

Brooklyn and on Staten Island, this movement has assumed great importance. So large has this business now become that the capital employed in building loan associations exceeds the capital of the entire national banking system, amounting to over seven hundred millions of dollars. In all the range of economic questions there is nothing more interesting, more helpful, or more hopeful for the country than this movement for the acquirement of homes. Economic questions like trusts and combinations, like the disappearance of competition, like the organization of capital in great transportation agencies, like co-operative movements all over the country, are full of significance to the workingman. But all these questions put together do not assume an importance so great, so far-reaching, and so beneficial as that involved in the Building Loan Association movement.

These words may be discounted by some as those of a man who has probably much land to dispose of as sites for homes. That may be so, we know not. The words may be true and wise nevertheless. There is probably nothing so promotive of comfort, self-respect and thrift, and so potent in conserving the peace and stability of a commonwealth, as the possession of homes by large masses of the citizens. There is scarcely a wiser philanthropy than that which promotes the acquisition of homes by the workingmen.

A COPY of the Adelaide (South Australia) *Advertiser* now before us has an interesting leader dealing with certain proposed political reforms which are under discussion in that colony. One member of the Legislature, for instance, coolly proposes, as the readiest and most effective way "to lessen the inducements to crisis-mongering," to reduce the salaries of Ministers by one-half. We have not heard the fate of the Bill, but as it is pretty certain to be opposed by two classes of leading politicians—those who are in office, and those who hope to be—its defeat may be accepted as a foregone conclusion. Another member is pressing for an amendment to the Constitution so as to require Ministers, on taking office, to go back to their constituents for re-election. As the Government had taken up this scheme, with the proviso that it be first approved by the people, it has a good prospect of being carried into effect. Probably it will be a surprise to most Canadians, accustomed as we are to regard such re-election as one of the safeguards of our liberties, or at least an essential feature of the system of responsible government we prize so highly, that there is room for such a reform in the constitution of another self-governing colony. A question of still greater interest and importance, by reason of its radical and, so far as British communities are concerned, novel character, had just been raised in the House by the motion of the Premier for a Select Committee to enquire into and report upon the election of Ministers by Parliament. According to the Premier, though the *Advertiser* does not agree with his statement in this respect, the House and the country have already declared in favour of the principle of an elective Ministry, and nothing remains to be done but to arrange the details for its introduction. There is undoubtedly much to be said in favour of such a system, the most powerful argument perhaps being that it would at once do away with government by party, if accompanied, as is proposed, by a provision for the election of the Ministers on the basis of proportional representation. More serious difficulties are suggested touching the possibility of framing such a system so as to fit in with responsible government, especially at such points as the seeming necessity for electing the Ministers for a term of years, and the difficulty of harmonizing the principle of individual responsibility of Ministers to the House, with the necessity that they should give advice as a whole to the Governor. If the politicians and people of South Australia can succeed in overcoming these and other difficulties and incorporating the proposed reforms in a workable system without sacrificing essential principles, their example will be pretty sure to be followed at an early day by other British communities which are suffering from similar evils, the outgrowth of party government.

PROBABLY the most important of the many reforms now under consideration at the antipodes, as indicated in the preceding paragraph, is that of "Proportional Representation of the people." Though this change does not seem to be actually before the Legislature, it is strenuously advocated by the *Advertiser*, which is, we believe, the most widely circulated and influential newspaper in the colony, and by some able political writers. The arguments urged in support of the scheme are many and some of them cogent. We are sorry that we have not sufficient details to enable us to put the proposal before our readers

in more definite outlines. We are not, indeed, sure that such definite outlines have as yet been drawn by its advocates. The main object is, of course, to secure the fair representation of minorities, which, as we in Canada know quite as well as our Australian cousins, is impossible under the present system. One has but to compare the representatives of the two parties in either the Dominion or the Ontario House with the adherents of the respective parties in the electorates, in point of numerical strength, to get a very vivid conception of the radical defect in the working of the existing system. On this point the *Advertiser* speaks as follows, and we must for the present content ourselves with putting its words before our readers for their consideration:—

If we had election by quotas instead of by majorities—and this end could be attained with ease by adopting the principle of the single transferable or effective vote—the rights of both majorities and minorities would be certainly conserved. The adoption of such a reform would naturally prepare the way for the consideration of other radical changes. A House of Assembly completely representative of the people would obviate the necessity of the Legislative Council (say Senate), and the veto of a second chamber representing only a fraction of the people could then be replaced by the popular veto or referendum. This would be quite sufficient as a means of controlling the power of a single chamber, and a much more logical and acceptable method of attaining the end for which, in theory, a second chamber mainly exists.

