The Colonist.

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THE SEMI-WEEKLY COLONIST

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THE LABOR QUESTION

The Victoria Laborers' Protective Association is likely to be asked to pass rather an extraordinary resolution. It will be asked to declare that the Board of Trade proposes to have its committee "hold secret sessions to investigate the alleged scarcity of labor and from the result of its secret investigation to compile a report and forward the same with petitions from other sources to His Excellency the Governor-General, for the avowed purpose of having the prohibitory $500 head tax on Chinese reduced." We do not know who is responsible for the deception that has been practised to induce the committee of the Association to draw up such a resolution, and perhaps it does not make any difference, for the personality of the individual counts for nothing. The important thing is the deceit contained in the proposed resolution. The discussion of the labor question has been carried on in a very gingerly fashion on the part of those who are not connected with labor organizations. A notion seems to be abroad that workingmen must be treated as children, and must be humored in all their ideas. If they choose to say a thing is so, they must not be contradicted, lest on some occasion they may deal out vengeance politically upon the person, who takes ground against their extreme views, or some one whom that person may support. We protest that workingmen are not children in intellect any more than they are in stature, but that they are quite as amenable to reason as any one else, when once they are rightly informed. The Colonist recently had a call from one of them. He wished to protest against the investigation proposed by the Board of Trade at the suggestion of the Montreal Board, because he said that the whole movement—a movement which is going on from one end of Canada to the other—was nothing more nor less than a scheme of the Messrs. Bullen to compel their men to work for nine hours. He seemed to believe this thoroughly. He refused to concede that the members of the Board of Trade may have honest convictions upon the subject, and when told that most of those persons, who wanted an investigation were opposed to the introduction of Chinese, and favored the investigation in the hope that some better plan could be evolved, he politely said that he did not believe it. The workingmen are being scandalously misled. They are being taught that there is on foot a plot to reduce their wages and make them work long hours. They are being persuaded that every man, who does not take off his coat to earn his living, unless he is a labor agitator, is their natural enemy. They are being impressed with the idea that there is a necessary and ceaseless strife between employers and employed, and that the only remedy for existing conditions is what is tantamount to a return to barbarism, although it is not so termed by those who advocate it. There is nothing more wicked than the teachings which workingmen are daily receiving. We have not a word to say against agitation for the betterment of the conditions under which all people live. We believe that a man should get all that the work he is engaged in is worth. We favor labor unions. We respect the opinions of men who toil, as far as they relate to their own work, more highly than the opinions of any one else. But what we do protest against is the constant deceit that is practised, whereby workingmen are made to think that they are slaves. Usually the man, who tells them that they are "wage slaves," earns his living chiefly with his mouth. He is other than a worse parasite upon labor than ever the holder of watered stock in a corporation is; for he lives by agitation, and to be successful he must deprive men, women and children of the necessaries of life, by compelling the wage-earners to stop working. We have every sympathy with the honest endeavors of workingmen to improve their conditions; we believe that they ought to be treated by their employers as liberally as business conditions will permit, but we take the position that, when they approach the consideration of labor questions, they should not be misled as to the facts.

Referring especially to the investigation proposed by the Board of Trade, it was not intended to be a secret investigation, but on the contrary every one was invited to assist the committee in reaching the facts. It was not intended that the committee should prepare a report and send it forward to Ottawa secretly, for any report made will have to be submitted by the Board, where it will be discussed, and it will be published in the press, where every one can see what it may recommend. The investigation was not ordered either with the avowed or secret intention of recommending a reduction of the Chinese head tax. Yet the workingmen of Victoria are to be asked to go on record as making these incorrect statements. How is it possible for a good understanding ever to be arrived at between employers and employed, if there is to be such misrepresentation as this?

The Laborers' Protective Association proposes to ask for a royal commission to investigate the subject. This would be very much better than a committee of the Board of Trade, especially as it would have the authority to examine witnesses upon oath. If the appointment of such a commission can be brought about, it would be a very excellent thing.

Mr. F. W. Morse, General Manager of the Grand Trunk Pacific, seems to think that his company cannot carry out its contract with the government unless Oriental labor is admitted into the country. There is nothing to prevent the Grand Trunk Pacific from getting all the Chinese labor it wants. It only has to put up the money for the head tax. It has, or ought to have, a guarantee of $5,000,000 in the hands of the Dominion government that it will complete the railway by 1911. This sum will pay the head tax on 10,000 Chinamen, and as matters stand it is for the company to consider whether it will forfeit the money or import Chinamen; that is, if the road cannot be completed in time without them. With all respect to Mr. Morse and other people, who think we ought to have a lot of Chinese in the country, we do not believe that half an effort has been made to secure white labor. Mr. Morse says that his company is endeavoring to get 20,000 laborers from England, Scotland and Russia. There must be many more laborers than that available in those countries, and before the barrier against Chinese labor is lowered in the slightest degree, let us be sure that such European labor cannot be got. Even if it cannot be obtained, it would be better to go more slowly than to fill up the country with Chinamen.

