

THE INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM.

NEEDED REFORMS IN REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT.

To the People of Canada :

We have had years of experience of our system of Representative Government, the result of which has been to prove representative government in some respects a failure. Our laws do not represent the will of the people, neither do they serve to prevent corruption. No system of government can be considered satisfactory, which does not answer these two requirements. The first duty of our legislative body, should be, to carry into effect the wishes of the majority of the electors of the community. In a state where the electors have no opportunity to express themselves directly upon the question at issue, it must necessarily happen that the wishes of the people may be one thing, while the law enacted by the legislative power may be entirely different. Especially is this true, when, as with us, a dozen different measures may be brought before the electors in one political campaign, on some of which one candidate may represent the elector's views, while the opposing candidate may be more in accord with him as to the remainder. The elector naturally votes for the candidate who represents his view on what he considers the most important question, while he is compelled to sacrifice his opinions on what he deems of minor importance. When added to this, there have been party affiliations extending over a long term of years, the voter very often sacrifices his views on even the most important matter, because, while not satisfied with the position taken by his whilom friends, he prefers to have them in power rather than to trust the control

of affairs to those in whom he has no confidence, fearing that they may do even worse than his friends. (In a proper system of government the voter should be able to express his opinion directly upon legislation).

Then, after a representative is once selected, there is no method provided by which his action may be controlled, either positively or negatively during his term of office. He is at liberty to break every pledge, and on every question to vote contrary to the wishes of his constituents. The electors are kings only at the moment they deposit their ballot, for they thus assert their sovereignty only to yield it up again to the representative body. This we believe to be a flagrant wrong which should be remedied. The evil results of the system have been made apparent in our own legislation, and much social progress has been retarded because of its defects.

The present system tends towards partyism and partyism leads to corruption. In the process of time electors become so identified with their party that they seek to palliate rather than condemn the wrongs of which that party may have been guilty. The result has been periodical revelations of corruption in our parliamentary systems. Patriotic citizens should look around for a remedy. Not a palliative that will serve merely as a check, but something which will strike at the root of the disease. We believe that the cause of these evils lies in the fact that our various representative bodies have practically uncontrolled power over both money and important interests. This affords the opportunity for corrup-