

Two Provinces on Verge of Provincial Elections



On June 8 the provincial elections will be held in Ontario and Quebec. It is an unusual incident for two provinces of the Dominion to be settling their political differences on the same day. The date was first fixed by the Ontario government and was announced some little time ago. It was known then that the Gouin ministry of Quebec intended to go to the people some time during the coming summer and as soon as the announcement of the dissolution of the Ontario legislature was made, Mr. Gouin proceeded to select the same date for his own appeal. Neither political party gains any discernible advantage by such an arrangement. The season chosen is a convenient one for all concerned, and the conditions are such as to insure a pretty complete expression of public opinion in both provinces.

Ontario Safely Conservative

"As to the opposition during the last session, there was none," said Mr. Whitney in his opening speech of the Ontario campaign at Hamilton last Wednesday. The remark was a sufficiently accurate epitome of the actual state of affairs in that province. The Liberal opposition in the Ontario legislature contains men of ability but they are few in number and bankrupt in hope.

Everybody who takes any interest in Canadian political affairs remembers vividly the cataclysm that overtook the Ontario Liberals at the election of 1905. They had held power for thirty-two years, during the latter part of which they had revelled in political corruption of the most unblushing character, until finally their own friends in thousands turned against them and they went down to crushing defeat. From that defeat they have not yet recovered. They have no hope of victory in the June contest, and they hardly take the trouble to pretend that they have any.

Have Since Learned Better

In the days when J. P. Whitney sat to the left of Mr. Speaker it was the fashion among his opponents to belittle his ability and that of his followers. Those who talked in this way really believed a good deal of what they said, but they have since learned better. Mr. Whitney has not only shown himself a very capable, fearless man, but he has gathered around him a ministry of whom every man is a power in the land. Together they have carried out necessary reforms, insofar as time would allow. What remains to be done will be gone about energetically in the next legislature.

Many important questions have been dealt with by the Ontario government during the last three and a half years. One of these questions, that of extension of boundaries, concerns Manitoba rather closely. The matter was really thrust upon the attention of the people of Ontario by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who practically begged that province to ask for a part of what is now the district of Keewatin. A resolution on the subject was, accordingly, passed by the Ontario legislature. There the matter has been allowed to rest. There is no indication that the people of Ontario really care much about it. Certainly they are not showing any great signs of excitement.

Condition of Liquor Traffic

A matter which Mr. Whitney has dealt with boldly and vigorously has been the condition of the liquor traffic. During the last two years that Mr. Ross was premier, when he was showing a determination to hang on to office at all costs, the Liberals coquetted with prohibition. They even came near to adopting it as a policy. Mr. Whitney, on the other hand, stood for a strict enforcement of the law, combined with a system of local option. His policy in this respect was practically the same as that which has prevailed of late years in Manitoba. Mr. Whitney adopted in substance the Manitoba law and made it his own, even to the requiring a three-fifths vote to carry or to repeal local option. On this point Manitoba, as the result of experience, has reverted to the principal of majority rule, but Ontario still adheres to the three-fifths rule and seems to prefer it. Some perfunctory references to the matter are found in speeches which have been made thus far in the campaign, but it can hardly be described as a living issue.

Living Issues Are Few

In point of fact, it is almost an exaggeration to say that the campaign has any living issues. The Liberals are objecting in a dispirited fashion to the redistribution bill, but their criticism is of the weakest character. They complain that Toronto is given four more members, but the growing population of that city made such an increase necessary, while as to the boundaries of the Toronto constituencies, it is enough to say that they were fixed by the Liberals themselves in the days of their power.

An attempt has been made to manufacture a grievance out of the conditions prevailing in New Ontario. Certainly there was for a while a good deal of loud complaint from that district. Pioneer life is necessarily hard. Roads and schools and the many other necessities of decent, civilized life must be provided as rapidly as possible, and provided, moreover, by a population widely scattered and not too well furnished with worldly means.