THE SUNDAY LAW

The Montreal Gazette, speaking of the Sunday Observance law says: "The probability is that, except for what they see in print, the classes most concerned will hardly know that a new Sunday law has been put on the federal statute book, and this altogether aside from any conflict with the laws of the province which will tend to make for uncertainty." The Mail and Empire says:

The Act rests upon the opinion which the Attorney-General may entertain with respect to it. That functionary may allow it to be enforced or may refuse to be guided by it. As a matter of fact, the authors of the law have said that they take no responsibility for it, but, on the contrary, turn it over to the Attorney-General of each province to adopt or reject as he sees fit. What the Attorney-General of a province will do with the authority so liberally given him it is difficult to determine. But it seems probable that there will be a protest against the interference with provincial rights which is involved in the placing of duties upon a provincial officer with whom the federal authorities have nothing to do, and over whom they have no control.

The protest will possibly take the form of a refusal by the officers in question to undertake the heavy responsibilities cast upon them. If the Attorney-General of a province declares that it is no part of his duty to administer or to refuse to administer a federal law, the entire subject will be carried back to the jurisdiction to which it belongs, and the federal government will have to show the responsibility for its own legislation. In that case a sound principle will be asserted. The idea of enacting a federal law, and then declaring that a provincial official shall say whether or not that law shall be a dead letter, is absurd, and it ought not to be tolerated.

VICTORIA'S WORST ENEMY.

The worst enemy that Victoria has today is the Daily Times, owned by Hon. William Templeman, Minister of Inland Revenue and representative of this city in the Dominion House of Commons. Yesterday in referring to one of its vagaries we used the epithet "silly." We withdraw it and substitute "malicious." To drag the question of rail-connection with the Mainland into local politics is little short of criminal, and it is especially so, seeing that in order to do so the Times deliberately misstates facts that are within the knowledge of all Victorians. The Times says: "To put the case plainly, the people of this district were assured that the golden opportunity had arrived, that if they elected the Premier and his supporters in this community rail connection with the Mainland was assured." We did not suppose that a newspaper in Canada would be guilty of publishing a statement so utterly devoid of truth as the sentence just quoted. It is absolutely and wholly false. No speaker on the government side gave any such assurance or anything that could be construed into such an assurance. The Colonist made two references to the subject in connection with the campaign. One was on January 30th, when we said that Mr. Eberts in a speech delivered at Boleskine Road school-house, had pledged himself to do all in his power to advance the project; that the question is not and cannot be a party one, that it needed some spokesman upon the floors of the legislature and that Mr. Eberts was eminently fitted to take that position. The second reference was the morning of election day. It was published in consequence of a declaration made by Mr. W. W. B. McInnes in Vancouver, to the effect that the Liberal party stood pledged to make that city the chief centre of population and business on the Pacific Coast, and was an appeal to the people of Victoria to elect candidates who were not so pledged. In neither article nor in any other article published in this paper was there anything which the most ingenious person can construe into an assurance that the election of Mr. McBride and his supporters would "assure" rail-connection with the Mainland. If the Times can discover a word in any article that ever appeared in the Colonist, if it can quote a sentence ever uttered by any government candidate during the last election, which, by the most forced construction that can be put upon language, can be made to mean that the election of Conservative candidates would secure the establishment of the connection referred to, let it quote the words. If it fails to do so, and it cannot do so, and if in view of such failure it fails to withdraw its statement quoted above, we shall reluctantly be compelled to brand it as deserving the contempt of all honorable men.

Nothing more hurtful to the city of Victoria than the attitude of the Times towards this project can be conceived. We are simply amazed that no one has sufficient influence with it to stay it in its foolish course. Will its friends never learn anything? Is not one lesson enough? Is it not sufficient to convert a majority of six hundred into a minority of six hundred by acts of folly, by ceaseless and senseless misrepresentation, by the imputation of false motives, by a policy of abuse and slander, by a refusal to voice the sentiments of the community on matters of great public interest? What do the Times and its friends want? Are they riding for a worse fall than the one they have already had? We have carefully abstained from any political references to this great project of rail-connection, and we do not intend to be exasperated by the Times into discussing it from a political standpoint, but we do not propose to be misrepresented, and to have an important proposal jeopardized by the publication of false statements without replying.

