

penses, and only bare salaries, fire, light, etc., being taken into consideration. The town is now without fire protection, and the commissioners estimate that an expenditure of \$6,500 is absolutely necessary to provide fire engine, hose and repairs to tanks, etc. This amount, however, is not taken into count, as it is thought it could be covered from collections of bark taxes now due.

The commissioners conclude, after considering the various features of the case, that 25 mills on the dollar, on an assessment of \$560,036, is the very outside which could be collected. This would give a sum of \$10,500, allowing 25 per cent. for uncollected taxes each year. Deducting from this the amount to meet current expenses, and a balance of \$3,546 would remain, to be applied on debt. The commissioners conclude the report as follows:—

"Your commissioners are therefore of opinion that taking into careful consideration all the circumstances before mentioned,

The municipality of the town of Portage la Prairie is able to assume only 40 per cent. of its gross liabilities, viz, \$113,791.56, and to pay interest on the same at the rate of 3 per cent. per annum, payable half yearly, and they have the honor to so report.

And they further report that there is not, in their opinion, any immediate prospect, or even for some years, any reasonable hope of the town being able to assume a larger proportion of its liabilities than before stated."

A contemplation of this report is not a pleasant matter, and places the affairs of the town in even a worse light than was previously supposed. The commissioners, however, are men competent to give an accurate statement, and from a careful study of their report, they seem to have arrived at a conclusion which cannot well be disputed. It is stated that most of the buildings are covered by mortgage, and that many buildings are offered for sale, together with the lands upon which they are erected, at less than the original cost of the material used in construction. Altogether the report presents a sad commentary on the boom days of 1881-82. It is to be hoped that a settlement of some kind may be speedily arrived at, so that the town may be given a chance to recuperate and improve. As it is no advancement can be made, and the longer the delay the less valuable will become the claims against the town. Portage la Prairie has some good natural advantages, which would no doubt be turned to account should a settlement be made, and the town might in this case show a vitality

which would surprise even the commissioners who have made the present report. At any rate it is to be hoped some arrangement will result from the investigation, and that at some future date the town will be able to meet its liabilities in full.

LOCAL POLITICS.

As a result of all the turning and twisting going on in local political circles, a new cabinet has been evolved. It has been known for some time that there was some wavering on the part of two or three supporters of the Government, and reports of dissensions in the cabinet itself were not wanting. At the late meeting of the supporters of the Government, Premier Norquay and Mr. LaRiviere intimated their intention of resigning their portfolios, and they have since carried their intention into effect. The Premier's resignation is understood to have been tendered in favor of Dr. Harrison as his successor; at any rate, the latter gentleman was called upon to assume the formation of a cabinet. The new cabinet has been announced and is found to consist of Dr. Harrison and the two other remaining members of the Norquay Government, namely: Dr. Wilson and Mr. Hamilton, with one new minister in the person of Mr. Burke, and one portfolio held vacant. The last named member will fill the place vacated by Mr. LaRiviere in representing the French section in the Legislature. The resignations are supposed to be the immediate outcome of the blunder in connection with the handing over of the provincial guarantee to the Hudson's Bay railway, before the latter had obtained its land grant from the Dominion. It is a question, however, even aside from the Hudson's Bay matter, if the Government could have pulled through, after the incompetence and mismanagement displayed in handling the Red River Valley railway scheme.

Best the present move to form a new Government is generally considered to be simply a previously arranged shuffle, to tide over a crisis and hold the supporters of the late Government together. With the narrow majority at the back of the Government, a single supporter could not be spared and as several of these were known to be wavering, something had to be done. It is understood the shuffle has been successful in patching up some sort of an agreement which will result in sustaining the new Government, at least

temporarily. That it will not prove a very lasting arrangement seems to be the popular belief, and a general election is considered by many as a probability of the near future. Should the latter view turn out to be the case, it is to be hoped an election would be the means of returning better material than now composes a considerable portion of the Legislature.

Whatever may have been Mr. Norquay's faults, it is pretty generally conceded that the Government has lost the major portion of its ability by his withdrawal. Mr. Burke, the new member, is not known to possess any legislative ability, and of the remaining old members nothing very flattering can be said in the same direction. The new Premier, Dr. Harrison, is known to be a very stiff party man first, which is the best (or rather the worst in the present juncture) that can be said of him. In view of the fact that not long ago he favored railway monopoly in the interests of Dominion Conservatism, his present professions of devotion to the Red River Valley railway and provincial interests generally, are mistrusted by many. That he will push forward the interests of the province in opposition to Sir John and the Dominion Government, can hardly be expected from a party man of Dr. Harrison's proclivities. With the most vital interests of the province directly at issue with the policy of the party now in power at Ottawa, the independent people of Manitoba can hardly be expected to place entire confidence in the new local Government, with a gentleman at its head who has heretofore been looked upon as the strongest upholder of the Dominion policy of any member of the late provincial Government. However, the Hon. Dr. may surprise those who are now inclined to look with mistrust upon his professions of loyalty to the provincial cause, now that he has to face a rather trying situation. His movements, however, will be watched very closely, by an intensely interested and earnest public, and any signs of wavering will certainly produce a storm of indignation which would render his tenure of office very uncertain. At best, with the narrow majority at his back, and the discordant elements among his following, his hold of office cannot be very secure, nor his course very clear sailing. If the coming session of the Legislature is got through with, without a general split up all around, it will be more than is expected by many who are conversant with the situation.