The Colonist.

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THE SEMI-WEEKLY COLONIST

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THE SESSION

The session of the provincial legislature, which has just closed, was not a long one, but it was quite busy. As a matter of fact, it was one of the shortest sessions in the recent history of British Columbia. This was largely due to the fact that the government had its work in hand in good season, the absence of any investigations by special committees and to the general desire of the members to get their work done and return to their private affairs. The list of Acts passed is fairly long, the number being sixty-one, of which only 10 are private. These latter include Acts for the incorporation of three railway companies, the Crow's Nest and Northern, the Hudson Bay Pacific, and the Eastern British Columbia. The fifty-one public Acts include thirty-one in amendment of previous Acts, the remainder being new legislation. Among the new measures several are of special importance. We may mention that establishing a new department, by dividing that formerly presided over by the Chief Commisioner of Lands and Works and placing the Crown Land under the supervision of one minister and public works under that of another. This change is one which the Colonist has for some time felt ought to be made. The Civil Service Act is one that will be productive of much good. The University Act lays the foundation of an educational institution, which if wisely carried out will be of incalculable value to British Columbia. The Grand Trunk Pacific Act has been so recently commented upon that no additional reference to it is necessary. As far as can be judged from present indications these are the most important pieces of legislation of a local nature, which were passed during the session.

The session will be memorable because of the passage of the Immigration Act and the debates as to the constitutionality of the Lieutenant-Governor's action in reserving the Bowser Bill. It is not necessary to say anything on the latter point, except that the constitutional practice in regard to Bills, which have passed the legislature may be taken as finally settled, and that hereafter no Bill will be reserved without express instructions from the Governor-General. There may be differences of opinion as to how far the solution of the question of Oriental immigration has been advanced by the passage of the Immigration Act. Our own view is that it has been materially promoted, because the enactment of such a measure by the unanimous voice of the legislature, at a time when negotiations were said to have just been completed with Japan for the restriction of emigration from that country to Canada, can only be understood as the most definite expression of the people of British Columbia that the maintenance of this as a white man's country can only be secured by restrictive legislation, and that international agreements, dependent wholly upon the will of a foreign government as to the manner in which they are carried out, will not be acceptable.

The session was not marked by any very notable debates. In this respect it fell below the usual average of sessions. At the present writing it is difficult to recall a speech that was specially noteworthy. There has been a gradual falling off in the legislature in this respect, and we think it is attributable to the growing supremacy of the party caucus. We are not sure that the change is a good one. Public opinion would be very much more healthy if there was fuller discussion of all public questions.

Mr. McBride has certainly exhibited during the session exceptional qualities as a parliamentary leader. His unfailing good humor is a wonderful help to him. He never wilfully hurts the sensibilities of his opponents, and he is an adept at pouring oil on troubled waters. There were occasions during the session when a less tactful leader might have precipitated a good deal of trouble. It is only fair to say that his good judgment in this particular was ably seconded by the Leader of the Opposition. As a matter of fact, no one seemed to be particularly pugnacious, and the people who attended the session as spectators found very little to interest them of the kind of discussion that keeps the galleries full.

On the whole it has been a business-like session, and the various measures passed will have a good effect upon the welfare of British Columbia.

DR. THOMPSON'S SPEECH.

Dr. Thompson, M. P. for Yukon, has the somewhat questionable distinction of having been the first man to advocate Canadian independence in the House of Commons. If he thought that he was going to make a sensation, he ignominiously failed, for the House heard him in frigid silence, and Sir Wilfrid Laurier administered a fitting rebuke. How completely without a semblance of life such a question is, the failure of Dr. Thompson to provoke anything like a general discussion in the House furnishes the best possible proof. But if he did not arouse the House, he certainly did arouse the country, although perhaps not just as he intended. He has been soundly denounced from the Atlantic to the Pacific by the press, and by none more so than by the press of Quebec. We quote from La Patrie:

