

Of course somebody must do the work, and those who take the most active part are liable to be spoken of as "running the machine."

While it is perhaps unnecessary to pay too much attention to remarks of this nature, it would be well to give as little ground for them as possible. The mode of conducting the board should be such as to encourage all the members to take an active interest in the work. The honors of the board should also be passed around. While it is a graceful and worthy acknowledgement of interest taken in the board, to continue to place honors upon certain members, in view of public sentiment outside, it is perhaps not always a wise policy to pursue.

The annual report of the Victoria board, a lengthy summary of which was published in this journal last week, is well worthy of perusal by those interested in British Columbia. It contains much valuable information relating to the commercial progress of the country, presented in a dignified and readable form. Altogether the report shows a state of prosperity and a hopeful outlook for the future. A large number of subjects are discussed under different headings, all of interest to the business community. The report speaks hopefully of immigration prospects, and in this connection depreciates the policy of the government in disposing of large blocks of land to speculators and others, holding that it tends to curtail actual settlement. The board is on the right track on this question and should follow up the matter actively. The fisheries receive considerable attention in the report. Reference is made to the salmon-fishing regulations and to the seal fisheries, and the hope is expressed that the Behring Sea question will soon be settled satisfactorily to both countries. The board evidently favors restrictions as to killing seal, as the statement is made that the "indiscriminate slaughter of seal is a matter which demands the attention of both governments." Regret is also expressed at the inactivity of the Dominion government in exploring and encouraging the development of the deep sea fisheries. In connection with the latter question the board sees a "large and profitable market in the United States for the produce of the fisheries," and hopes that the obstacles which prevent the exportation of fish to that market may be removed.

Speaking of the commercial prosperity enjoyed the report says: "In the city of Victoria the value of real estate has advanced nearly 100 per cent. within the past twelve months, a fact which attests sufficiently the flourishing condition of its trade." While this rapid advance in real estate no doubt shows commercial prosperity in other directions, taken alone it can hardly be considered as a favorable feature. An advance of 100 per cent. in twelve months looks like undue inflation and over-speculation in land property. Real estate values in Victoria may not be inflated, but the statement indicates danger, and the fear may at least be expressed that such a condition is indicated by such a rapid advance in prices. The great advancement made by Victoria during the past year has no doubt been of a solid nature, but it would be better were it not attended by such a rapid advance in real estate.

Unfortunately, however, real estate inflation seems almost invariably to attend a period of general advancement in western cities.

OUR ICELANDIC POPULATION.

The Icelanders of Manitoba, to the number of about 1,500, celebrated the 1016 anniversary of the settlement of Iceland and the birth of the Icelandic nation, in Winnipeg last week. One of the speakers estimated the Icelandic population of Manitoba at 9,000 to 10,000, about 3,000 of whom are in Winnipeg. The Icelanders are among our most worthy settlers. As an industrial population for the cities, they are quiet, sober, honest and willing to make the best of their opportunities. They are decidedly superior to most other foreigners in this respect, as they are not given to strikes and riotous conduct, such as often characterizes the industrial classes. Where they have taken to agriculture, as a great many have in Manitoba, they have done well, and some who came here without means a few years ago, are now in good circumstances, or as one of their number said at the celebration, "are worth thousands." They have a faculty of adapting themselves to circumstances and living within their means until they can get ahead, which cannot be said of a good many of our immigrants. In business many of them have also done well, and several of them have more than a local reputation outside of their own nationality as successful business men.

Socially and politically the Icelanders make excellent citizens. They seem to imbibe the spirit of our institutions more readily than any other foreigners. They acquire the language of the country and become enthusiastic and loyal citizens. They do not make a great noise and agitate for special privileges for their nationality, such as is the case with some other settlers. They accept our institutions and our laws as they are, and go quietly to work to improve their own condition on their arrival here. They want only fair treatment as citizens of the country, and no favors. They are good citizens because they are honest, sober and industrious, and because they endeavor to make themselves citizens of the country in the fullest sense of the word, and not foreigners residing among us. Manitoba would be the better of having hundreds of thousands of such citizens instead of 10,000.

The Icelanders of Manitoba have shown themselves a progressive people, quite worthy of citizenship in this progressive country. Though they have had many disadvantages to labor under, coming here poor and unacquainted with the language and customs of the country, they have as a rule done well. There are now one monthly and two weekly papers published in Winnipeg in their language. They are all well educated in their own language and are rapidly becoming the same in English. They are now founding an institution of learning in Winnipeg, which will be the first Lutheran institution of the kind in Canada.

A WISE REFORM.

The provincial government of British Columbia has evidently resolved upon a very wise reform in the administration of the public

domain. In the last official *Gazette* notice is given that crown lands will not be disposed of by private sale hereafter, pending contemplated legislation. The management of the crown lands in British Columbia has been anything but satisfactory in the past. In fact the administration of the public domain in the Pacific province, as in other parts of Canada, has not been without grounds for scandal. The administration of Dominion and provincial lands in other parts of Canada has given very frequent cause for scandal. The parcelling out of the public domain to political favorites, wire-pullers and schemers has often been a crying disgrace. Lands have been given away as bribes and they have been alienated from the crown in other doubtful ways. From all accounts some doubtful work has been done in British Columbia in connection with the lands.

THE COMMERCIAL has always held that the public domain should be reserved for actual settlers, and should not be either given away nor sold to individuals and corporations in large lots. This position has been taken in regard to the lands of Manitoba and the Territories, and the same will apply to British Columbia. In the latter province there has been too much of the sentiment to regard the public domain as a useless encumbrance, rather than a great and invaluable heritage of the people. This will perhaps account for the very unsatisfactory immigration policy of the province. Things have been allowed to go along in a haphazard sort of way, and very little inducement has been held out to settlers to come in and possess the land. Scarcely anything has been done in the direction of surveying the lands and preparing them for settlement. People who wished to locate in the province have had to hunt up locations suitable for settlement and then squat on unsurveyed land. This of course has not been encouraging to settlement, as very few would care to locate in the province under such circumstances. It is to be hoped that the announcement in the official *Gazette* foreshadows a general change in the administration of the crown lands in the direction of providing more encouragement to actual settlement. At any rate, the private sale system is very liable to abuse, and may even lay the administration open to grave charges for which it is not blameable. A change in the system is therefore desirable.

New Buildings at Victoria.

Building operations were very brisk at Victoria, B. C., last year, and this year there is a continuation of activity in the same line. Among the finest of the new buildings may be mentioned that erected on Johnson Street by H. Saunders. This splendid structure has just been completed and occupied by Mr. Saunders. It has a frontage of forty feet on Johnson Street, and one hundred feet on Oriental Alley. The building is two stories high, with full size basement. The ceilings are lofty, the ground floor being seventeen feet from floor to ceiling, and the upper floor fifteen feet. This makes the building equal to an ordinary three-story structure in height. It is, however, in massiveness and the artistic style of the structure, rather than in size, which makes this one of the finest