#### THE CANADIAN VIEW OF THE BEHRING SEA QUESTION.

FROM the Canadian point of view, the claim of the United States to jurisdiction or a protectorate over the fur seals which breed upon the islands in Behring Sea and swim and feed in the waters of the North Pacific Ocean, appears wholly absurd and untenable. It is based upon a diplomatic imposture. Assuming that the position of the United States Government with reference to Behring Sea is fairly stated in Mr. Blaine's letter to Sir Julian Pauncefote, dated the 30th June, 1889, the whole jurisdictional claim is based upon the ukase issued by Emperor Paul of Russia in 1821, asserting the exclusive right of his subjects to engage in whale fishing and other commercial pursuits "all along the northwestern coast of America, from Behring Strait to the 51st parallel of northern latitude, and likewise on the Aleutian Islands, as far south as latitude 45 degrees and 50 minutes north." Mr. Blaine does not attempt to prove that Behring Sea ever was, for any purpose, a *mare clausum*, or that it can be made such now, and Emperor Paul's ukase was binding upon nobody but his own subjects. It was a mere *brutum fulmen*. Hon. William McDougall, one of the best of our Canadian Constitutionalists, says that "no other nation accepted it and none protested against it more rigorously than did Mr. Adams, in the name and on behalf of the United States." And as the Government of the United States resisted Emperor Paul's attempt to assert jurisdiction over Behring Sea, it is surely stopped from citing that ukase as evidence that Russia had exceptional property rights in those waters which she could convey and did convey when she sold Alaska. Shortly after the issuance of the ukase, Mr. John Quincy Adams, on behalf of the Government of the United States, asked the Russian Minister for explanations respecting the extraordinary claims made by his sovereign. On receiving such explanations Mr. Adams replied, denying Russia's pretensions to sovereignty over the north Pacific and concluding thus:—

"The President is persuaded that the citizens of this union will remain unmolested in the prosecution of their lawful commerce, and that no effect will be given to an interdiction manifestly incompatible with their rights." And yet Mr. Blaine makes this pretence, which Mr. Adams denied, the basis of his claim to special or exclusive jurisdiction over Behring Sea. In one of his communications Lord Salisbury points out that the convention between the United States and Russia of the 17th April, 1824, put an end to any further pretension on the part of Russia to restrict navigation or fishing in Behring Sea, so far as American citizens were concerned; for by Article 1 it was agreed that in any part of the Pacific Ocean or South Sea, the respective citizens or subjects of the high contracting powers shall neither be disturbed nor restrained, either in navigation or fishing, and a similar stipulation in the convention between Great Britain and Russia in the following year put an end, as regarded British subjects, to the pretensions of Russia, which had been entirely repudiated by Government in correspondence with the Russian Government in 1821 and 1822.

Here is the marvellous document, the ukase of Emperor Paul, upon which the claim of the United States to exclusive property in Behring Sea and the fur seals that swim therein appears to be based:—

*Ukase of H. M. the Emperor of all the Russias which interdicts to foreign nations all commerce with the Aleutian Isles and determines the maritime limits of Russian America.*

DATED SEPTEMBER, 1821.

1. It is permitted only to Russian subjects to engage in commerce, in the fishery of the whale and of other

fishes, and in any branch of industry whatsoever in the islands, ports and gulfs in general along the north-west coasts of America, beginning from Behring Strait so far as 51 north latitude, as well as along the Aleutian Isles, and on the eastern coast of Siberia and of the Kurile Islands, that is to say from Behring Strait so far as the south cape of the Island of Ouroup, that is to say as far as 45.41 north latitude.