We are aware that a few people in Canada have had dreams of independence, but no one ever thinks of the thing today, and it is a long time since, either in the press or in parliament, such views as those expressed by Dr. Thompson, and which, for that reason, we are justified to call retrograde, were brought forward. The chilling reception given to his speech by the whole House will prove to the member for the Yukon how badly he was inspired and how far he was from expressing the true feelings of the Canadian people. Let us add at once that the French-Canadians especially disapprove of this unfortunate speech. Our English-speaking fellow-citizens have their reasons for remaining faithful to the British flag, but we French-Canadians also have ours. We have a reason of interest which is still more powerful than the reason of sentiment.

In the condition of numerical inferiority in which we are still placed today, what would the independence mean if not its almost immediate absorption by the American ogre? Now, can any one believe that our language, our religion, our laws and in fact all our most sacred prerogatives would have the same ample and generous protection under the star-spangled banner as is at present guaranteed.

Senator Ross proclaimed proudly in New York a short time ago that in Canada, rather than in the United States, reigns the real spirit of liberty. It is true that there has been friction in the past, but England now nobly understands her duty. She contrives so to speak as to make the weight of her tutorship felt in the least possible manner. From year to year she grants us greater latitude, to such an extent that we are now practically our own masters.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier gave Dr. Thompson the energetic and dignified reply which he deserved. The whole French-Canadian population stands with him on that ground where they all meet. We never miss an opportunity to say so, because we strongly feel that the French-Canadians are proud to live under the shade of the British flag, in which they salute the symbol of liberty.

It is a fine thing to have such a declaration of sentiments from a paper of the standing and influence of La Patrie. We direct attention to one expression. "England now nobly understands her duty," says the French paper. "She contrives so to speak so as to make the weight of her tutorship felt in the least possible manner." This is well put. Canada is yet in a sense under the tutorship of England, and the marvellous manner in which that relation is preserved without friction is the best possible evidence that can be given of the capacity of our nationality for self-government, and the sagacity which influences the men, who are responsible for the administration of the complicated and difficult affairs of the Empire. While we think Dr. Thompson exhibited exceedingly poor judgment in his observations, we are not wholly regretful that he made them, for they have elicited such an expression of loyalty to the flag and British connection as has not been heard in Canada for many a long day. Incidents like these show how strong are the bonds of Empire.

MR. MACDONALD'S POSITION.

We are glad to be able to say that Mr. MacDonald's declaration in the House as to the advisability of the sale of the Metlakahtla reserve to the Grand Trunk Pacific is very frank and emphatic. We quote from the verbatim report of his speech published in the Times. He said:

Now, the question we have to consider is, this, was it better that we should merely retain our reversionary rights in this 13,000 acres of land in Kaien Island and the adjoining islands, or that we should convert it into a present liquid asset of the province? I am going to say now that the course the government is pursuing in presenting this agreement to the House is a wise one and in the interest of the province.

This excellent result, of which the leader of the Opposition has spoken in such complimentary terms, is due to the determination of the provincial government to stand out for the rights of the province. The Dominion government anticipated that the province would not insist upon the acknowledgment of its reversionary right. A reversionary right in an Indian reserve is a somewhat intangible thing, and to convert something so intangible and of an inappreciable value into "a liquid asset," to use Mr. Macdonald's language, is a fine stroke of business. The province retains a quarter interest in the 13,000 acres, or 3,250 acres. What the value thereof will be, no one at the present time can estimate, but the potential value of land at the terminus of the Grand Trunk Pacific is very great. The real consideration for the sale of the reversionary interest is not the $2.50 per acre, but this quarter interest, which is a present interest. Let any person look at the case as if it were his own business. Here is an area to which he has reversionary right, assuming that the highest court of appeals should decide the legal question involved in his favor, which right may fall in a century from now, and perhaps at so remote a period that no calculation can be made upon its possibility. Under such circumstances a purchaser comes along and offers the owner of this reversionary right an absolute present title to one-quarter of the area and to pay him $2.50 for his future right to the remainder. Is there a man in the world who would not jump at the offer? We do not believe there is. Hence it is easy to see why Mr. Macdonald called the agreement "a wise one and in the interests of the province."

