

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, AUGUST 17, 1896.

WESTERN REPRESENTATION NEEDED.

Last week The Commercial referred to the vacant portfolio of the Interior department, in the federal government. All the departments have been filled but this one, and so far not a single western man has been selected for a cabinet position in the new Liberal government. It is presumed that a western man will be finally selected for the vacant portfolio, but the delay is causing a very uneasy feeling here as to the intentions of the new government in regard to the West.

The Commercial a short time ago referred to the general feeling of the mistrust which has long been felt throughout the West, regarding the policy of the Liberal party toward the West. To repeat, the belief, whether right or not, has long prevailed here that the Liberals as a party were hostile to the West and opposed to western development.

In referring to this belief, The Commercial said that the Liberals now have an opportunity of proving the falsity of this opinion, which has long been a popular one throughout the West. So far, however, the Liberal policy has not been reassuring to this part of the country. In cabinet making, at least, the West appears to have been entirely ignored. This situation we repeat is causing a very uneasy feeling here, and already the old statement that the Liberal party is opposed to western development, is again being freely reiterated here.

The vast extent of territory and great importance of western interests, renders it necessary that the West should be ably represented in the federal government. All Canada is deeply interested in the development of this new country. The questions which affect this part of the Dominion are largely questions which require to be dealt with by those familiar with the resources and needs of the country.

The late short-lived Tupper government contained two western members. The new Liberal government so far is without a western man, and with all the portfolios but one filled, we have a chance only of obtaining one representative in the cabinet. The Tupper government, with two western men, did not do full justice to the West in point of representation in the cabinet, viewed from the standpoint of the vast territory interested and the national as well as local importance of western interests. What then about the new Liberal government, with a possibility only of giving place to one western representative?

The three little Maritime Provinces have four cabinet ministers. If representation in the cabinet were on the basis of population, then the West would be entitled to two cabinet ministers, compared with the Maritime Provinces. The area of territory and importance of local questions should also be considered, as well as that of population. The West being a new region, requiring

special legislation, and special measures to assist in its settlement and development, would apparently render it advisable that it should be represented in the cabinet by several persons who were particularly well qualified to look after western interests. If any part of the country should have a particularly liberal representation in the cabinet, it should be the West.

We have referred to the important point of area of territory. A large area of territory, even if sparsely settled, will require wider experience and information, in order to deal with its interests carefully, than a small, compact territory. The three Maritime Provinces, with their four cabinet ministers, have an aggregate area of 53,800 square miles. Compare this with Manitoba, which, though the smallest of the five organized provinces and territories of the West, has an area of 74,000 square miles. Then comes Assiniboia with 90,200 square miles, Alberta with 106,100 square miles, Saskatchewan with 108,400 square miles, and British Columbia, with its great mineral, fishery and lumbering interests, with an area of 833,800 square miles. All these five vast divisions, with a population approaching half a million, are without representation in the cabinet, while the three Maritime provinces, with an aggregate area of 50,800 square miles, and a population of 900,000, have four cabinet ministers. Besides the organized provinces and territories of the west, there are the districts of Athabasca, Keewatin and the vast northwest region, with a further aggregate area of 1,600,000 square miles, making altogether, with Manitoba and the other provinces and territories mentioned, a total aggregate area approximating 2,400,000 square miles. All this vast territory and its interests, which latter are the most important questions before the people of Canada to-day, without representation in the cabinet!

Not room for a single representative from this Great West among the fifteen ministers who compose the cabinet! The people of the West do not wish to be arbitrary in this matter, but such a jug-handled arrangement as this is certainly unreasonable. The West should have at least three members in the cabinet, giving one each to the provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia and one to the Territories.

CIVIC GOVERNMENT.

Two cents on the dollar is the rate of taxation in Winnipeg this year, the maximum limit allowed by the statute. For this very heavy tax what are the citizens receiving? This is the question which should be studied by every one who is anxious to have the city affairs carried on in a business-like and economical manner.

Several attempts have been made to bring about a reform in our mode of civic government, but they have all come to naught. A tax of two cents on the dollar should stir the people up a bit to consider this important question.

It would be difficult to find any one who would try to prove that the citizens are receiving anything like value for this heavy tax. This tax is practically all absorbed in meeting interest on the civic debt and carry-

ing on the ordinary affairs of the city. Little or nothing is left for public improvements. Sewers and street improvements have to be paid for by a frontage tax against the property fronting on the streets where the work has been done, so that the two cent tax does not represent the full taxation of the city.

A large portion of the two cent tax is required to pay interest on the civic debt, for which the city has very little to show in the way of assets or public improvements. The city owns nothing in the line of water-works, lighting plant, street railway or anything of this nature. These have all yet to be provided as civic works. A systematic plan of street improvement has not yet been attempted. A little paving has been done on the frontage tax system, or by general taxation, but as yet we have principally clay roads which are next to impassable in wet weather. Even the surface drainage of the city is very imperfect yet.

The large sum raised annually by a tax of about two cents on the dollar, is annually absorbed in maintaining the schools, fire and police departments, the health department, salaries, etc., besides providing interest on the civic debt, as aforesaid. The expenditure for schools seems to be particularly heavy, but this is of course beyond the control of the city council. The total expenditure of the Winnipeg school board last year was \$232,722, of which about \$85,000 was for maintenance, and the balance for interest and new buildings. Part of this sum was raised by the sale of debentures, and the balance contributed by the city council and the small government grant. This year the school board have asked for \$105,000 from the city council.

While the expenditure of the school board is a big item in the annual taxation of the city, it may not be excessive, viewed from the standpoint of the requirements of education. It takes 4.8 mills out of the 20 mills levied, to meet the demands of the school board, and besides the remaining sum of 15.7 mills, the city council has other sources of revenue from licenses, business and frontage tax, etc. For all this large expenditure better results should be apparent than has yet been visible in the city of Winnipeg. Before this will be accomplished, it will be necessary to reduce our municipal system to a basis where ordinary business principles will rule, and then we might hope for better results.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

In connection with the recent discussion regarding the building of more flour mills in Manitoba, some remarks made by Mr. Pillsbury, one of the big Minneapolis millers, may prove interesting. Mr. Pillsbury in a recent newspaper interview stated that he had made no money on his large exports of flour for a long time. The only profit he said was in the home trade, and "the surplus output has to be realized on abroad for what it will bring." This fully bears out the statements made by The Commercial regarding the condition of the milling industry. It has long been generally understood in commercial circles that milling wheat for export is not a profitable business. The large mills in the