2. Consequently, it is forbidden to every foreign vessel to land at the Russian establishments designated in the preceding paragraph, and to approach them at a distance of less than 100 Italian miles. Everyone infringing this order will forfeit his cargo.

There were a great many other articles in this ukase, but the foregoing are the only ones referring to the Behring Sea fisheries. The area of ocean which the Russian Czar thus sought to appropriate includes the greater part of the Pacific Ocean between Asia and North America. The fifty-first parallel runs from a point in British Columbia to Cape Lopotka in Asiatic Russia, and does not cross a single island. How could Russia lay claim to ownership over such a waste of ocean, and how could she sell to the United States what she could not possibly protect? The combined fleets of the great nations of the earth would be insufficient to keep traders and fishermen out of the waters over which Emperor Paul claimed ownership. Mr. Collet, in his diplomatic notes, points out that had Russia's design been to obtain by force a monopoly of the whale or the seal fisheries in Behring Sea she would have put her eastern limit on the west of the peninsula of Alaska, whence a naval armament might be extended along the Aleutian Islands. But Russia had no such idea. She pretended to possess whole coasts where there were only a few straggling fishing hamlets and tried to apply to the North Pacific Ocean the principle under which the sea of Marmora, which is almost surrounded by Turkish Territory, is allowed to be a close sea—making no difference between an entrance only one mile wide and one which stretches four thousand miles from the coast of North America to the coast of Asia.

Did the American whalers pay any attention to Emperor Paul's ukase? Not at all. They armed their vessels and carried on their fishery, just as the British Columbian sealers are now hunting for seals regardless of the United States' claim to jurisdiction over Behring Sea. Emperor Paul had not the power, if he actually had the will, to shut American whalers out of Behring Sea. But the Governments of Great Britain and the United States lost no time in protesting against the claims put forth in the famous ukase. Those Governments made common cause against the Czar's impudent assertions, though each negotiated with Russia separately. The manner in which the Muscovite diplomatists, by their untenable assertion of jurisdiction over the waters of the North Pacific, and by their success in fomenting "bad blood" between Great Britain and the United States, obtained treaty advantages which Russia would never have secured otherwise, are matters of history. But by her treaty with the United States Russia bound herself to make no settlement south of latitude 54° 40', while by her treaty with Great Britain Russia obtained a boundary line and cession of 300 miles of coast. In each of these treaties Russia abandoned the claim to make the North Pacific a close sea. Here are the first articles in the two treaties:—

*Treaty with the United States, 1824.*

ARTICLE 1.—It is agreed that in any part of the great ocean, commonly called the Pacific Ocean or South Sea, the respective citizens or subjects of the high contracting powers shall be neither disturbed nor restrained, either in navigation or in fishing, or in the power of resorting to the coasts upon points which may not already have been occupied, for the purpose of trading with the natives, saving always the restrictions and conditions determined by the following articles.

*Treaty with Great Britain, 1825.*

ARTICLE 1.—It is agreed that the respective subjects of the high contracting parties shall not be troubled or molested in any part of the ocean commonly called the Pacific Ocean, either in navigating the same in fishing therein, or in landing at such parts of the coasts as shall not have been already occupied, in order to trade with the natives under the restrictions and conditions specified in the following articles:—

What were the "restrictions and conditions specified?" In the treaty between Great Britain and Russia, which is still in force, Behring Sea is not mentioned as distinct or separate from the Pacific Ocean. The second article of the treaty reads thus:—

"In order to prevent the right of navigation or fishing exercised upon the ocean by the high contracting parties from becoming the pretext for an illicit commerce, it is agreed that the subjects of His Britannic Majesty shall not land at any place where there may be a Russian establishment without the permission of the Governor or Commandant, and, on the other hand, that Russian subjects shall not land without permission at any British establishment on the north-west coast."

The third, fourth and fifth articles of the treaty describe the boundary line between the Russian and British possessions on the continent of America and prohibit either nation from forming "establishments" within the territory assigned to the other.

The sixth article secures to British subjects "from whatever quarter they may arrive, whether from the