

SHOULD THE COUNCIL OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION BE CONTINUED ?

Since the appointment of a Minister of Education in lieu of a Chief Superintendent, it is reported in certain quarters that the Council of Public Instruction might be dissolved, and the whole educational machinery of the country handed over to the Minister, as so much departmental routine. We objected to the change proposed with reference to the appointment of a Minister of Education; we believe it was a mistake. We have no doubt in our own minds, but subsequent events will prove it was a mistake. We are well aware that the plea for the change *theoretically* was good enough, and that it is anomalous, where the Executive is supposed to be responsible to Parliament and the country, for any officers of the people to possess the power wielded, and the whole well and wisely wielded, by the Chief Superintendent. But the *practical* advantage of a permanent head to the Education Department—the advantage of being able to take soundings uninfluenced by the boisterous winds of party politics, was so great as to more than counterbalance any damage that might ensue from a trifling violation of well recognized theories of constitutional government.

To follow the change of the head of the Education Department by the abolition of the Council of Public Instruction, would be a serious stroke to the public mind at present, and besides being unpopular, would, what is far worse, jeopardize the Public School system of the Province. It must not be forgotten, that in making a system of education like ours effective and practical, two things are required :—1st. Good Legislation on general principles ; and 2nd, A wise filling up of details. It so happens in this case too, that the general principles are

easily defined and easily asserted, but that details constitute not only the more difficult, but also the more important duty. For instance, our whole system is based on three ideas—We must have the facilities for securing an education—these facilities must be *free* to all both rich and poor, and the people themselves must have the sole control, through the trustees, of school property, and the selection of a teacher. These three principles constitute the whole sum and substance of our Public School laws. And yet with principles so few and simple, how vast are the details. There are Regulations for Normal and Model Schools—for Inspectors of High and Public Schools—Programme of Studies—Revision or Construction of Text Books—Depositories for Maps, Books and Apparatus—the licensing and grading of teachers—and all requiring the most careful consideration and supervision. Indeed, it might be said that a failure in any one of these regulations would vitiate our whole school system.

Now, the question naturally arises, how is attention to be given to all these matters, if the Council of Public Instruction is to be abolished ? Who is sufficient for the task of managing a department as political chief, and at the same time give even the most limited attention to all the matters above referred to ? Or where can we find the man with that practical knowledge of our school system as it now exists, and the new wants which constantly arise, to impart the necessary vitality or make necessary improvements ? We know that politicians claim special fitness for any ordinary duty of government. We would not for a moment wish to detract from their merit, either real or assumed, but we do say that there is not now in the Province known to us, a