Was Dealt With Promptly

This state of affairs was recognized by the Whitney government and dealt with promptly. A new portfolio, that of lands, forests and mines, was created. Hon. Frank Chene was appointed to fill it. How well he has done so

may be judged from the contentment which prevails in that section. Every reasonable need has been met. Settlers have been treated with more generosity than formerly, being now made the owners of any timber or mineral that may be found on their lands. The result is that the agitation, which was gaining more or less headway, for the formation of a new province out of the western part of Ontario has completely died away and the district seems likely to send a solid delegation to Toronto to support the Whitney government.

The power question has occupied and still occupies a large share of Ontario's attention. The discussion has been somewhat complicated, but the fundamental idea is to see that cheap electrical power is furnished wherever practicable and that this necessary tool of modern progress is not allowed to fall into the hands of monopolists, or that, in any event, the price at which it is sold shall not be unduly high.

Hon. Adam Beck's Work

Hon. Adam Beck, the member for London, has had this part of the government's policy in his especial charge. He has made considerable progress towards carrying out the idea, and on this question Mr. Whitney declares that the government now sees the end of its troubles. Mr. Beck in this respect is hardly so fortunate as the government. His political enemies in London are hard after him and the constituency has become, for this reason, perhaps the most interesting in the whole fight. Mr. Beck himself is confident of victory. His confidence will probably be vindicated by the electors, but there is no denying that the contest is a warm one.

The names of Messrs. Mackenzie and Mann figure somewhat prominently in the platform discussions which are going on. Towards the close of last session the Canadian Northern railway secured from the legislature a considerable enlargement of the amount of their bonds guaranteed by the Ontario government. The security held by the government is more than ample and the increased guarantee was in fact supported by Mr. MacKay, the leader of the opposition. Mr. MacKay is now trying to explain his own vote and to insinuate that there is reason for alarm, but the guarantee is strongly defended by Mr. Whitney, who says that not only was it right, but that he is proud of it.

Law Reform Coming

In fact, the Conservative contention is that all of their promises have been carried out except the one relating to law reform, and in this

the foundation has been laid for a settlement which will be carried through next session.

Apart from their having little to criticize and nothing of a constructive character to offer, the Liberals are handicapped by the existence of a certain amount of dissension within their own ranks. After the last election Hon. G. W. Ross continued the thankless task of leadership for a little time, but it was plain that he was no longer wanted, and he soon accepted a seat in the Canadian senate. The Liberals of Ontario had recognized the desirability of getting rid of all the leaders whose names were connected with the past. Therefore they rejected Hon. Richard Harcourt, the sole survivor of the old regime, and chose George P. Graham of Brockville to fill the vacancy. Mr. Harcourt since that time, though he has remained with the party, has exercised no influence. A few days ago it was announced that he had retired from public life. The real reason for his retirement is that he cannot find a constituency where he can be re-elected.

Mr. Graham Soon Quit

Mr. Graham did not remain long as leader of the opposition at Toronto. He occupied the position from January to August, 1907. Then he gladly accepted a chance to go to Ottawa as a member of the Laurier administration. This left the leadership vacant once more, and there were those who thought that T. H. Preston of South Brant was the right man for the job, but the friends of A. G. MacKay of North Grey succeeded in making their views prevail.

Mr. MacKay is regarded by a considerable section of his followers as hardly large enough for the position. They are waiting for him to make good, but they don't half believe he can do it. His failure to frame any coherent, intelligent policy on which to go to the country has not strengthened him. But it is perhaps hardly fair to blame him. Leading a discontented and half-mutinious forlorn hope is not a task to be desired.

The situation, in brief, is that the Conservatives are active and aggressive, with capable leaders, a sound record and a progressive policy. The other side has none of these things. The result, therefore, cannot be doubted. The Conservative majority may possibly not be so large as in 1905. Some seats may be lost or won through purely local reasons, but the net result is sure to be a renewal of the confidence which the province has given to Mr. Whitney and his colleagues.