DOMESTIC HELP

In the Midland Counties of England domestic help receive from £12 to £16 a year without any restriction as to hours of labor. Here we pay Chinamen from £4 to £8 a month, and they expect to have a part of their time to themselves. Board is included in both instances. Some of the Chinamen are good domestic servants; some of them are not. They do not average as high in this respect as white servants. There is, we believe, plenty of employment in British Columbia for all the domestic servants likely to come here from England, at much better wages than they receive at home, and with more opportunities for them to attain better positions than domestic service anywhere offers. We are informed that there are many persons, well qualified for such service, who would gladly leave England for this province, if they knew of the chances which exist for procuring employment. The provincial government is negotiating with the Canadian Pacific Railway Company for a low fare from Liverpool to British Columbia points, which is likely to come into effect in May.

In view of the above facts, the Colonist wishes to do something towards assisting employers to obtain the domestic help they require. For this purpose a list will be opened in this office, upon which we will enter the names of such persons as may desire servants, as well as particulars as to the number wanted, the nature of the work that they will be expected to perform and the wages that will be paid, together with such other particulars as the applicant may consider important. This list will be copied and sent from time to time to Mr. J. H. Turner, Agent-General of British Columbia, in London, with the request that he will do what lies in his power to bring it under the notice of persons desiring such employment.

In order to assist in this matter further, the Colonist will at its own expense send copies of any issues of the paper, which may contain information bearing upon the question of domestic help, to such persons in the United Kingdom as it may be advised can make use of them to good advantage. Names may be either left at the Business Office of the paper or be sent in by mail. Applications for servants must be in writing and may be either sent in by mail or left at the office. Where the applicants are unknown to the Colonist, they are requested to give some reference.

RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION

The Times complains that the Colonist is writing columns urging the Dominion government to take action upon the report of the Royal Transportation Commission, as far as it relates to the establishment of railway communication between Vancouver Island and the Mainland. We suppose that this is intended as its answer to our request that it would define its position and that of its proprietor, Mr. Templeman, in respect thereto. It tells us that we should follow the example of the Toronto World and call upon the provincial government to take action. The Times is unwise in taking this position, and we shall regret very much if we are forced to assume that this is the attitude of Mr. Templeman. The government of which Mr. Templeman is a member, asked the authority of Parliament to appoint a Transportation Commission, specially charged with the duty of reporting upon new routes for commerce. That Commission came to Victoria and after examining into the question very thoroughly, recommended that the government should forthwith investigate the best route by which the ports of Vancouver Island can be reached from the plains of Alberta. This recommendation has not yet been acted upon, and although the report of the Commission has been before Parliament for discussion on several occasions, not a representative of British Columbia has made even a passing reference to this part of it. The Colonist and hundreds of individuals, including the Times Printing and Publishing Company and the esteemed editor of that paper, have united in a memorial asking Sir Wilfrid Laurier to give effect to this recommendation; but when we ask the Times to say in print that it wishes this to be done, it informs us that we ought to urge the provincial government to do the work. In our view of such things, if the provincial government should take upon itself to do what the Commission appointed by the federal government recommended the latter to do, it would lay itself open to the charge of encroaching upon the business of the Dominion government, that is unless it shall be made known definitely that the latter does not intend to do anything. If that should prove to be the case, if we are to understand that the Dominion government proposes to ignore the recommendation of its own Commission and believes that the provincial government should take the matter up, we shall have no hesitation in doing all we can to convince the provincial government that such action on its part ought to be forthcoming. For this reason we would be glad if the Times would inform us if it is speaking for Mr. Templeman in what it says. Are the views which it advances the views of the representative of this city in the House of Commons and the representative of the province in the Dominion cabinet? If we knew this was the case, we would then know how to act. If there is no hope that the Dominion government will give effect to the recommendation of the Commission, we will all have to see what can be done to persuade the provincial government to do something.

THE LEGISLATURE

The present legislature will compare very favorably with any of its predecessors; indeed we feel almost warranted in saying that it presents the appearance of being the best that has ever assembled in Victoria. Nevertheless, as the proof of the pudding is in the eating, we shall not make any rash statements on this point. It ought to be the best legislature because the people have more available men to make selections from, and because it is largely made of persons, who have taken an active part in the recent development of British Columbia. Whether for weal or woe, there are fewer white-haired members than have occupied seats in the House for a long time. Let us hope that this signifies neither a deficiency of wisdom or too great rashness. Our own view of the case is that it indicates that this is a province of young and active men. Much interest will be felt as to how the debating power of the present House will compare with that of its predecessors. Some people may be surprised when we say that there has not been enough discussion in the House. We do not say that there has not been enough talk, but there has certainly not been sufficient discussion of principles and measures. The people ought to be told more, not about what honorable members think of each other, but what is intended to be accomplished by measures laid before the House.

