

Political Peregrinations

THE people of British Columbia are watching the peregrinations of the various political leaders with a good deal of quiet amusement. The premier, accompanied by two of his ministers and Mr. Hold-Back Thomson of Victoria, first toured the northern part of the province, and, according to his own account, received considerable encouragement therefrom. His point of view is that the constituencies through which he passed will all return a solid Conservative phalanx to the next parliament. He says that the discontent aroused by hard times has passed away and that the Hon. W. J. Bowser & Co. is once more doing good business in the old way. The premier is convinced that the electorate is disgusted with the tactics of the Liberal opposition. He lays much emphasis on the fact that investigations failed to discover anything in the shape of "graft" in connection with the administration of past years. He is apparently gratified that not a member of the Conservative government has been put behind the bars of the penitentiary, and evidently considers that moral issues can be evaded if only the letter of the law is observed. He continually reiterates in all his speeches and interviews that the Liberals "discovered nothing." That shows his obtuseness and his complete lack of consideration for public opinion. Judging by his own words, he fully expected the Liberals to prove that the Conservative government of which he is leader, had been guilty of embezzlement or fraud on a great scale. As they did not prove any such thing, he thinks he has gained a clean bill of health.

THE PREMIER'S LITTLE HAND

As a matter of fact, the Liberals have proved a very great deal in the course of their investigations. They have proved how patronage has been worked to the utmost limit; how contractors have had to "see" the local Conservative committees before getting or letting work, and how Messrs. Matson, Hamilton Read and Alexander all received great benefit from their connection with the government. There was no need to investigate the Dominion Trust scandal. That cannot be hidden even under the mire of plugging. Premier Bowser naturally relies on this mire as a means of enveloping the Liberal attack. It may be taken for granted that the premier has by no means lost sight of the plugging investigation as a political asset. It appeals to him and it is more than likely that at the last moment he will try and use it to swing public sentiment against the Liberals. If he can keep his fingers on John Scott and two or three days before election get him to make an affidavit stating where he obtained the funds for the plugging, which could be published in all the newspapers, it would be the sort of campaign material he would thoroughly relish. The Liberals cannot blame Mr. Bowser if he does this. John Scott would perhaps tell a fine story from the Conservative point of view, if he were paid to do so. The whole question is whether this story is worth a round sum of money to the Conservatives. If so, they better keep a close watch on Mr. John Scott and at the last moment get his story and make it as public as possible—if it happens to suit them. If it does not suit them but proves that Mr. Macdonald himself knew nothing of the plugging

they better, through their friend, Mr. John Salavan, watch Scott and prevent the Liberals using any story he may have to tell.

TAKE NO CHANCES

It is rather wearisome being obliged to mention this matter almost continually, but, unfortunately, it is the premier's trump card. He hopes to win the election in the plugging investigation. During his tour he has probably thoroughly realised that he is on the brink of disaster unless he can change public sentiment by some such factor. As far as Vancouver is concerned, he still believes he can win his seat, and that public sentiment, which was so much against him at the bye-elections, has undergone a complete change. Another Conservative convention was held and Mr. Welch retired from the ticket in favor of Dr. McGuire. Vancouver will probably split the ticket as well as the Conservative party. Under present circumstances, it is nauseating but probably true, that the Conservatives will make all the capital they can out of the plugging allegedly done at the last election by the Liberals. They hope to make that mud stick somehow. It is undoubtedly a feather in Mr. Macdonald's cap that Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper believes in him, and it is generally acknowledged that Mr. Macdonald himself seems to be prepared to face the music quite boldly. It is said that in the whole course of his political career, he has never spoken with such passion or eloquence as he has done since the scandal was investigated. He declares his conscience is clear and those who heard him believe him. As has been said in these columns before, if he knows of anything which can throw light on the situation, if he can give out a perfectly frank statement of his connection with John Scott, it will pay him to do so. He is dealing with an extremely unscrupulous and shrewd man, as his opponent, and does not want to take any chances.

WILL SWEAR BUT NOT BET

So much for Mr. Bowser's tour and its results. His island tour was hardly a success. It is said that at Duncan's the people would not listen to him. In the north they listened to him, but their enthusiasm does not seem to have been overwhelming. On his tour of southern districts he met with a very varying reception. He will probably speak in Vancouver during the month and his faithful followers will no doubt endeavor to stimulate enthusiasm which, truth to tell, they do not feel. Their sentiment may be summed up by stating that they would be exceedingly glad if the premier would transfer his endeavors to Kamloops and not run in Vancouver. They endorsed his nomination with much enthusiasm and made eulogistic speeches regarding his services to the party. But he is a terrible handicap, and they know it. Every one of them would swear he will retain his seat, but not many of them would care to bet very heavily on their oath.

MR. BREWSTER'S FRANKNESS

Mr. Brewster, the Liberal leader, and his lieutenant, Mr. Macdonald, opened the Liberal campaign in Vancouver recently. It is difficult to judge public sentiment by such