Exactly why Hon. Lomer Gouin, premier of Quebec, should have decided to appeal to the people at this particular time, has not been adequately explained in any public utterance by himself or any of his supporters. The legislature had still a year of legal existence before it, so that another session could have been held, with its accompanying incidental advantage of another sessional indemnity of \$800. The government, although in the nature of things not as strong as when it was formed, is nevertheless in such a position that the possibility of its defeat is not contemplated by even the most enthusiastic opponent. The explanation probably lies in the facts that just at present certain internal feuds have been temporarily hushed, and the province also finds itself financially prosperous, largely as a consequence of the \$600,000 received from the Dominion treasury by way of increased subsidy. Mr. Gouin may well think that it is wise to take no chances. Nobody can tell what a year may bring forth.

The Quebec Situation

The existing government of Quebec came into office under very peculiar circumstances. The Liberal administration dates from 1897, when F. G. Marchand became premier. When he died in 1900 his place was taken by Hon. S. N. Parent, with Lomer Gouin as minister of public works.

So strong was this administration that Hon. E. J. Flynn, the then leader of the Quebec Conservatives, feeling that victory was hopeless, issued a manifesto advising the Conservative party to retire from the contest altogether and allow the Liberals to carry the seat by acclamation. This advice was far from palatable to a considerable section of the party, but it nevertheless had a very demoralizing effect. In 34 constituencies the Liberal candidates were elected by acclamation. In 19 others the fight was between two Liberals, with no Conservative in the field. When the votes were counted, it was found that in a legislature of 74 members there were seven Conservatives, Hon. P. E. Leblanc, of Laval; A. W. Giard, of Crompton; L. P. Bernard, of Shefford; Pierre D'Auteuil, of Charlevoix; Geo. Lafontaine, of Maskinonge; Honore Petit, of Chicoutimi, and J. M. Tellier, Joliette. This little band has since been reinforced by C. E. Gault, of Division No. 5, Montreal, so that at the time of the dissolution the first men were eight in number.

After such a triumph, Mr. Parent was, to all appearances, supreme, but his troubles com-

menced immediately. Besides being premier of his province, he was mayor of Quebec and president of the Quebec Bridge company, which last position, in view of subsequent events, he may perhaps wish he had relinquished earlier, despite its alluring prospect of easily acquired wealth. The great are always envied.

Wanted the Whole Thing

In the opinion of many Quebec politicians, Mr. Parent was something of a hog who wanted the whole thing for himself and would not give the boys their fair share. Mr. Parent's manner, moreover, is not propitiatory. He is brusque and dictatorial.

Discontent grew, until in a few months rebellion broke out, headed by Lomer Gouin, who had been minister of colonization and public works; Adelard Turgeon, minister of agriculture; and W. A. Weir, minister without portfolio. These gentlemen deserted the premier and openly demanded his resignation. They were backed by Senators Choquette and Legris, leaders of the Dominion Liberal party in the province and by the Dominion solicitor-general, Rodolphe Lemieux, who happened to be the law partner of Mr. Gouin. The resulting row was somewhat protracted, but it presently became evident that Mr. Parent could not rely upon the support of the legislature. He, therefore, resigned under the usual plea of ill-health, but he exacted his price. Though beaten, he was still powerful. His price was the presidency of the National Transcontinental Railway commission, which was rendered vacant by the death of Mr. Wade. This position Mr. Parent still holds.

These events brought Mr. Gouin the coveted position of premier which he still holds. Of the two gentlemen who helped him openly in his struggle for leadership, Mr. Turgeon is minister of lands and forests, while Mr. Weir is provincial treasurer.

Danger Was in Sight

Whatever troubles Mr. Gouin may have had since he became premier have arisen mostly from the size of his majority and the consequent difficulty of satisfying everybody. Only once has his government been at all within sight of danger. This attack, which threatened for a time to shake his power, and which resulted in the retirement of his colleague, Frs. J. B. Prevost, from the Portfolio of colonization, mines and fisheries, arose out of the operations of one Baron de L'Epine, the agent of a Belgian colonization syndicate. According to the baron's story, as told on the witness stand in a subsequent libel suit, the syndicate agreed to purchase 500,000 acres of land from the provincial government, the price to be nominally seventy cents per acre, but really one dollar per acre. In other words, the provincial treasury was to get the seventy cents, while the Liberal party treasury was to receive the other thirty. The syndicate was to pay ten per cent of the purchase money down and the rest in instalments as the land was disposed of to settlers from Belgium. The arrangement fell through, according to the baron's testimony, because the party organizers demanded that thirty cents per acre, amounting in all to \$150,000, be paid in advance. The syndicate found it impossible to raise such a sum on that kind of security. The baron thus cruelly cheated out of a snug commission, began to talk.

