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VICTORIA, TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 1893.

PROVINCIAL BUILDINGS.

We note that, although the matter had not been formally debated in the Provincial Legislature, reference has been made to the subject of the public buildings which it is contemplated to erect in this city on the other side of James Bay. It is evident that to a certain extent sectional considerations are likely to be imported into the discussion when it does come up, and already in Vancouver a resolution has been adopted adverse to the proposal to expend \$600,000 or perhaps more in the city of Victoria on the proposed work. Mr. Cotton and one or two other Mainland men, while expressing themselves as adverse to the contemplated expenditure at the present time, strongly deprecate the idea that they are influenced by a desire to take the seat of government away from Victoria. This being their position and, as we believe that not a few members from the other side of the Gulf of Georgia are of this way of thing, we contend that no better time than the present could be chosen for beginning to build.

In the first place we may say that new government buildings are absolutely necessary, the additions and improvements that are constantly being made being only like putting a patch of new cloth on an old garment, whose appearance is very little improved by the change but which at the same time is actually made more susceptible to the influences which bring about its final destruction. Moreover, even the increased accommodations are not equal to the requirements and, no matter what may be done, ere long new quarters must be had. Any one with half an eye will see that the province ought to build.

Then as for a site, one is already possessed and occupied that cannot be surpassed, if indeed, equalled in the entire province. We already own it, and to remove to a new location would require two transactions—the selling of the present property and the purchase of another. It may be said that the land we now have would bring a high figure and that out of its transference a considerable profit might be made, while a place elsewhere might be purchased at a much lower figure. We reply that the James Bay land is worth quite as much to the province as to any possible purchaser, and so soon as it were known that the Government had decided to build elsewhere the land which had been selected would, whether it was worth

it or not, "appreciate in value" immensely. In fact every dollar that could be exacted would be insisted on, so that the outcome of the two transactions might be expected to be little short of a pecuniary loss.

From the point of view of accessibility, there is little to choose between Victoria and either Vancouver or New Westminster; but were this point made to prevail to the advantage of either the Terminal City or her sister on the Fraser, it would not be long before Kamloops or some other city in the interior presented its claims and might by a similar process of reason obtain the honor and advantage—for some advantage it certainly is—of being chosen as the capital of British Columbia. Or it might be that for a change we should have the experience of perambulating parliaments as was the case in Upper and Lower Canada before Confederation—the expense and inconvenience of which are well understood by many people now living on the Mainland who hail from the provinces in question.

And, as another alternative, it might be that the way would, by lack of hearty agreement on this matter, be opened for a division of the province into its original parts—a point which we notice has been mooted by a new addition to the list of serials with which the Mainland has been favored.

Talk of this kind, however, is idle. We want, if that were possible, even more consolidation than we now have. In common with the rest of the Dominion, we have too much provincial legislation, our bills on this account being heavier than we can afford. But, under existing circumstances, even should it be true that Victoria is rather remote—which we do not for a moment admit—it was its remoteness that caused Ottawa to be chosen as the capital of the Dominion, and it was a kindred consideration that led our United States neighbors to hit upon Washington as the centre of the legislative and administrative system—an argument that cannot certainly be made to apply anywhere else.

Then, after these preliminaries, taking it for granted that Victoria is the best location for the seat of Government, we hold that no time better than—even if as good as—the present could be chosen in which to begin operations. Money is cheap and the credit of the Province is such that she can borrow funds on the best terms that the market offers. Times are dull and the number of unemployed in the Province is very considerable. Apropos to this we take the following from the *Colonist*:

"It is impossible to read the account which our reporter gives of the condition of the unemployed in this city and the way in which they bear the hardships which they are called upon to endure without admiring their courage, their independence and their manliness generally. The men, too, are more cheerful and hopeful than one might expect to find them. They do not whine, neither do they seem inclined to blame the country or their fellow-citizens for the hard times that press upon them so severely."

This extract is sufficient to show that matters in this city are more than ordinarily hard, and renders it unnecessary to enter into a description of the actual situation. We may add that in other cities of

the Province there are many idle men, the distribution among whom the value of the labor required to put up the public buildings would be a boon that would rescue them from dire extremities. It is no uncommon thing for governments and municipalities in times of distress to have works performed even in advance of actual requirements in order to prevent distress and suffering. More than enough white men could be found in the province bordering on a condition of poverty to supply the labor required, and they should be employed on the work, not through contractors, but under the supervision of the government officials—the best working plans and specifications being prepared preliminary to commencing operations.

It was expected that the Victoria sewerage works would have furnished employment to considerable home labor; but many strangers were brought in and the bread was thus taken out of the mouths of those who belong to us. We want to see the Provincial buildings begun without delay and carried to completion by home labor exclusively. This is the general sentiment—Hon. Mr. Beaven not excepted, unless he has abandoned his former pretensions.

AN INSOLVENCY ACT STILL WANTED.

The *Trade Bulletin*, of Montreal, complains very properly that though the passage of a uniform bankruptcy law for the Dominion is of far more importance to the country at large than any measure brought forward during the present session of the House of Commons, there is very little chance of such a Bill being made law. We may go further and say that there will be no such measure this year. The Government are afraid of dealing with the subject. They recognize, however, that the interests of solvent traders are seriously imperilled by the existing state of affairs and that there prevails a condition of what has been described as legalized robbery which is working its way even into this province whose fair commercial fame has stood so high.

In several instances, notably one within the last few days, an insolvent whose credit was worked out in this province, turned his attention to Montreal, Toronto and American trade centres and, having given his brother a mortgage on his entire lock, stock and barrel, ran the whole length of his tether and then closed or was closed up, leaving nothing for any one, it is understood, except the privileged claimant or claimants. No wonder people are asking whether or not, in view of the absence of an insolvent act, it is safe to give any kind of credit at all. The paper which we quote on the general principle pithily remarks that "the negligence of Parliament in spite of the memorials and petitions which have repeatedly been addressed to the assembly lends color to the statement recently made by a prominent wholesaler in the east that as there are members on both sides of the House who have already gone through the mill and might at some time have to go through again, they do not want the present bankrupt regime disturbed."