

Court Bill. The line of defence to be taken, as indicated in Mr. Mercier's speech at the indignation meeting in Montreal East, is somewhat peculiar and can hardly fail to prove embarrassing to the Dominion authorities. "You must know," said he, "that no veto can have any power until a proclamation has been issued by the Lieut.-Governor. I have no right to say more." The hint is ominous. One result of the tactics indicated must be to place the Lieut.-Governor in a very awkward position. As the appointee of the Dominion Government, to which he is supposed to stand in a relation similar to that occupied by the Governor-General towards the British Government, he will, of course, be duly informed of the veto, and directed to make the proclamation accordingly. But as the constitutional ruler of the Province he can take official action only as prompted by his responsible advisers. What would be his duty in case he should be instructed by the Ottawa Government to issue the proclamation in question, and at the same time advised by the Quebec Government to refrain from issuing it. The difficulty of serving two masters would be brought home to him in a very direct and practical manner. The possibilities of the situation are curious. Whatever may be the issue, the struggle is a fresh illustration of the desirability of having the veto power vested, if vested at all, in an authority whose use of it will be above suspicion of partisan bias. But, given a tribunal with functions purely judicial to pronounce on all questions of interpretation and constitutionality, what need of any power of absolute veto?

THE Conservatives of Cardwell having at length agreed on a candidate, the election will no doubt be fixed for an early day. It is one of the anomalies of Canadian constitutional practice that the election of a member to represent a vacant constituency may be deferred *ad libitum* to suit the whim or the political exigencies of the Government of the day. It is idle to say that no harm results from keeping a constituency open so long, as Parliament is not in session. Whatever tends to facilitate wire-pulling, or to deepen the impression that politics is a partisan game in which the party in power hold the trump cards, is mischievous and demoralizing. It is high time that the opportunities of both Dominion and Provincial Governments for the manipulation of elections were still further limited by the adoption of a rule fixing the limit of time after the occurrence of a vacancy within which the writs must be issued and made returnable. The issuance of the writ is the Speaker's function. There is no good reason why his action should not be required to be prompt and uniform in all cases. Why should the Governments have anything to do with the business, directly or indirectly?

It is announced that the Manitoba Government have decided to aid the Hudson Bay Railway to the extent of two and a half millions of dollars. No doubt the United States' threat of non-intercourse has wrought in favour of this scheme. Few will doubt the wisdom of the people of the Northwest in seeking to secure this alternate outlet for their products, though it could be wished that the feasibility of the scheme had been more clearly demonstrated. Still, in view of the facts that the Bay has been navigated in the past, and that shipbuilding science is making constant progress in its struggle against natural obstacles, there seems good reason to hope that the Hudson's Bay route may yet be proved available to a much greater extent than is at present believed. In the event of freer intercourse with the East and the South by the multiplication of railways, there would still be always great advantage in having the short cut to Europe. In the event of non-intercourse with our neighbours, the opening up of the route would be almost a matter of absolute necessity.

It is pretty clear that the last word has not yet been said, or rather that only the first words have as yet been said, on the subject of close organizations in trade and manufactures. The question at issue is too broad and too far-reaching to be settled by any summary process of legislation. Nor will it do to condemn such business arrangements as those referred to on the strength of disagreeable connotations suggested to the public mind by the use of mere names, such as "monopoly," "trust," "combine," etc. In this, as in most difficult questions of public policy, there is a good deal to be said on both sides. It would be absurd to suppose, as most of us are perhaps too ready to do, that all or the great majority of those who enter into such combinations to regulate and perhaps restrict the production or sale of articles in common use, are utterly selfish, conscienceless schemers. We may indeed believe that some are blinded by self-interest; that others are glad to leave such nice questions of right and wrong in their business transactions to their agents and managers; and that the latter are too often more anxious to commend themselves to their principals by a good financial showing, than to base

their transactions on the moral rock-bottom of the Golden Rule. But it is evident, on the other hand, that the manufacturer or the merchant who finds himself in danger of being ruined through over-supply and consequent over-competition, will not only need to be conscientious and self-sacrificing above the average to prevent him from agreeing, when opportunity offers, with his competitors to limit production or regulate prices, but he will also need to be very clearly shown that such agreement is wrong in principle and injurious in practice. It is, in a word, obvious that, in connection with this matter of trusts and combines, is emerging one of the most difficult and complicated questions with which the political economist, the legislator, and the moralist of the day has to deal. The wonder is, not that here and there a speaker or writer is found approaching the subject somewhat gingerly, but that it has not already become a leading topic in all the papers and magazines.

THE foregoing observations have been suggested by the tone of injured innocence, no doubt sincere, pervading that part of the report of the Combines Committee of the Undertakers' Association of Ontario, presented at its recent meeting, in which reference is made to the manner in which the Association has been spoken of by the Combines Committee of the House of Commons, and by the newspapers. The Report, it is true, does not commit itself to any defence of the principle of combines, but rather, by styling the society a "Mutual Benefit Association," and emphasizing the statement that it is "without uniform price lists, secret understandings or minimum schedules to govern its members in the sale of their goods, leaving every member at liberty to conduct his business according to his own ideas of profit and loss," seems to imply that the depravity of such "understandings" and "schedules" must be taken for granted. If it were necessary to deal with this association in particular, some of the omissions in this negative description of its objects might be rather curiously supplied from that part of the Secretary's Report, which states that "the Dominion Burial Case Association continues its agreement with us to recognize these only as legitimate undertakers who belong to our Association, together with those who were engaged in the business prior to our formation in July 5th, 1884." The mention by the Executive Committee of the long-standing complaints of members of the Association that manufacturers in the United States were supplying persons outside of the Association, is also strikingly suggestive. But the present object is rather to point out the need of an exhaustive discussion of the principles involved in the toleration or prohibition of such monopolies generally, whether partial or complete in their scope. Such a discussion has hardly been commenced as yet. There may be, we believe there can be, little doubt that the ultimate conclusion of political science will accord with the popular instinct in pronouncing against all such monopolies, but that conclusion may carry with it consequences much more sweeping than those at present in view. When, for instance, the Undertakers' Association seek legislation forbidding undertakers to advertise themselves as "embalmers" until they shall have passed an examination, such examination to be no doubt prescribed and held by the Association, they are virtually asking the powers of a close corporation for an object which is ostensibly for the good of the public. On what principle can their request be denied, that will not be equally applicable to the two learned professions which are already legally operating as close corporations, and conducting similar examinations?

THE long-looked for letters of acceptance of President Cleveland and Judge Harrison have at length been given to the public. The most noteworthy and, in fact, the essential feature of the former, which is lengthy and somewhat laboured, is its unequivocal re-affirmation of the economic principles laid down in the famous message to Congress. The letter commits the President, and, so far as he can speak for it, the party to the theory of a revenue as distinctive from a protective tariff. He declares that "unnecessary taxation is unjust taxation." He contends that a protective tariff means that for every million dollars paid to the Government in duties, many millions must be paid into the pockets of private individuals. He distinctly affirms his belief in "the absolute duty of limiting the rate of tariff charges to the necessities of a frugal and economical administration of the Government." In thus boldly maintaining his former position, in the face of the "hedging" attempted by so many of his supporters, the President once more shows himself possessed of the courage of his former convictions. Owing, possibly, to his firm stand on this ground, Judge Harrison's letter, which appeared later, is largely a defence of the opposite policy, that of protection, pure and simple, in support of which he vigorously urges the usual and familiar arguments. The tariff question is thus, once more, set in the foreground as the great issue of the campaign. The