

THE COMMERCIAL

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THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN MANITOBA.

The political situation in Manitoba is becoming quite interesting. The provincial elections, which will probably take place within a few months,

dates, the general condition is usually unfavorable to the third party man. The Prohibitionists, however, apparently have no other choice but to make a straight fight to elect their own men to the legislature. They can not, of course, deal with the government party, in view of the incidence which is still fresh in the minds of all Manitobans. From the so-called Liberal opposition there is no hope for them. The newly-adapted platform of that party gives not a word of encouragement to the prohibition element. Their only hope is to be able to elect a sufficient number of their own men to the legislature to give them some voice in the affairs of the province. Three or four able and determined men could easily dictate to the House, in case of a close condition between the leading parties.

The Labor party is not likely to prove a factor of much importance in the situation. It is not likely that this party will nominate any candidates outside of Winnipeg. In the three city constituencies labor candidates have been nominated, but their chances of election in any case are considered very slim.

The Political Reform Union may, perhaps, be classed as the most recent movement in Manitoba politics, though the existence of the organization out-

erment would be a union of the Liberals, Prohibitionists and Unionists with the object of accomplishing this end. The Commercial, of course, has no knowledge of what may be going on within the inner circles of any of the various parties, but judging from the newly-announced Liberal platform and the utterances of the leader of that party, the Liberals have no intention of coqueting with the Prohibitionists at least. On the other hand, their platform may be taken as a straight hint to the Prohibitionists that they will have to fight for all they can get. The leaders of the Political Reform Union, again, judging from their public utterances, are quite hostile to the Liberals, or at least to some of the leaders of the Liberals. A union to oust the government, without which the government is apparently quite safe, seems therefore among the improbabilities at the moment.

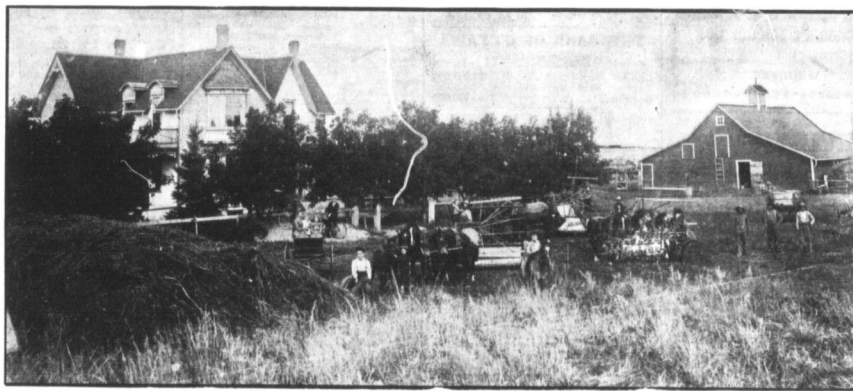
KOOTENAY LEAD INDUSTRY.

R. Robertson, of Nelson, and H. Bentley, of Lechler, are visiting principal points in the Territories in the interest of the lead industry of the Kootenay district of British Columbia. Those interested in the Kootenay lead industry have been endeavoring for some time to secure tariff

conditions which have existed of late.

In the Kootenay district of British Columbia there is a large area of silver-lead bearing territory. Considerable capital has been invested in the development of these mines. Prior to January, 1900, the ores produced from these mines were sold in the United States at a profit, notwithstanding the high duty imposed by the United States on lead in ores. In January, 1900, the United States Smelting and Refining Trust refused to make further purchases of British Columbia ores. This at once practically paralyzed the lead mining industry. This has led to the closing of most of the silver-lead mines, the percentage of silver in many of the ores being too small to permit of the working of the mines unless a profitable market can be found for the lead. The decline of the industry is shown by the statement of the Kaslo board of trade, which says that the production of lead has declined from 31,000 tons to less than 12,000 for last year.

A statement published by the Nelson board of trade says that over \$20,000,000 has been invested in these lead mines, and about \$750,000 in smelting plants. Besides this, there has been an investment of many millions of dollars in other ways, as a result of the development of the lead



MANITOBA FARM HOMES—MATTHEW SUTTON, ROLAND.

will make one of the most remarkable contests which has ever taken place in Canada. This situation is due to the great variety of interests which enter into the contest. If all the parties in the field succeed in electing any number of members to the House, the next Manitoba legislature will be a very complex body. Besides the two old parties of Liberals and Conservatives, we have in this contest a Prohibition party, a Labor party and the Political Reform Union. The Prohibition party is perhaps the strongest of the three new elements, and has shown great activity so far in preparing for the campaign. In fact the Prohibitionists have shown almost greater energy than either of the old political parties in nominating candidates and carrying on other preliminary work. What the result of their efforts will be when it comes to the vote, is, of course, difficult to say. In the case of a three-cornered contest, where a Prohibitionist candidate comes in between two straight party candi-

dates the present form of the Prohibition movement. Generally speaking, the Political Reform Union may be said to be composed of the more radical of the Liberals, joined with whom are persons who for various reasons have seen fit to withdraw allegiance from the old political parties. The Unionists have several candidates in the field, either nominated or prospective, and they may be able to put up quite a fight in a few constituencies.

The general effect of the advent of these new elements in the provincial elections will doubtless be to weaken the Liberal opposition and strengthen the governing party. This is evidently fully realized by the opposition, judging from the attack made upon the Prohibitionists by the leader of that party. The injection of a few Political Reform Union candidates into the contest would, however, prove even more disastrous to the Liberals than the advent of the Prohibitionists. In this badly mixed provincial political situation, the only hope of ousting the gov-

ernment. The object in visiting the Territorial towns is to secure an endorsement of the proposals for protection to the lead industry from the business men of these towns. A number of points have been visited, and in every case the boards of trade have adopted the proposals. In this connection it will be remembered that the Winnipeg board of trade recently endorsed the proposals of protection for the lead industry. The Winnipeg board did not pronounce directly upon the principle of protection. The ground taken was, that a protective policy is now in force in Canada, and while that policy remains, western interests as well as eastern manufacturing industries should receive whatever benefit may be derived from that policy. Speaking generally, the tariff is mainly in the interest of the eastern manufacturers. The West has few industries to protect. The lead industry is one of the few, and it has been slowly dying for some time, owing to the unfavorable commercial

industry. All this capital is threatened with absolute extinction as a result of the decadence of the lead industry. The population of the district has declined from 20,000 to about 10,000. The expenditure for wages in connection with the lead mines was estimated at \$2,750,000 annually before the decline in the industry set in.

The proposals now made for the revival of the industry are based on tariff protection. At present there is no duty on lead ore coming into Canada. On lead pig, scrap, etc., there is a duty of 15 per cent, and on dry white and red lead, 5 per cent. The British preferential tariff reduces the duty to 10 per cent, on pig and 3 1/2 per cent, on dry leads. The following scale of duties is asked on lead and its products: Lead ore, 1 1/2 cents per lb.; pig lead, etc., 2 1/2 cents per lb.; corroded lead, 2 1/2 cents per lb.; white zinc, 2 1/2 cents per pound. At present it will be noticed that the duty is lower on the corroded lead than on pig

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