Libel suits followed and the accused ministers obtained whatever vindication can be got from the verdict of a court in such a case, but there was a particularity of detail about the baron's disclosures which impressed many of the electors.

New Man at Helm

Henri Bourassa, then member of parliament for Labelle, came forward at this juncture. He possessed a considerable personal following, he had made a close study of matters relating to local administration, and he cherished an ambition to be premier of Quebec. He made several speeches throughout the province denouncing the government, but just when his accusations were beginning to attract attention and before the movement which he led had gathered force, Mr. Turgeon, one of the accused, resigned, and challenged Mr. Bourassa to test the opinion of the electors by contesting the constituency of Bellechasse. This challenge Mr. Bourassa, rather unwisely accepted. With the whole force of the government arrayed against him and with only a comparatively few days for the discussion of the issue, Mr. Bourassa was badly beaten. Mr. Turgeon, of course, proclaimed that his victory showed that the people did not believe the charges against the government, Mr. Bourassa, his health somewhat impaired by the exertions of the campaign, retired temporarily from public view, and the government remained triumphant. That was last October. Since that time there have been no large clouds on the Liberal horizon.

As It Is Today

Such is the position as it stands today. Mr. Bourassa will not revamp his personal movement until a later date. For the present he will stick to the insurance business in which he is making money. The contest, therefore, will lie between straight Liberals and as many candidates as the Conservative party can put in the field. Many constituencies will not have a Conservative candidate and in several of these there will be two Liberals running, but in any event the victor will be a supporter of the Gouin administration. The Conservatives expect that their strength will be considerably increased in the next legislature, but as yet they are chary of specifying what seats they expect to win.

Construction of the Amur Railway



RUSSIA has made a momentous decision in finally resolving to construct along the banks of the River Amur a very great extension of her Siberian railway system. The Duma, after much elaborate oratory, which suggests that its members have amply developed one characteristic of representative institutions, has this week passed the necessary bill. The line will branch off from the existing route at a point apparently west of Chita, and will follow the course of the great waterway, in a vast semi-circular sweep, until it unites with the Ussuri railway at Khabarovsk. It will thus link up a wide gap in the existing chain of communications, and will give access by rail to Vladivostok through territory that has long been in Russian possession. The scheme is grandiose and in a sense courageous, but many sincerely patriotic Russians are believed to regard it with intense misgivings. They point to the strained condition of the national exchequer, and ask whether Russian finance is in a position to face an enormous initial outlay, and heavy annual charges for maintenance, in connection with a line that is most unlikely to prove remunerative. They further deprecate the proposal on the ground that it commits the Russian government to a continuance of that adventurous policy in the Far East which of late years has caused such poignant tribulations. They are loth to see Russia still turning her face, as Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria once phrased it, towards "the morning light of the East," and they think the cabinet would have been wiser to devote itself and its money to questions of development nearer the centre of the empire. General Kuropatkin and other eminent military authorities are understood to dislike the scheme because they doubt its strategic value, unless it is associated with a large development of existing lines, which would imply a further heavy expenditure. M. Stolypin, however, insists upon regarding the Amur railway as of "primary national importance." He is looking ahead, and perceives that China is tolerably certain to exercise her right to buy the Manchurian lines, which she can purchase, both from Russia and from Japan, thirty-one years hence. If China completes the purchase, Russia would have no control over means of communication with her maritime territory except by a river exceedingly difficult to navigate, which is frozen for several months every year. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Amur railway scheme has been vigorously revived. M. Stolypin recognizes that its construction will involve great sacrifices, but, not unnaturally, he feels that the need is great. Russia is too deeply committed in her valuable Pacific provinces to leave them beyond the reach of the unifying locomotive. The necessity is economic as well as strategic. It implies no visible menace, and there is nothing

in the decision at variance with M. Isvolsky's friendly speech last month on Russo-Japanese relations.

