

Is "Politics" a Science---Or a Game?

By Emily Wright.

If the motto of this magazine were not "Fearless, Fair and Free," this article would be very much easier to write. The Editor, however, will not suspend the middle word, not even at election times, which does not seem fair at all. For the most part in all countries, the motto of all election campaigns comprising all parties has been, is, and always will be, "Fearless and Free." Not that any candidate would publicly acknowledge this. We never knew of one who did not time and time again avow, how "fair" he was to his opponent. Personalities are never used, unless the opponent starts first—which, of course, he never does. To be perfectly fair in politics at election times seems to be an impossibility for the party politician and, we should like to know, where is the candidate who is not a party politician, in some sense? A campaign without conflict would be a poor affair indeed. The public expects to have some "fun"—and it is rarely disappointed.

Now "politics" has been defined as the "science of government," as having to do with legislation, judicature, and administration. In this deep, broad, responsible sense it is given the superior appellation of "Political Science." We send representatives to the Legislative Assembly and expect them to do serious work on our behalf—broadly speaking, to bring in legislation for the development of the Province in every particular, to pass necessary laws for the betterment of social life, to work out pressing problems to solution in order to keep pace with the onward trend of civilization, and to re-establish returned soldiers in a satisfactory manner in civilian life. The application and administration of such legislation is practical politics. In this sense, then, is "politics" a science.

But no one would suggest that in election campaigns "politics" continues to be a science. It becomes a game with the spectators seeing most of it.

Liberals hide their mistakes and shortcomings in pages of advertisements extolling their unprecedented regime, hoping that the Conservatives will not find them out, whilst the latter, ignoring their past sins of commission and omission, too clever in the game to be bluffed, pounce on each good thing which the Liberals think they have done and expose it in its true colours to the public's delight or disgust! And so the game goes on.

We do not propose to comment on the Liberal programme for they do not seem to have one. However, this does not matter much, because they tell us that they have "lots of legislation in their minds." This is somewhat of a relief, for we feared from their attitude that every thing had been done and they were now resting upon their laurels.

The Conservatives, on the contrary, have thirty planks in their platform, some of them being exceedingly heavy and long. Indeed, the whole structure is so huge and vast that if they are returned to power they are bound to accomplish something. There does not seem to be one single thing omitted from their programme. During Mr. W. J. Bowser's brief term of office, as Premier, he undoubtedly put through some good legislation, and by putting "Women's Franchise" up to the electorate, he gave the men of this Province the privilege of giving the vote to women—but we shall come to this later.

One of the Liberal advertisements sets out seven pieces of legislation which the Liberal Government claims to have passed for the benefit of women. Then the following words appear: "Previous Governments Gave You **Nothing**." Now that last sentence is part of the political game. To the uninformed—and there are many—these words would make a strong appeal. Previous governments gave women nothing, because women had not the power to make them. We must

say that we have been unable to discover anything especially superior in the ethics of this government, which would lead us to suppose that they would have transcended all other governments by passing legislation for women's benefit, solely from a sense of their magnanimity. Women now have the power of the vote, and this, together with the evolution which is world-wide for the betterment of social and industrial conditions, is responsible for the new legislation for women. It is highly probable that any other constitutional government would have done as much. The Liberals were fortunate in being in power during these first years of the enfranchisement of women.

The advertisement also tells us that, "The Oliver Government gave women the Franchise." This, too, is another part of the game which was indeed well-played about four years ago, but the public was not deceived by it. We should hardly trouble to refer to it, but that the Liberals are endeavouring to make political capital out of the fact that they took unto themselves the credit which was really Mr. Bowser's and the male voters' of British Columbia. The latter actually cast the ballot in favour of giving women the franchise. The Liberal Government dare not do other than abide by the will of the voters. There was no room for broken electoral pledges on the part of the succeeding government, concerning the franchise, or we might have had a duplication of the "militant suffragist" for whom the broken pledges of the British Liberal Government of 1906 were directly responsible.

Several pieces of progressive legislation for women have been placed on the Statute Book. These in themselves would have stood the Liberals in good stead without resorting to petty subterfuges, which really do them more harm than good. Some of them are not much different from the previously existing laws, some of them are far from being perfect, but they are all steps in the right direction.

Is the "Mothers' Pensions Act" Misnamed?

One of the finest things they have accomplished is the "Mothers' Pensions Act," which, by the way Mr. Bowser says the Liberals "grabbed" from his platform. Just about the time that discussion was taking place on this subject, one of the noblest sentiments ever given utterance to was, "There are no illegitimate children." Mrs. Ralph Smith repeated this and was cheered to the echo. We read it in the newspapers, and were thrilled to think that at last there was some one with a real touch of the "human" in the House at Victoria. We thought that some measure of help was about to be given to mothers, even though they were unmarried. But we find that Mrs. Smith might just as well have exclaimed, "What a glorious sunset!" for all the good that has been accomplished by the expression of such lofty sentimentalism. The Mothers' Pension Act is misnamed. It should be called "The Widows and Deserted Wives' Pensions Act." Every one must know that the biggest part of the responsibility of a so-called illegitimate child rests upon the mother. There are methods by which she may obtain, if she so desire, some material aid from the putative father, but very little at best. If she is deserted by him, what happens? She does not come within the scope of Mothers' Pensions. Mrs. Smith repeats, "There may be illegitimate parents." Taking for granted that this is so, an illegitimate mother is as much a mother as any other kind. But this intensely "human" government does not think so. When Mothers' Pensions were being considered they drew the cloak of respectability about them; they stood aloof and refused to help the girl who, either through her folly or man's perfidy, is left, stranded, with a little baby in her arms. They