THE answers given by Chancellor Boyd and Mr. Justice Robertson to the questions submitted by the Minister of Education, concerning the construction to be placed upon certain amendments to the Separate Schools Act, will be useful as a guide to assessors and others charged with the administration of the law. These answers make clear the power of the Courts of Revision to determine complaints and correct mistakes in cases in which names are alleged to have been placed in the wrong column of the assessment rolls for the purpose of the school tax, or wrongfully omitted from the same. They also show that the assessor is not bound to accept the statement of, or made on behalf of, any ratepayer, under section 120 (2) of the Public Schools Act, if he is informed, or ascertains before completing his roll, that such ratepayer is not a Roman Catholic, or has not given the notice required, or is for any reason not entitled to exemption from the Public School rates. The answers of the learned judges also establish the fact that the wrongful assessment for one or more years of one who is not a Roman Catholic, or who, being a Roman Catholic, has not given the requisite notice, does not estop him from claiming in any following year that he should not be placed as a Separate School supporter for that year. These are, as above intimated, points in regard to which it is well to have a clearly defined and authoritative decision. At the same time, they are, severally, points in regard to which it does not seem possible that there could have been much serious doubt in any mind not under the influence of partisan bias. With regard to the one matter which, as we have repeatedly pointed out, is of real importance, the objection urged against the amendment to the Separate School Act is sustained by the decision of the judges. The question and answer in regard to this matter read as follows:

Is or is not a ratepayer, who has not, by himself or his agent, given notice in accordance with the last foregoing section (section 40 of the Separate Schools Act), entitled to exemption from the payment of rates imposed for the support of Public Schools or for other Public School purposes, as in that section mentioned?

Answer—If the assessor is satisfied with the *prima facie* evidence of the statement made by or on behalf of any ratepayer that he is a Roman Catholic, and thereupon (seeking and hearing no further information) places such person upon the assessment roll as a Separate School supporter, this ratepayer, though he may not by himself or agent give notice in writing, pursuant to section 40 of the Separate Schools Act, may be entitled to exemption from the payment of rates for Public School purposes—he being in the case supposed assessed as a supporter of Roman Catholic Separate Schools.

From this it is clear that, although the fact of a ratepayer being supposed by the assessor, or stated by some one else, to be a Roman Catholic is only *prima facie* evidence for such assessor of his being entitled to exemption, and is subject to correction by the assessor at any time previous to the completion of his roll, yet it may have the effect of securing to the person so entered in the Separate School column exemption from taxation for the support of Public Schools, without his having given the notice required by the Public School Act, and declared by it to be necessary in every case. If we are correct in thus understanding the decision, it follows that the amendment in question to the Separate Schools Act really contravenes in effect the intention of the Public Schools Act, and should be repealed or amended accordingly. It is true that the assessor may, by the use of sufficient diligence, ordinarily prevent this result. But it does not appear that he is under any special obligation to use such diligence. He may, and in most cases probably will, content himself with leaving the name in the column in which he may have in the first instance placed it. In any case, it surely should not be left to the assessor to determine, as he virtually does in the case supposed, unless protest is entered, whether a given Roman Catholic, or supposed Roman Catholic, shall be rated as a Public or as a Separate School supporter. That should, evidently, be decided by other officials on the receipt of the legal notice, or on satisfactory evidence that such notice has been given in a previous year. A declaratory or amending clause is surely needed, and should be passed without delay. The principle involved, viz., that all ratepayers shall be assumed to be Public School supporters, in the absence of the legal notice to the contrary, is of too much importance to be lightly set aside.

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CANADA is naturally much more anxious to be legally rid of the little army of United States "boodlers" of various grades, who have sought asylum within her borders, than to reclaim her own who have fled for refuge to the great Republic. The Weldon Extradition Act would have served the former purpose admirably, and the Dominion could very well have afforded to let her neighbour do as she pleased about reciprocating. For these reasons we regret that that Act was not permitted to go into operation. It really seems much the simpler, and for aught we can see, the better method of dealing with the matter. Why should not each country make its own laws to limit the right of asylum in its domains—in other words, to determine what classes of fugitives it will, and what classes it will not, surrender to a foreign state? If one neighbour should adopt such a law and carry out its provisions impartially, the other would be pretty sure to follow suit. If it did not, it would certainly get the worst of the bargain, since it would have to domicile its neighbour's criminals while reclaiming its own. To talk, as is sometimes done, about the unfairness of this and that proposed provision of an Extradition treaty, as favouring one country more than the other, seems almost puerile. The right to retain the embezzlers, violators of trust, and other dishonest classes of fugitives from a neighbouring nation, is one of so doubtful a character that a people desirous of preserving high moral standards might very well afford to forego it, even without an equivalent. The political refugees, whose claim of asylum it is the main object of extradition treaties to secure, are the very persons whom no civilized people would be in the least likely to surrender without a treaty. Since, however, the Mother Country has not seen fit to ratify the Weldon Act, preferring to retain whatever advantage in negotiation Canada's peculiar situation in respect to the United States gave her, as a makeweight in negotiating a treaty, all will be pleased to learn that there is every reason to hope for the early ratification of the draft-treaty which has been prepared by agents of the British and American Governments, and which has recently been sent to the Senate. It is satisfactory to learn that the scope of the proposed treaty includes all that class of breaches of trust, and violations of the laws of honesty and honour in business transactions, whose omission from the existing treaty has given rise to a state of affairs which is injurious and disgraceful to both countries.

