

# Trustees' Bulletin

## DUTIES OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

By WM. IVERACH

The duties of school trustees are not all set forth in the Public Schools Act, and it is doubtful if the implied duties are not much more difficult to perform than the prescribed. The average trustee of a few years ago treated himself as simply being the trustee of the rate-payers only, and in those days the school trustee treated himself, and the public whom he served treated him as holding the public office of least importance in the gift of the people, and the trustees who succeeded in running the school on the least amount of money were considered the most successful; results were always a secondary consideration, if we got them, all right, and if not, change the teacher. One lady who had been left with a young family, but in good circumstances, expressed the current opinion when presented with a petition for her signature, asking that a new school district be formed near her home, said, And are you likely to be a trustee? The other replied in the affirmative. Well, I will sign the petition because we need a school, but you'll have to remember that the main thing is to keep the taxes down.

But a new day is dawning over our fair Province, and in some parts of it the sun is already well above the horizon. And trustees are beginning to ask themselves if they are not trustees of more than the ratepayers' money, and we already have a goodly number of men devoting their time, free of all charge, to the public school business, who refuse to accept such important offices as reeve, councillor or mayor, and who have even refused to become candidates for the Legislature or the House of Commons, and they are asking themselves: To what extent are they the trustees of the children's opportunities and to what extent as a conse-

quence are they the trustees of the destiny of the nation? and a still more subtle question some are already asking is, to what extent are they the trustees of the public opinion in the district in which they serve? Is it the duty of the trustees to simply keep their ears close to the ground and listen for the trend of public opinion and simply steer their ships in accordance with it, or to what extent should they be the moulders of it?

In some communities, when the trustees ask for more money it is usually forthcoming without protest, but not so in others. When a school money by-law is turned down it is usually nothing short of a calamity. It means that the trustees can not carry out their programme and naturally then they can not get the desired results from the money they can get. It is often followed by the resignation of a number of, if not the whole board, and a consequent division of the forces that ought to be working in harmony for the upbuilding of the community. But the question we are trying to find an answer to is, whose fault is it if a trustee treats himself as being a trustee of the children's opportunities? He ought to be very careful to cultivate the public sentiment in favour of the money by-law before submitting it. This does not necessarily presume superior intelligence on the part of the trustee, but the ratepayers elected him to give close attention to school affairs and, if he sees that a greater investment is necessary to get results, the money ought to be forthcoming, and it would be if only the majority had given the matter the same close attention the board did, but because they did not, they allowed themselves to become the victims of a few parsimonious ratepayers, and the brakes are put on the wheels of progress for the time, al-