We find no fault with Mr. Macdonald for his references to the Kaien Island transaction. His criticisms are not well founded, but we are not so unreasonable as to expect the Leader of the Opposition to exhibit absolute perfection. The Kaien Island false alarm was his own particular baby. He fathered it and the honorable member from Delta mothered it, and although it died a-bornin' we have not the heart to find fault with his eulogies of the corpse. "'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all."

Mr. Macdonald's other criticisms were such as might reasonably be expected of the leader of the Opposition, whose duty it is to point out anything in a government bargain to which he thinks exception may be taken, but we are glad to be able to say that his whole speech was conceived in a spirit worthy of a gentleman occupying his responsible position.

A WARNING.

The Montreal Star has a story from Vancouver to the effect that it is intended to organize a number of anti-Oriental riots in the Pacific coast cities "to synchronize with the arrival of the American fleet," and it thinks the rumor is "all too probable." We think our contemporary is needlessly alarmed, at least so far as the British Columbia cities are concerned. Doubtless there are some hot-heads in the community who would be ready to propose anything that would give them a little passing notoriety, but we believe the good sense of the great majority of the people will prove strong enough to prevent anything so criminal as the Star fears. Our contemporary must not take all Vancouver stories as law and gospel. At the Terminal City they have a trick of invention which has long been known to the newspaper world of this province. It is inspired in part by a desire to keep the city in the limelight, and in part by a wish to send out news that will be saleable. Vancouver was very badly treated by the correspondents of the press at the time of the disturbance last fall. Despatches were sent out that were almost pure inventions, as witness the story that Victoria was in an uproar; that Government house had been attacked and the windows in the Parliament buildings had been broken. Probably the Star's story has no better foundation than the one referred to.

While we take very little stock in the report, we think the Star's warning against any such demonstrations is timely, and we hope it will be heeded by the saner heads in the Exclusion organizations. It is quite possible that some irresponsible people may seek to foment trouble, and trouble often comes like a lightning bolt out of a clear sky. We quote the closing sentences of the Star's article, which are worthy of consideration, and show that the nature of the situation is being better appreciated by the people of the eastern provinces. The Star says:

The gravity of the whole situation is revealed as in a flashlight by the eagerness of Australia for a visit from the American fleet. They wish to make plain the solidarity of all white races that border on Asia on this subject; and it is, perhaps, as well that it should be made as plain as the smoke of a cruising and peaceful battleship squadron can. It may save trouble in the future.

Three and a half per cent. money in London does not have a particularly panicky sound.

CALGARY AND ALBERTA.

The Albertan prints a very long and eulogistic description of the city in which it is published. It is a pretty good evidence of what Calgary is that one of its newspapers feels justified and is able to get out such a special number, which contains much that is somewhat surprising to those of us who have not kept track of what is going on in that progressive city. Most of us do not know that Calgary claims a population of 17,000, and even allowing for a little pardonable exaggeration, it is a good deal bigger place than those think, to whom it is simply a name on the map or a station where the transcontinental trains stop for a few minutes. In addition to saying many good things about the city, the Albertan devotes a lot of space to the province after which it has been named, and here it has a theme which is even more inspiring than the other. If we were not so fortunate as to live in British Columbia, we should wish to live somewhere in Alberta, a province of vast resources and a favorable climate. Speaking in all seriousness, we doubt the ability of the Albertan or any other paper to foretell the future of that magnificent province. British Columbia has no jealousy towards it, for Alberta and British Columbia are the complement of each other. What we produce they need; what they produce we need. Moreover, we furnish them with access to the sea and pleasure resorts innumerable. In one sense Victoria and the other coast cities of this province are the ports of Alberta. In the growth and prosperity of the inland province our development is involved, and what is also of interest is the fact that a considerable portion of British Columbia, sufficient to make a large province of itself, is identical in all respects to Alberta.

