

# THE WEEK.

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## THE WEEK:

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All articles, contributions, and letters on matters pertaining to the editorial department should be addressed to the Editor, and not to any person who may be supposed to be connected with the paper.

ROUND Robin, it is already whispered, will be likely to make its appearance before the close of the long session at Ottawa. This term suggests reproach. It certainly does not comport well with the dignity of members of the Commons and Senate of the Dominion to enter more or less slyly and shamefacedly into agreement to support each other in demanding and receiving from the public funds entrusted to them a larger sum than that to which they are legally entitled, and which, by the very fact of seeking and accepting election, or appointment, they tacitly agreed to accept as remuneration for their services. It is, indeed, very doubtful whether, in helping themselves, should they do so in this way, to an additional allowance from the public funds of which they are the trustees, they would not come perilously near to a betrayal of trust. On the other hand there is much to be said in favour of a more liberal remuneration of our members of Parliament. One thousand dollars is certainly a very inadequate equivalent to a successful business or professional man for the time and money spent at Ottawa during a three or four months' session. The primary question is, we suppose, that of the principle on which this allowance is given. Is it in payment for services, or simply an indemnity for loss? Indemnity is, we believe, the favourite term, and the theory is, we suppose, that the one thousand dollars is given simply as an equivalent for actual outlay in the public service, implying that the patriotic citizens who aspire to serve the State in the high capacity of Senators, or Commoners, would scorn to accept vulgar cash as payment for their services. But is not such a theory wrong in principle and mischievous in practice? There are, of course, many members of both Houses whose time is so valuable, in the pecuniary sense, that it would be out of the question for the State to attempt to pay them an equivalent. Such members can afford to serve their country at their own charges. But there are many others—and these not always the least useful—who can ill afford to spend so large a portion of their year at Ottawa, without some reasonable equivalent. Ought she to be willing to accept their services at

an actual pecuniary loss to themselves? Can the country not afford to pay the man whose annual income, as the result of his labour, is, say \$2,000 to \$5,000 a year, a fair average equivalent for his time and services? And would it not, as a matter of policy, be in her own interest to do so? Does not the consciousness that he is making a pecuniary sacrifice which he can ill afford tend to dampen the energies of many a member, and render him less diligent and punctual in the discharge of his Parliamentary duties? May it not, in some cases, even add to the temptation to try to make something indirectly out of the position? We throw out these questions in the interests of justice to all concerned. It may be that Canada could not afford to pay her members of Parliament on so liberal a scale as her wealthy neighbour, viz., \$5,000 a session, and that it would be unwise to do so, if she could. But is there any good reason why she should not double the present allowance, or even be as liberal as Australia and make it \$2,500 a year? Would not a fair remuneration like that tend to bring into public life an abler and better class of men—many of whom cannot afford the sacrifice involved under present conditions?

THERE is no indication, save perhaps in the Committee of Privileges and Elections, that the processes of investigation which are prolonging the Parliamentary Session are nearing their end. On the other hand rumours are still rife touching new charges to be formulated, new investigations to be demanded. Meanwhile, though no one can foretell in what state the passing of this spasm of purification will leave Ministers and parties, it is not too soon, perhaps, to begin to enquire, What of the future? It is all very well and very right that all the light possible should be thrown upon whatever is wrong or rotten in the management of the present administration, and that wrongdoers should be exposed and punished without regard to social position or political affiliations. This is what Premier Abbot has declared himself and his Cabinet resolved to do. But effects indicate causes. It is obvious that the disgraceful state of affairs revealed in different Departments must be the result of radical defects in the system of which the disgraceful doings are the outcome. It would be comparatively useless to expend so much time and money in unearthing the consequences, if the fruitful causes are to continue to operate unchecked. Realizing, no doubt, this fact, the Premier laid before the Senate the other day, in brief outline, the course he proposes to pursue in order to effect a permanent reform in the public service. So far as appears, the two main features of his plan are the appointment of a Commission to investigate thoroughly the system or systems at present in vogue, to report on their defects and to recommend the changes which they may find to be necessary for the protection of the public interests and the national honour, and the appointment of a permanent Inspector, or Overseer, who shall be in a position somewhat like that of the Auditor-General, in respect to official independence, and who shall have power to enquire into, oversee and direct the business methods of the departments. These measures may be very good so far as they go, but they fail to go far enough. The value of the Commission will depend entirely upon the kind of men who may compose it, but there can be no doubt that the report of a competent board of enquiry would be of immense service to a Government honestly bent on reform.

