

THE RECENT SESSION

Reviewed by Premier McBride in an Interview with the "News-Advertiser." — Despite Opposition Statements to the Contrary, Much Useful and Important Legislation was Enacted. — The Position on the Railway Question Explained.

The Hon. Richard McBride, K. C., Premier of British Columbia, was in town last week, and during his visit a representative of the "News-Advertiser" interviewed him regarding the work of the past session. As is well known, the Opposition press and some members on the left of the Speaker have endeavored to make out that the work of the Legislature during the past session was of an insignificant and trivial character and of no particular benefit to the Province as a whole.

In answer to a query regarding the Opposition arguments that the session had been a barren one, the Premier said that was a matter on which different views might be held. "In my opinion," said the Premier, "and I am willing and able to prove my assertions, the business transacted by the Legislature during the past session was by far and away more important than is ordinarily the case. In fact, I think this was, in many respects, the

MOST IMPORTANT SESSION OF THE LEGISLATURE

that has been seen in recent years.

Take, for example, the Act amending the Assessment Act. It had been announced by the Government before the session of 1904 ended that a Commission to investigate the matter would be appointed and that no pains would be spared in order to have the subject of taxation fully enquired into. The Hon. F. Carter-Cotton, President of the Council, was Chairman of the Commission, and with the assistance of Hon. R. G. Tatlow, Minister of Finance, and Messrs. J. Buntzen, the Managing Director of the British Columbia Electric Railway Company, and D. R. Ker, the head of the Brackman-Ker Milling Company—both of whom are well known and successful business men—the Commission succeeded in accomplishing the difficult task before it, and its report formed the nucleus of the present Act.

This Act was passed to amend many legitimate grievances against the original Assessment Act passed last year, and to more equitably distribute the additional burdens imposed by that very necessary piece of legislation. That this end has been achieved I think few fair-minded persons will deny. For instance, the rate on personal property

HAS BEEN REDUCED

from one per cent. to two-thirds of one per cent—a reduction of one-third—

while the rate on income has been increased. This, I may point out, is in line with the opinions of many expert authorities on fiscal finance, who hold that personal property should not be taxed, and that a larger measure of the burden should be placed on income.

Then, again, the objectionable feature of the taxation of the book debts has been entirely abolished. This form of taxation was very strongly protested against by practically the whole mercantile community, whose credit business is, in general, a large one. I presume they will hardly regard this particular piece of last session's legislation as trivial and unimportant.

Another very noteworthy section of the Act is that providing for the creation of a Board of Assessors, who shall meet at least once a year to consult and decide upon the best methods of securing correct and equitable assessments throughout the Province. This provision is of the utmost importance, being designed to do away with the inequalities and discrepancies in taxation which were constantly occurring under the old system. Thus, two men might own pieces of land identically similar in size, nature of soil, advantage of position and state of development, yet the assessor in the district where one is situated might value his land at \$10 per acre, while his neighbor in the other district, no better circumstanced, would be valued at \$100 an acre by the assessor of that district. Such a condition of affairs—by no means infrequent under the old system, and causing much injustice—will, I think, be remedied by the creation of a Board of Assessors, and I consider that this provision should be of the greatest possible benefit to the land owners. I need hardly say that the efficient supervision over our financial affairs, exercised by the Minister of Finance, is mainly responsible for the good standing which the Province of British Columbia enjoys to-day in the money markets of the world."

The attention of the Premier was then called to the

LAND ACT,

which has been attacked in several quarters, the attacks being directed more especially at those sections covering the timber regulations.

When asked the reason for the change in the law regarding timber leases, the Premier said the explanation was an