale, and the unreasonable enhancement of prices, were the other points. The court has decided that the defendants have not intended to violate the law, and that they were actuated by a bona fide desire to protect their own interest and that of the wholesale groceries trade in general. It would be dangerous, said Justice Falconbridge, to accept as a settled doctrine of political economy or proposition of law that under any and all conditions and at all times, every man or corporation should be declared to have an absolute and inalienable right to buy and sell, trade or barter with any other person or corporation without restriction as to quantity or price. In the present case, it was argued, the endeavor was to protect the interest and welfare of the wholesale grocers of Canada, whether or not they were members of the Guild. The Guild invited the membership of legitimate wholesale dealers and the prices in all cases were fixed by the manufacturers. This appears to be one of the most important points. The grocery combine did not actually restrain trade. Conditions not being satisfactory, an organization was formed to adjust wholesale prices. The combine did not dictate terms to firms who were not members thereof or to the trade generally. As a case in trade conspiracy it would appear that the grocery combine was a bad selection.