

The Commercial

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CANADIAN LEGISLATIVE TENDENCIES.

Now that the Dominion Parliament has been prorogued and the results of the past session's labors can be fairly reviewed, the question comes to the front: What are the tendencies of Canadian legislation? It may be difficult to define these, although at first sight it may be assumed, that a Government in power with a tyrant and overwhelming majority at its back, should pursue a policy regarding which there could be no mistake as to its tendency. But, after all, the majority which supports Sir John A. MacDonald and his colleagues is made up of many discordant elements, embracing the opposite extremes of religious bigotry, and almost as opposite points in local interests, so that conciliation is a very necessary commodity to secure their cohesion.

It is singular that with a support gathered from such varied sources, the most prominent tendency with our present rulers at Ottawa should be in the direction of centralization of power. Yet such is unmistakably the case. The aim is centralization, while the means of reaching the same may, and have been varied to please a party worthy, on account of its power, of such consideration, or coerce another not worthy of it. The aim was as evident in acceding to the unjust demands of Quebec, as it was in ignoring those of Manitoba. By paying the unjust demands of the former the Ottawa Government secured a stronger hold upon its railway dictation in an eastern province, while by ignoring Manitoba's just demands, the local railway rights of the Northwest were for a time, at least, effectually crushed. Power was paid for in one instance and unwarrantably usurped in the other.

Subtlety is another very important means to be employed in gaining this end, and it was made plain in the General Railways' bill of the member for Winnipeg, one of the echoes of Sir John's Government. The measure in question aimed directly at the root of provincial railway rights, by offering to branch railways, chartered at Ottawa, a subsidy denied to those chartered by provincial Governments, carrying thus a generous appearance upon its face, but at the same time

striking a heavy blow at provincial liberty.

Daring is another means employed by Sir John's Government in reaching centralization, and the \$22,500,000 guarantee to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company was the very acme of the same. By the completion of that road from the Atlantic to the Pacific our Ottawa rulers hope to forge the last links that will hold half a continent within their grasp, to be ruled or misruled by them with perfect impunity.

Other means employed in this aim of centralization might be cited, but it is unnecessary to bring them forward. The aim cannot be mistaken by the most obtuse political economist, while its justice and its wisdom must be called in question by every true friend of Canada. The days are gone when Imperial Caesar heralded his decrees from Rome, and half a world obeyed; and a system by which any man, or combination of men could so govern a people seems unsuited to the soil of this continent at least. In America rulers must rule with the will of the people, and for the interests of the people; and it is difficult to see, how a Government at Ottawa, which fills every office within its gift with its own creatures to the furthest limit of the Dominion, can be ruling in such a manner, and with such a spirit. Canada, as a nation, cannot be cemented together with blood and iron, in the old style of binding an empire. It can only become unified by a careful study of the interests of every element within it, and a policy which will further one and all of them, and that can never be associated with a power centralizing policy.

The recent speech at Montreal of the Governor-General shows how great minds like his can grasp the situation after a very short study of Canadian affairs. A delegation of as much power of local government as confederation will admit of. His Excellency foresees it necessary to make Canada united and contented. It cannot be said that the policy of the present Dominion Government has any tendency in that direction, and their rule cannot but produce discontent and discordance. These too often develop into feelings of a much more dangerous character, and instances are not wanting in history where they have ended in sectional hate. It is yet time enough to prevent any such unwished for developments, and prevention can only be reached

through a broad and liberal policy of respecting local rights.

Canada and its interests have been very aptly likened to the revolving arrow upon an old-fashioned wheel of fortune. While revolution around the central pivot may go on seemingly smoothly and regularly, it is impossible to tell where the extremities may stop. To give it with certainty, a guiding hand is required far away from the central pivot.

SHORTENING BUSINESS HOURS.

There is at present on foot in mercantile circles a movement to introduce the Saturday half-holiday in Winnipeg, or at least to make it general in wholesale circles, for it has been in force with some houses for months back. A movement of this kind is no doubt one in the right direction, and should be carried out as soon as it can be made consistent with the interests of trade. There are, however, greater difficulties in carrying out this much needed reform in a business centre of a new country than in an old city where every department of business is down to working like the wheels of a well regulated piece of machinery. In a country ever changing, and steadily increasing in its business aspect, the demands upon the time of those employed in mercantile pursuits must necessarily be made in a rather erratic manner, and cause much greater care and trouble to get the hours of labor down to a minimum, consistent with the health and comfort of such people. The difficulty, although it exists in wholesale circles, is not so great as in retail business, and its less frequent existence is due almost entirely to the desire of wholesale merchants to study the interests of their employees. Such merchants, as a rule, have gone through all the grades of their calling, and know practically how to secure the comfort and respect of their employees at the same time. This is made very evident frequently, when we find such men in their offices, away on into the hours of night, working laboriously while their employees are enjoying the hours usually devoted to leisure. It may be confidently expected that men of that stamp will use their every endeavor to reduce to a minimum the business hours of their employees, and reach a Saturday half-holiday as well as other beneficial arrangements with as little delay as possible.

When we leave wholesale and come in to retail circles we cannot say the same