INTERESTING ANNOUNCEMENT.

It is stated that the result of the conference just held at Winnipeg between Mr. Whyte and other Canadian officials will be the expenditure of $1,000,000 in the improvement of the company's property on Vancouver Island. This is a very interesting piece of information and taken in connection with the assured beginning of work on the Grand Trunk Pacific, will mean that there ought to be work and to spare for every man willing to take such employment as railway construction and similar work affords. The individual, who likes to have his wages brought to him on a silver salver, and who cannot exist away from vaudeville shows or his club, may not derive much comfort from the news, but all self-respecting men, who are physically fit for outdoor employment will be glad to hear it. As a matter of fact there are not nearly enough unemployed men in the province to meet the demand that will set in as soon as the operations referred to are fully under way.

There does not seem to be any good reason why Victoria and the whole Island should not experience an exceptionally prosperous year. This city is growing steadily and solidly. Every merchant will tell you so, and the merchants are the best judges because they are in a position to learn from the new customers whose names get on their books. Yet nothing exceptional has occurred to cause this growth. It is the result of natural causes in the shape of the superior attractiveness of the locality. When active development by the Canadian Pacific is under way, the advance movement will be far more pronounced than ever. It is interesting to listen to what visitors to the city say about it. They have got the idea that "Victoria is all right." That is the story which is being told all over the country. This is largely due to the splendid manner in which our city has come through a period of business depression felt all over the Continent seriously except in this fortunate spot. And better times are ahead.

BOWSERITIS.

The Times will surely have to be operated on for Bowseritis. There is nothing which the Attorney-General can say or do which does not cause our esteemed contemporary to froth at the mouth. Its latest paroxysm was caused by the fact that the Attorney-General told the House that he is responsible for legislation. Well, isn't he, or if he is not, who is? If there was one thing upon which we supposed there was no doubt it was as to the right of the public to hold the Attorney-General responsible for the character of legislation passed by the legislature. He may make mistakes, of course, because even "the first law officer of the crown" is not infallible, but he cannot deny his responsibility. We have heard in times past very strong criticisms of an attorney-general for permitting legislation to go through the House without exerting all his influence to prevent it, and the Colonist has done a little of such criticizing itself. We have always supposed that some one was charged with the duty of keeping the legislature straight, and that the Attorney-General was that person. If he is not, will the Times kindly tell us who is?

But it does not make much difference what Mr. Bowser does. According to the Times Mr. McBride constitutionally cannot do what is right, and Mr. Bowser always does what is wrong. There is a distinction between these two qualities, for when Mr. McBride does something that was right when Sir Wilfrid Laurier did it, the thing forthwith becomes wrong; when he acts along lines endorsed by the Liberals in convention, what he does forthwith becomes wrong. That is to say, the fact that Mr. McBride does anything whatever is proof as strong as Holy Writ that the thing, whatever it may previously have been, is wrong then. With Mr. Bowser the case stands rather this way. He would not do right if he could. He devises mischief continually. There never was quite so terrible a person. The difference between him and the Premier, in the estimation of the Times may be thus defined: If Mr. McBride should rise in his place in the House and repeat the Ten Commandments, they would thereafter become wrong; whereas if Mr. Bowser should do so, they would become void ab initio. We are sorry for our esteemed contemporary, but fear that its case is hopeless.

The various civilized countries of the world might do worse than call for plans and specifications for a "disaster-proof" building, of the types used for school houses, theatres, etc.

Citizens generally express great gratification at the announcement that the government has included the sum of $20,000 in the estimates for the construction of the Mill Bay road, a public work which will redound greatly to the advantage of Victoria and the lower island districts.

