

THE ONTARIO ELECTIONS.*

Toronto, Ont., Dec. 16.

The Provincial elections are over and the Conservatives have again secured a large majority.

No sooner had Sir James Whitney announced that a new election would take place than some of the Conservative papers proclaimed their belief that, in consequence of his opposition to local option in taxation, it would be well for the country to have a stronger Opposition. At the same time the Liberal party came out unequivocally in favor of this local option; and the leader of that party, Mr. N. W. Rowell, in his opening meeting gave his approval to the proposal and was heartily applauded for it by the audience.

To those who have had to fight the politicians, often with very little encouragement, thus to see one political party and some of the members and papers of the other political party endorsing this all important measure has been a cause of great rejoicing.

The two Conservative candidates for the city of Ottawa, I presume under the influence of the Southam brothers of the Ottawa Citizen, pledged themselves publicly to support a measure for local option in taxation, so that in spite of the opposition of Sir James Whitney, the leader of their party, a bill to grant power to municipalities to remove taxes from improvements will be introduced in our next Parliament.

During the election Sir James was induced at last to notice the criticism of some of his own supporters, and in a communication to the press, he assumed a case in which two men bought farms for \$4,000 each, on which one man erected a home worth \$1,000 and the other a home worth \$16,000. "Now," he said, "the proposal is made to give the one man an exemption of \$16,000 and the other an exemption of only \$1,000." Then he continued: "I shall not argue this point at all, but will say that when the farmers of Ontario make it clear that they desire the imposition on themselves of such a rank and manifest injustice, no government will stand in their way."

In making this assumption, he very carefully avoided the case of the man who, by holding a single acre in any of our commercial centers, without spending an hour in the production of anything, can secure the crops of a hundred farms every year.

In this same communication he promised that there would be a special committee to deal with assessments at the close of the next session of the local Parliament. The question has now obtained so strong a hold on the minds of the people, and has received such hearty support from a large portion of the press of both parties, that it will not down.

Twenty-one years ago the Parliament of Manitoba, in consequence of the representations of the farmers, who saw the speculators reaping the benefit of their pioneer work, amended the assessment act with the following words: "All land in rural municipalities, used for farming or gardening purposes, shall be assessed as it would be assessed if it were unimproved." Shortly after that the Province of British Columbia passed a measure which allowed the taxation of improvements to the amount of only

half the value, and as much less as the municipalities might choose. Saskatchewan and Alberta followed with similar legislation, while the Province of Ontario, which prided and boasted itself as the most progressive, populous and wealthy of the Provinces, has been clinging blindly and stupidly to an antiquated and unjust method, which aroused, often to a white heat, the spirit of speculation, and time and again brought on financial cataclysms that swept the country, in spite of its fertility and the skill and industry of its people, with epidemics of bankruptcy.

W. A. DOUGLASS.

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AUSTRALASIA.

Corowa, N. S. W., Australia, Oct. 27.

Mr. George Fowlds has resigned his position as the Minister of Education in New Zealand, as he considers Sir Joseph Ward's ministry not sufficiently progressive. He found that as a Minister he was hampered in the expression of his views, and he felt he could serve the people better as a private member. He will advocate that the tax on land values be increased by a penny in the pound, and that customs duties on the necessaries of life be remitted.

A general State election was held in Western Australia last month, when the Labor party was returned by a large majority. At present, there is in force in this State a land value tax of one penny in the pound, with exemptions. The Wilson ministry, which was defeated, had proposed to abolish this tax, and to increase the income tax. The Labor party supports a land value tax without exemptions. It is much sounder on land value taxation than the State Labor parties of Victoria and New South Wales.

The budget of last year, submitted to the State parliament of South Australia by the Verran (Labor) ministry, was passed by the lower house, but defeated in the Legislative Council. [See *The Public*, current volume, p. 79.] The Ministry is trying to pass a veto bill, somewhat similar to that recently enacted in England. This year's budget was lately presented by the Treasurer, Mr. Crawford Vaughn. Like that of last year, it is on Singletax lines, the increased land value tax being in substitution for existing taxes. It is proposed to increase the tax on land values by one-half penny in the pound. Against this, railway freights are to be reduced, the income tax exemption raised from £200 to £300, and stamp duties on receipts abolished.

In Victoria, local government taxation is levied on the annual rental value of land and improvements. The State Ministry has introduced a bill making it optional for municipalities to tax land values instead, and providing that if a Council does not adopt this method, a poll of taxpayers may be taken to decide the question. But the conditions laid down in the bill will make it very difficult to obtain the holding of a poll, and plural voting is not abolished, so the bill is a very disappointing measure. As a general State election is to be held in November, it is doubtful if the bill will be proceeded with this session. At this election, a system of preferential voting will be used for the first time. The State is divided into 65 constituencies, each return-

*See *Public* of December 15, page 1267.

ing one member, as previously, but an elector will now vote for the candidates in the order of his preference, instead of voting for one candidate only. This method is an improvement on the old one, but is much inferior to the system of proportional voting in force in Tasmania.

