

# THE BRITISH COLUMBIA COMMERCIAL JOURNAL

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## FIRE PROTECTION.

As will have been noticed, the Fire Underwriters have resolved to increase the insurance rates in Montreal, recent experiences having demonstrated that the existing charge was not, in view of the losses incurred, sufficient. Unless we have a continuance of the luck for it is little else that we have had in the past, it may be that we shall be in a similar position. We are therefore, glad to notice that Chief Deasy and the Fire Wardens have given the subject some attention, and have resolved to report in favor of recommending the obtaining of additional appliances, the strengthening of the force and the establishment of well equipped additional engine houses to meet the requirements of the outlying sections in Victoria West, the eastern district above Cook Street and at James Bay. For these purposes it is proposed to submit a by-law to the people, who, it is to be hoped will appreciate the necessities of the situation, and vote in favor of the departure. There are other fire department recommendations, which have been so far left in abeyance, upon which we should like to see the council take action. Fire insurance at a low cost is a great desideratum, but it can only be obtained by a community doing its full share towards lessening the risks of loss.

## ISLAND AND MAINLAND.

Those who upon the mainland desire to stir up strife appear, we regret to say, to have for the time being got their innings. In some sense they have played a strong game; but they failed to score, possibly because they were afraid to go far enough. It may here be stated that it appears to be only a faction of the population of the greater half of this province who are anxious to get away from Vancouver Island. The reader of Rev. Mr. Maxwell's manifesto will remark how insignificant and unimportant are the counts of his indictment, their lack of point being to a certain extent made up for by the virulence of his own individual deliverances as well as those of Rev. Mr. Pedley. The other orators do not appear to have been able to hold their own with the clerical denunciators, who would seem to have been by no means backward in making use by signs, if not by verbal expressions, of the coercive stock arguments the field for whose exercise is generally the pulpit.

What right, we should like to know, has Mr. Maxwell—or any other man—if he be

correctly reported, to consign the premier, his colleagues and supporters to the lower regions? That kind of thing was tolerable on account of ignorance in what are termed the dark ages; but its presentation on a political platform nowadays deserves to be visited far more heavily by the church courts than the departures of the men upon whom the heresy hunters are accustomed to pounce because they dare to think. We have yet to learn that the movement is of much more importance than that attached to it by mere agitators and disappointed politicians. Should it take more definite shape, it will then be time to discuss whatever issues may be drawn.

## THE LABOR BUREAU.

It is rumored that a certain commission merchant is to receive, or has already received, the chief position created under the act to provide for a Board of Arbitration and Bureau of Labor Statistics. If this be the case, the parties principally concerned, the local employers of labor and the workmen themselves will be greatly disappointed. Irrespective of the fact that the business which he was accustomed to carry on has been to a great extent antagonistic to native industry and that probably the individual in question only contemplates going out of trade in view of the changed conditions that have been brought about under the National Policy of protection, it is difficult to see what qualification he can have for the position to which he appears to have successfully aspired. As a middleman, what can he know of the processes by which the raw material has been developed into the finished article, or of those little misunderstandings between capital and labor which come in for almost daily adjustment in the workshop, and which, if they do not require statesmanship to regulate, demand tact and delicate manipulation, so as to avoid a controversy that with but little provocation might end in a strike?

We have no doubt that the reported appointee and what are considered to be the most eligible applicants for the other positions created by this particular act and by several others of the statutes of last session are in their way most excellent gentlemen and have their own special claims upon those in authority over James Bay; but that is not all—the public whom they serve and the interests affected have a right to be considered. No one will say for a moment that there are not many merchants in Victoria and elsewhere in the province upon whom both capital and labor could rely not only to do justice to them to the measure of their ability and actuated by a thorough desire to do that which is right between man and man. But, in cases like the present, the desire to do right cannot count for everything. For work like this, there must be special adaptability special training—and, without this, neither capital nor labor can have reasonable faith in the outcome.

It has been said that no man can serve two masters; but, in a case like the one referred to, both have to be served by the exercise of common sense and a thorough determination not to swerve from that which is right. The head of the Board of

Arbitration and Statistics must not be a lawyer, for instead of there being manifested that narrowness which frequently finds its most successful development in hair splitting, there must be a broadness that can take in the subject not only in its immensity, but grasp and appreciate the little points which to the one side are as things of nothing, while, by the other, they are regarded, if only as straws, still as something which when collected and put together make a bundle of considerable weight. The commissioner must not be a middle man—a handler of the products of others—whose sole consideration has been whether or not the competition or rather lack of it warrants him in making a twenty-five or fifty cent commission or profit as he might, perhaps, prefer to call it.

It is not a mere artisan or a manufacturer only whom the situation demands. To perform their duties, the officers of the department must be acquainted with the entire situation if they do not thoroughly appreciate it. The workmen who constitute so important an element in the electorate claim that they must not be made to take second place to the ideas of the capitalist. These should all be taken together and their merits respectively valued, the parties to the issue being themselves placed upon a common footing, the scales being equally balanced before the respective claims and arguments are placed on one or other side.

The Victoria and Sidney Railway has changed hands, and construction work will be begun almost immediately, the road, it is said, to be run in connection with the E. & N. R'y.

After numerous delays in connection with the enterprise which appeared for a long time as if it were about to be snuffed out by the Dominion authorities, the contract has been let for the much talked of and much wanted Nelson and Fort Sheppard Railway, which will afford an inlet to and an outlet from a most important section of mining country. Mr. Larson, the contractor, built the Great Northern, (Jim Hill's) railway in connection with which it is the intention to run it. The entire work is to be completed by October 1st. At least it is the promise of Mr. Corbin that trams will be running into Nelson by that time.

The Behring Sea arbitrators continue their sessions in Paris, and counsel for the United States have delivered themselves of long winded addresses of which the end has not yet been reached. We are much surprised to see that the Board has thrown out the supplementary statements of Great Britain which were prepared during the visit of experts to the sealing grounds last season. This, we presume, is because the Americans, who also had their agents out, have comparatively little to offer, the British rejoinder destroying its entire value. Some sort of a technicality raised by the Americans caused the arbitrators to rule out the statements, though we notice that it will be possible to introduce all or most of them in the argument when the British counsel take the floor.