THERE is room for difference of opinion with respect to the second proposal. Some may doubt whether the best way to secure greater departmental honesty and vigilance would be to take the burden of responsibility off the shoulders of the Heads of Departments and transfer it to an outsider. But be that as it may, it is pretty clear that such a remedy would not go to the roots of the disease. Those roots are embedded in the patronage system, of which even Mr. Senecal bitterly and justly complains. So long as individuals are chosen for positions, high or low, in the public service, on any other grounds than those of merit, which includes, of course, moral character, so long it will be vain to hope for a thoroughly honest and competent public service. Nor is it too much to say, in view of the debate which took place in Committee of Supply the other day on

certain items for post-office buildings—and we refer to this as simply a minor illustration of what is well known to be going on continually in the matter of appropriations and subsidies, all over the Dominion—that it is useless to attempt to reform the offices at Ottawa, while the public funds are being distributed on party principles and for political ends by the Government itself. Like Ministers, like subordinates, may be accepted as a safe political maxim. The Minister, or the Government, that recommends an appropriation from the public funds or any other ground than that of the public interest, pure and simple, is doing the same thing, only on a vastly larger scale, as the engineer who recommends a contract in return for a "consideration," or the Superintendent who accepts a commission on the amount of a purchase. Herein is one of the inherent and seemingly ineradicable vices of the party system. So long as it is in the power of the Government of the day, by means of its partisan majority, to reward faithful adherents, or to bribe vacillating electors, by offices of honour and emolument in the case of individuals, and by appropriations from the National Exchequer in the case of constituencies and Provinces, it is almost useless to hope for justice or purity in political life. The temptation is too strong to be resisted by any but the phenomenally virtuous politician, and even his judgment will often be at fault under the influences brought to bear to sway it. We submit, therefore, that the first and fundamental problem for a Government Commission on political reform to solve should be that of devising some competent and impartial Board, or Bureau, some permanent Committee or Commission, or some other practical device, for the initiation of all kinds of appropriations and subsidies. Reform in the use of patronage in appointments might be secured by the simple method of abolishing such patronage and leaving all appointments to the public service absolutely in the hands of an impartial Civil Service Commission, subject to fixed laws governing examination and promotion. But *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* Who can devise a plan to prevent the Ministers themselves from betraying their trust as keepers of the national purse and manipulating the public funds in the interests of party? This is the "crime of crimes" in our national politics. This is the perennial source of corruption and demoralization in our public life. What is the Government going to do about it? What does the Opposition propose?

"THAT paradise of Nature" was the strong expression used by Col. Howard Vincent, in his address before the Toronto Board of Trade, to characterize the Maritime Provinces of the Dominion. The phrase is, of course, hyperbolic, as we suppose it was intended to be, yet it fittingly and opportunely reminds us of the fact that in the Atlantic Provinces of the Dominion there are natural beauties of sky and landscape rivalling those of Italy, and natural resources of soil and mine, river and sea, which need only fuller development in order to make that section of Canada one of the richest and most progressive portions of this rich continent. Hence it is a wise policy of the Government which has brought it about that two farmer-delegates of high standing and reputation are just now visiting those Provinces on behalf of the agriculturists of England and Scotland. The report of these visitors, after full investigation, will supply the needed supplement to that of their predecessors, who embodied the results of their tour of observation over the Western Provinces of the Dominion in the excellent reports which appeared a few months since. The westward tendency of the populations of the older sections of both Canada and the United States is the result of natural laws and influences too strong to be counteracted by any forces which society or the State can bring to bear. Nor can there be any doubt that the tendency of the movement is, on the whole, beneficial. What is needed to make it thoroughly salutary in building up the nation is that the places left vacant in the older Provinces by the many who obey the westward impulse, shall be promptly filled by incomers of the right stamp. Considering the great stream of immigration that is constantly flowing towards this continent from the Old World, there seems to be no good reason why two thrifty families from the United Kingdom should not be