The McGowen (Labor) ministry in New South Wales started with an absolute majority of two, but owing to some by-elections the parties became equal and for some time there was a deadlock. Another by-election has now restored the Government majority. The Ministry proposes to reduce the income-tax exemption, and to restore the stamp duties on checks and receipts, which were abolished a few years ago. The New South Wales budget is thus a great contrast to that of South Australia.

The Federal graduated land-value tax, in its first year of operation, produced nearly £1,400,000, in spite of the high exemption of £5,000. The Federal government intends to establish a Commonwealth bank, which will conduct all ordinary banking business.

ERNEST BRAY.

INCIDENTAL SUGGESTIONS

ORGANIC EDUCATION.

Fairhope, Ala.

Whoever heard of a grower of fine plants or animals, making requirements of those plants or animals? Instead, the wise student of nature studies the symptoms of health or disease and works in harmony with those symptoms. Whenever the plant or animal responds unsatisfactorily, the treatment is changed at once. So also with the wise physician. He does not blame the patient when results are undesirable, but changes the prescription!

In our school work, however, it is different. We do not study the needs of the child as evidenced by the symptoms; but we plan a course of study and exercises which are designed to help him, but under which he often languishes or becomes restive, indifferent or even vicious. When this occurs we do not change the treatment, but console ourselves with blaming the child.

When the little child grows nervous, near-sighted, and round-shouldered, we put on glasses, give a few "corrective" exercises which often still more exhaust the nervous system, and continue to require the child to spend his time in an unwholesome room, working in an unwholesome way at needless employment.

When the girl's nature does not respond to the requirements in arithmetic, she is counted dull or stupid, or possibly abnormal, but the nature of the requirement is not changed. When the boy grows indifferent, languid, or vicious, refusing to do his best at school, acquiring a distaste for grammar or languages, the school "fails" him, exhorts him to greater effort and brands him "different"—but never once does it enter the minds of the authorities to change the requirements.

Why should education insist upon being uneducational? Our insane desire to "educate" is a fatal barrier to development which is the only true education. Could a child's conscious striving and over-

eating make him taller or broader? Neither will conscious striving and over-study make him wiser or better.

Why not act as reasonably in education as in other things? If the nature of the little child requires freedom, why not give freedom instead of requiring him to sit at stationary desks and be silent? If his nature requires out of doors, fresh air, why not give that? Can't he "learn" anything out of doors? If his seeing should not be at close range, why give him a book at so young an age? Can't he learn anything without books? If his nervous system requires the larger movements first, why put him at writing so young? Are there no other "educative activities" in which he may more safely engage?

We know that many children "fail" in school. We know that many grow indifferent and unhappy. We know that some are not strong enough to meet the "requirements." Then why in the name of education should we continue the treatment when the response is unsatisfactory? Why not sanely and bravely look the little child in the face, and throw away all of the "traditions of the elders" and all of our unrighteous requirements, and simply and religiously meet *his* requirements? How shall we know them? By the symptoms of his response or reaction. For the test of the environment is the reaction of the child. The test of a school is the condition of the child—bodily, mentally, spiritually.

What does the body need? Fresh air in out-of-doors, play, freedom, no stationary desks, no enforced silence, but quiet—only when the occupation requires it; much choice in occupation, physical coordination through creative handwork.

What does the mind require? Time to observe, investigate, think and reason out a few things—often help and guidance from the teacher, but rarely ordered attention; experiences and activities in harmony with age and interests—that is, things of sense in the early years, books, experiences of others and abstractions in the later years.

What is necessary for the spirit? Joy in work, a genuine desire to do it; work which enlists every part of the entire organism. In fact, all half-hearted work is insincere, and we often cultivate dishonesty in the child when we try to develop "will power" by arbitrary requirements.

True education is organic—that is, it develops, strengthens and improves the body, makes the mind more intelligent and the spirit sweeter—in fact perfects the entire organism.

But can it be done? Why not? What is to prevent our taking the desks out of the room, allowing only twenty pupils to the teacher, and removing the "intellectual requirements" of the first grades in any city? Instead of desks, have tables at which the children may work. Instead of requirements in reading, writing, numbers, etc., let the children sing and play, make things of paper card board and textiles, taking care that the nervous system is not injured by too close work. Let them have gardens in which they may plant what they choose, and which they may care for in their own way with the sympathetic assistance of the teacher. Let them have stories of geography, history, and literature. Give them an opportunity to learn to speak some other modern language than their own. Let them have