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CHARLOTTETOWN GUARDIAN

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1905.
INVESTIGATING THE SENATE.

The Ottawa correspondent of the Toronto News has set out to give some definite information with regard to the Senate of Canada and the extent of its labors, from which we compile the following. It appears that while Parliament sat for over six months, strictly 102 days, the Senate sat only 68 days. Of these three were merely formal sittings, six were not longer than ten minutes each, twenty were of half an hour or less, and nine only were resumed after the dinner hour.

Thus the full working days of say six hours each were nine in all; the afternoon sittings of one to three hours numbered 28; the afternoons of less than one hour were 20 and the merely formal meetings three. Those Senators who attended all the sittings from start to finish were in their seats about 125 hours in all. It seems strange that the Senators should have had so little to do in so long a session, but this is in part explained by what follows.

The Senate met January 11, passed the address and adjourned for four weeks. Resuming on February 13, it met on three or four days a week for a fortnight and again adjourned for two weeks. Less than a month after the Senators returned they took another three weeks off. Then followed another two weeks at Ottawa and another three weeks adjournment. Two later adjournments took place, one of ten days, and another of five. These various adjournments covered 99 days, or more than half the entire session. Besides which there were no sittings on Saturday or the other numerous holidays recognised at Ottawa.

Custom allows a Senator 15 days absence during the session, exclusive of the time covered by adjournments, without deduction from his pay, and it seems that two more days, for going and coming are not counted against him. So that attendance at the House or at one of its committees on 51 days was sufficient to save to a Senator his full indemnity of \$2,500, thus paying him at the rate of \$50 a day. Thirty-seven Senators had 51 or more days to their credit at last session and drew their full indemnity, but of these only three put in 65 days.

Twenty-seven other Senators presented themselves at more than half the sittings. All those who were there 33 days drew \$2,350 and those with 50 days drew \$2,492, there being a deduction of \$8 for each day missed short of 51. The News gives a list of 16 Senators who did not appear on half the days their House was sitting. A Senator who attended only 21 days drew \$2,284, or at the rate of \$96 a day. This is really handsome pay in view of the short sittings ranging from a few minutes to a few hours.

At the foot of the list given by the News stands the name of Senator Cox, the great Toronto financier whom Mr. Blair said, "could not wait". He was present only five days of the session, as befitted a man who could not wait around Ottawa doing nothing. But he had some reward from his country, for he appears to have drawn \$2,112 indemnity and his mileage besides. His indemnity alone made \$422.40 for each day of his attendance. There seems to be something worth thinking over in these facts.

The annual meeting of the Fruit Growers was an inspiring and encouraging one. The display of fruit showed the capability of our province to produce all that the most luxurious taste could desire, and gives a hint of the vast extent to which the capabilities of our soil and climate are still left unused. The educative value of these annual meetings and exhibitions must be great.

Hearst has been able to make no progress in overturning the election of Mayor McLellan in New York. The latter will be Mayor for the term of election.

It ought to be stated in connection with the indemnity bill elsewhere referred to in this issue, that hereafter attendance of Members at committee meetings will not count for a day's attendance at the House itself as heretofore.

Almost 22,000 people died from the bites of venomous snakes in India last year. Bounties are given for the destruction of snakes, but it has been found that this has led to the natives breeding snakes for the purpose of securing the bounty.

The location of the new railway station has been pronounced by the community in general and by some of the most prominent Liberals as the worst that could be made. On the back of this to refuse a \$15 telephone for the convenience of all the patrons of the Railway when respectfully asked for, is about the most unpopular thing that could be done. It is surely worth while for any Government however strong to try and please the people in something, and especially at this joyous season of the year.

We are glad to find The Patriot energetically advocating a telephone for Georgetown station, and also that Mr. Warburton has written General Manager Pottinger on the subject. As The Patriot observes, "It seems mighty strange that every little trifle that our people require should have to be fought for so strenuously." There is no doubt also that what seem to be trifles at Ottawa, often tend to bring a Government into disrepute and to defeat its candidates. The politicians ought to have learned this long ago.

It is clear as pointed out by Mr. Borden the other day, that a stop should be put to the practice of Members of Parliament receiving professional fees for promoting or opposing measures that may be pending in Parliament. The practice has crept in and appears to be growing. A Member with a retaining fee in his pocket to support or oppose a given measure is in the same position when he comes to vote on the measure as a bribed juror on the jury panel. Mr. Borden proposes make this practice unlawful. It has always been improper.

The Czar has promised to restore the land to the people. He cannot do this too quickly. What it means will appear when it is stated that nearly one third of all the land in European Russia is and has been held as a personal belonging of the Czar and his family. The rents of these lands, representing almost the very life-blood of the people go to Moscow and St. Petersburg where they are squandered by the Grand Dukes in luxury and debauch. The Russians are an agricultural people and possession of the land means everything to them.

In all that we have said and may yet have to say on the increase of indemnity to Members of Parliament we have dealt with the question on general and public lines. We have no desire to place undue blame upon our Island representatives in the Senate or Commons. They did not originate the measure, and their numbers are so few it seems unlikely that their united opposition could have stopped it from being enacted. And we desire again to express our sense of their earnest and able efforts to secure justice for the Island in the matter of communication with the Mainland. That service must not be forgotten.

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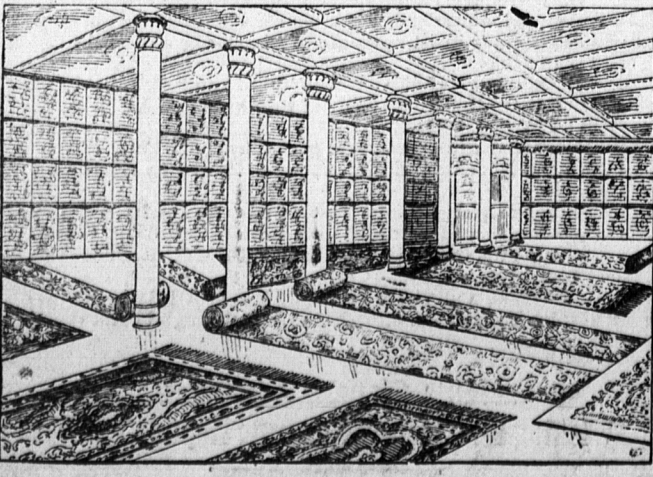
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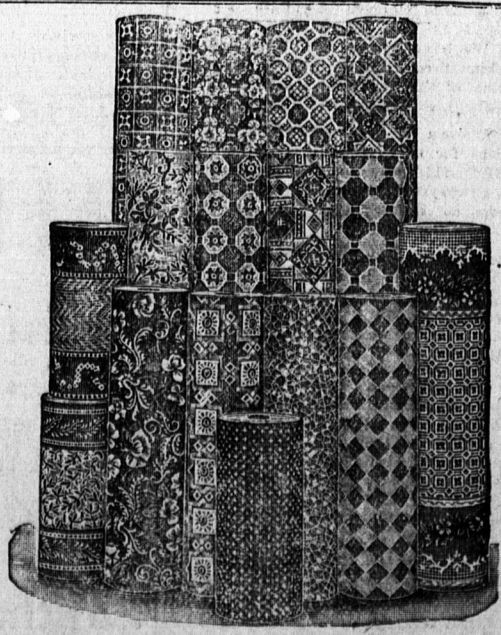
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