The programme in the Speech is an interesting one, and shows that the government is alive to the requirements of the province. The Times complains that there has been no reference to a railway policy. We do not profess to be in the confidence of the government upon this subject, but this we feel safe in saying, namely, that, in view of the very short time that has elapsed since the elections, it would be unreasonable to expect that any railway policy would be laid before the House at its opening. As to Mr. McBride's views upon the subject we are not informed, but if he is unwilling to submit to the legislature a railway policy consisting of a lot of "glittering generalities," and is waiting until he has had time to develop something, which is reasonably certain to be carried into effect, he will have the hearty endorsement of the whole province. The Colonist's view of a government's duty as to railway construction is that general legislation should never be passed, and that assistance should not be given to enable promoters to peddle charters in the money centres. Every proposal ought to be considered on its merits, and ought not to be considered at all, unless some responsible people stand ready to carry it into effect.

THE PROVINCIAL FINANCES

The revenue of the province for the fiscal year ending June 30th, 1906, was $3,044,442.49. In the previous year it was $2,920,461.71. Of this amount $306,076.66 was received from the Dominion, and the remainder was contributed from local sources. The largest single item last year was from timber royalties and licenses, the amount being $509,043.44, a gain of nearly $100,000 over the previous year. Next in order came the real property tax, which yielded $301,765.85, a gain of about $15,000. From land sales $189,391.92 were received, against $141,510.29 in the previous year, a very satisfactory gain. Timber leases yielded $100,499.83. Thus the timber industry contributed in all $609,492.23 to the revenue; from lands, including survey fees and rents, $301,676.48 were received, making the revenue from these two sources $920,168.71, or nearly as much as the total revenue of the province ten years ago. Nothing more clearly indicates the development of the country than this. Mining contributed in all $440,686.39; the revenue tax and the real and personal property taxes $616,074.31. From wild land taxes $101,308.02 were received. Thus we find that the principal sources of the provincial revenue are as follows:

From direct taxation	$616,074.31
From timber	609,494.23
From mining	440,686.39
From the Dominion	306,076.66

Registry fees yielded $152,120.71, an increase of 60 per cent. over the previous year. It is impossible to suggest any better indication of the prosperity of the country than this affords. Further particulars as to receipts will be found in another part of today's paper.

The net expenditure of the year was $2,328,126.27. The largest single item, except interest and redemption charges, was for public works, which called for $452,726.76. Next in order came education, for which $418,937.97 were required. Salaries of all kinds absorbed $372,357.27, and the administration of justice exclusive of salaries $116,405.53. The public debt makes an annual charge upon the revenue of $713,063.15, a very serious legacy from the past, and one that would never have had to be assumed if the province had received that consideration from the Dominion to which it is entitled.

We shall discuss various features of the provincial finances in future articles; this reference is only intended to give a very general idea where most of the money comes from and where it goes to, for the benefit of those who do not care to go through columns of figures.

A plan is being developed in England whereby young men will be given certificates from the schools in which they have studied, which will substantially mean that they have left school without a stain upon their characters, and that they have passed through a probationary period of eighteen months since leaving school, learning some calling with credit. Such certificates will, it is thought, be of great value to young men, who may emigrate to Canada or other parts of the Empire. The organization is to co-operate with the Public Schools Association of Montreal. The idea seems to be an excellent one.

Alberta has apparently more money than it knows how to spend profitably. Last year it had a surplus of $473,000; this year it has $412,000. Alberta is a province that can be very cheaply administered as compared with British Columbia, and by the grace of Sir Wilfrid it has a splendid revenue.

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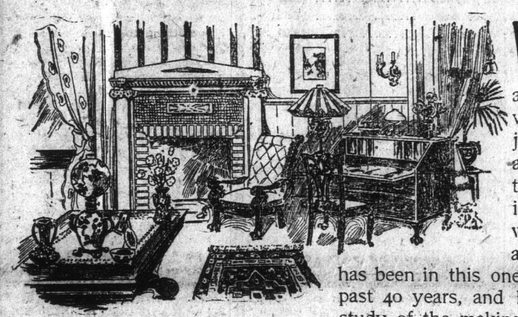

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