There is nothing revolutionary in the suggestion of Mr. Garden that the legislature should put some limit upon the indemnities paid to the officers of municipalities, nor is it in any sense a reflection upon those corporations. In almost every part of the world such limitations are set.

Conservatives of Nanaimo are preparing to perfect party organization in preparation for the forthcoming federal elections. It is merely a recitation of the truth to say that never before in the history of the province have the Conservatives been in a better position to present a solid and united front to the enemy—and this observation applies particularly to the situation on Vancouver Island.

It is announced from Vancouver that there is a likelihood of Mr. Joseph Martin taking up his permanent residence in England and also entering political life there. There are not a few in Canada who, while finding it impossible to endorse many of Mr. Martin's views on public questions, will nevertheless agree that he possesses qualities which make it possible for him to became an appreciable force in the political life of any country, and that should he go to England there is but little doubt that he would be "heard from."

Scientists and investigators seem to be exerting a special effort these days to upset as many old-fashioned thories as possible. It has long been the popular belief that the practice of smoking is injurious to the human system. Dr. George L. Meylan, physical director of Columbia University, has just completed statistics showing the effect of the use of tobacco upon 607 students, mostly freshmen, who have entered Columbia college in the last two years. Dr. Meylan has found that the physical condition of the smokers—that is, their weight, height and lung capacity and total strength—is, on the average, better than that of the non-smokers. He admits, however, that tobacco may injure the heart.

It is announced from Ottawa that the policy of the government in regard to the Quebec bridge will shortly be announced, and that "Canada will show to the world that she is able to perform what she began." This expression of a determination to complete the structure, in spite of the tremendous difficulties which have strewn the path of that enterprise, will, we fancy, be viewed with approval by Canadians generally, who would not willingly wish to lie under the imputation that they lacked the pluck and stamina to show that they can succeed in what they set out to accomplish, notwithstanding the terrible disaster which attended their initial efforts. But while this will be the very natural feeling among all classes in Canada, they will, nevertheless, be disposed to regard with a very critical eye the proposals of the government for the rebuilding of the great bridge. Rightly or wrongly, there was a settled suspicion that in the past, political preferment has played altogether too prominent a part in the work connected with that unfortunate undertaking.

Mr. Mackenzie King, deputy minister of labor, has left for London to lay before the Imperial authorities the facts respecting the feeling in Canada on the question of the restriction of the immigration of Asiatics. The Colonist has no hesitation in saying that for issuing these instructions to Mr. King the government is deserving of universal commendation. We have, from the very opening of the question, urged that it was one presenting such grave difficulties as to demand the summoning of a conference of representatives of the various colonies to deal with it; and, while a decision to pursue this policy has not as yet been reached, the mission of Mr. King is a step in that direction, and it has, therefore, our heartiest approval. In Mr. King, Canada has a delegate whose fitness for the important task allotted him all parties will unite in saying is all that could be desired, and Conservatives, not less than Liberals, will hope that he may be able to impart such information to the home authorities as will enable them to gain an adequate knowledge of the actual situation in Canada in respect to one of the gravest problems which has ever confronted the statesmen of the Empire.

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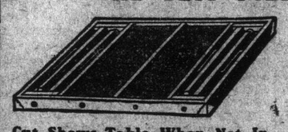

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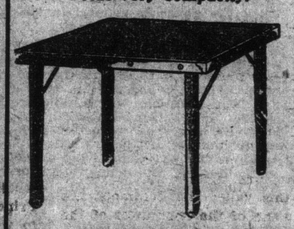

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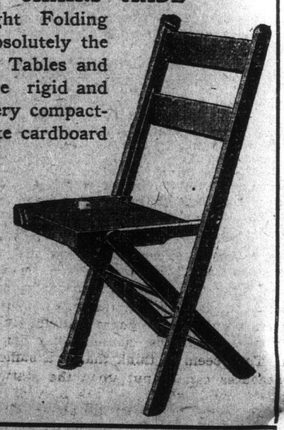

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