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SUCH incidents as the recent declaration of war by the newspaper *La Patrie* against *L'Electeur*, and the controversies going on in several places between Separate School supporters and members of Separate School Boards, on the one hand, and certain of the Roman Catholic clergy on the other, show that our French-Canadian Catholic fellow-citizens are not the solid phalanx, in their aggressive attitude, which has been supposed. This is well. Undesirable as are such dissensions in themselves considered, there are times when they are decidedly helpful to the cause of liberty and progress. Were it true, as is often asserted, and as was claimed in effect the other day in the newspaper paragraph which Mr. Meredith too hastily assumed to be inspired by a Roman Catholic prelate, that the Catholic vote is "solid," and may be used at the pleasure of the ruling powers of that Church to turn the political balance as best suits its purposes, Canada might well despair of attaining equal rights and independent national life. Happily, however, the position being taken by *La Patrie*, and other representatives of the Roman Catholic laity, indicate the existence of a mental and moral independence, the tendency of which will be to grow and spread, leading those who exercise it to refuse to bow their necks in political matters to the yoke of Ultramontanism. The contests in certain of the Separate School Boards are very significant. It is noteworthy that such prelates as Archbishop Duhamel, even when disclaiming the attempt to exercise arbitrary powers over the Separate School Boards, do still assert a large degree of authority, in virtue of their ecclesiastical position. Such authority would, if admitted, go far to make the members of those Boards mere puppets in the hands of the priests, and the schools mere nurseries for the Church. These facts add emphasis to the query which has been before put in these columns, whether an undue and undesirable deference is not paid by the Ontario Government to the views of the Catholic clergy, as distinct from the laity of that Church, in matters of school legislation. We do not forget that Mr. Mowat has distinctly denied that the objectionable amendments to the Separate School law were made at the suggestion of the Catholic clergy. This denial we are, of course, bound to accept without reservation. But why is not the election of Separate School trustees conformed to the law and custom which have now become almost uniform in political and municipal elections in Ontario? Is there any sufficient reason for withholding the ballot from those Catholic electors who are asking for it? Mr. Mowat asks if the ballot should be forced upon the Catholic electors. Few Protestant observers can, we think, doubt that it would be acceptable to the great majority. But admit, for argument's sake, that only a minority of those specially interested have declared themselves in favour of secret voting, why should they not have it? We suppose that it is only the minority, in any case, who need such protection! Why should not the Catholic minority have it? To grant it could not possibly interfere with any legitimate right of the majority, or of individuals, clerical or non-clerical. What other reason can be conceived of, why the Ontario Government should refuse to even a few Catholic ratepayers the protection in voting for Separate School Trustees which is given to all other classes of voters, than that the wishes of the prelates and clergy are paramount?

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THE correspondence recently published between Premier Mercier and ex-Premier Chapleau, of Quebec, partakes too largely of the personal element to recommend itself as a subject for independent comment. Upon the propriety and good faith of Mr. Mercier's act in publishing, without the consent of the writer, a private letter, we prefer to offer no opinion. The provocation, or rather temptation, was undoubtedly great, though that in itself would be no excuse if it were even an extenuation of a breach of confidence. The net result of the correspondence, in so far as it revealed facts of public interest, will have surprised no one. It has simply confirmed what was before well understood, viz., that the question of the Jesuit's Estates Act was the *bête noir* of Quebec politicians, and that both premiers alike realized the necessity of getting it out of the way. From a party point of view it is undoubtedly a great advantage to Mr. Mercier to have been able to shew that his predecessor in office had virtually consented to pay a somewhat larger price for the settlement of the vexed question than that with which he himself effected the compromise. Mr. Chapleau's letter is valuable to Mr. Mercier's party as proving the pressure of political necessity. Possibly it convicts his opponent also of inconsistency or insincerity not creditable to the statesman though all too common with the politician. Beyond these points, touching Mr. Mercier's good faith, Mr. Chapleau's political integrity, and the incidental proof of the political exigency existing in the Province by reason of the Jesuits' Estates claim, we see nothing of public value in the correspondence. It certainly does not settle any of the moral or constitutional questions involved.

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THE spectacle lately to be seen in the streets of New York of squadrons of men armed with axes, engaged in chopping down the poles on which the electric light wires were suspended, and leaving the city in comparative darkness, was a strange one. To an onlooker ignorant of the causes which led to this unique crusade, the axemen must have seemed like the advance guard of some hitherto undiscovered race of Vandals, commencing to make war on modern civilization. Electricity has already won so many triumphs along the line of its application to the supply of human needs and conveniences; its progress has been so remarkable and its promise of future achievements is still so large, almost defying imagination to set bounds to it, that we are unwilling to grant the possibility of its permanent failure at any point. Fortunately there is no need to predict its failure as an illuminating agent, able to cast all its predecessors literally and metaphorically into the shade, though for the present the danger to human life carried in its currents seems to overbalance the benefits conferred by its efficiency as a source of light in the darkness. The two main questions just now involved in its success as a lighting agent are those of scientific skill in perfecting methods and conscientiousness in the use of appliances. Into such matters as the practicability of substituting weak and safe currents for the powerful, death-dealing ones at present employed; of running the wires underground instead of overhead; of securing perfect and lasting insulation, etc., we need not enter. They may be left for scientific experts with every confidence that the ends sought will be soon attained. In the meantime it is reassuring to learn, as we do from the New York *Nation*, that the special causes of the bad eminence gained by the New York wires as instruments of death are on the surface and are such as may be easily removed. The *Nation* says: "It is altogether suitable that a new system of municipal lighting, created under the superintendence of a butcher, a theatrical ticket agent, and a saucy young lawyer, should be got rid of by cutting down the poles with an axe and plunging the town in darkness." Want of scientific knowledge and skill in a matter in which both knowledge and skill are of vital importance readily accounts for the whole failure. The *Nation* feels sure, as