The Amur railway will place a severe tax upon Russian resources. It will be over 1,300 miles long, and any engineers save those who have resolutely spanned Asia with bands of steel would hardly contemplate the enterprise without apprehension. The estimated cost of construction alone is set down at over £22,000,000, a sum which will probably be largely exceeded, if precedent counts for anything; and M. Stolypin has stated that the annual charges will amount to two or three millions sterling. The engineering difficulties are great. The constructors will not be advancing across an endless level prairie, as they did when they emerged into Manchuria through Trans-Baikalia and the Khingan range. There are rugged mountains to be traversed. The liability of the Amur to floods when the thaw comes will have to be taken into account. The bridge-work will be very heavy. Not only the broad main stream itself, but an endless number of tributaries, will have to be crossed. Russian railway engineers, however, have little to learn in the matter of bridging rivers, and, if their methods of railway construction are sometimes criticized in countries where more rigid principles are enforced, it must be said to their credit that they build their lines in a manner well suited to the regions they develop. Political differences apart, it is impossible to deny a meed of admiration to the many zealous and capable men in Russia who have pierced with their railways some of the most desolate lands in the world. The Siberian railway was often scoffed at before the war, but its carrying capacity in a time of great emergency astonished railway experts. The real pioneer of Russian civilization in these northern Asiatic latitudes, the lineal successor of Yermak and his Cossacks, and of Muraviev in his barge on the Amur, is the railway engineer. His work, often conducted under the most deterrent conditions, typifies alike the courageous confidence with which the best Russians face the future, and the indomitable skill and energy with which they rough-hew and shape the path of empire, undismayed by the most formidable rebuffs. We may sometimes dislike the policy of Russia in Asia, but we should not fail to recognize the fine qualities it has frequently called into being.

How far the enterprise to which Russia now stands committed will assist in the further development of Eastern Siberia is still an open question. Its first object is to furnish the missing link in the chain of communications on Russian soil, but it cannot fail in the long run to have important economic results also. These will doubtless become apparent in the maritime provinces rather than along

the route to be traversed by the new line. The watershed of the Upper Amur is a region of dank forests, hardly capable of supporting a large agricultural population. The settlements scattered sparsely along the northern bank of the river maintain a precarious connection with the world without, but the territory is never likely to attract large numbers of cultivators. Towns like Blagovestchensk may grow, because they are centres of the gold mining industry, to which the line is certain to give a great stimulus. It is towards the Ussuri districts, however, that M. Stolypin's gaze is turned when he speaks glowingly of "forty million acres of cornlands" awaiting the touch of man. Many problems must be solved before the available fertile areas are brought effectively under cultivation. Even under existing conditions, the flood of emigration to the Amur territories has been larger than the Russian authorities are able to cope with adequately. Siberian methods of agriculture leave at present a large margin for improvement, and the new settlers do not always make successful and thrifty colonists. The eternal difficulty of Chinese competition is becoming very conspicuous in the Primorsk province, and on the Amur also, while even the mild Korean shows an increasing tendency to dwell beneath the Russian eagles in preference to the banner of the Rising Sun. The process of developing the Pacific territories is not only vast, but is still to a large extent inchoate. However, it will probably take Russia ten years to complete her new line, and by the time it is finished she will have a clearer idea of future possibilities. Meanwhile, it is sufficient for onlookers to recognize that, if the scheme is adventurous and perhaps rather reckless from the financial point of view, it is probably necessary; that it should tend to add to the world's supply of corn and gold; and that there is no need to peer behind the strictly peaceful assurances with which it is introduced.—London Times.

Members of the Y. M. C. A. in Los Angeles, Cal., are deeply agitated because General Superintendent C. B. Weaver, in charge of the construction work of the five hundred thousand dollar association building, has discharged all Christians he could find among the two hundred men employed and declined to hire any. He declares that he can "get twenty-five per cent more work out of sinners than church members," and will finish the job with men making no profession of faith.

Two young thieves who had robbed a shop front in Brussels, were so hard pressed in the chase by the police and the shopkeeper that they lost their heads and fled right into a police station before recognizing it.

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