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COMPLAINT has been made from time to time in the Legislature and out of it, in regard to the peculiar method now followed in Ontario in the publication of school text books. Most of our readers knew, we suppose, that in the contract between the Minister of Education and the publishers of these text-books is a clause providing that the price of any such book may be determined by arbitration between the parties to the contract, but few, we venture to say, were aware that such an arbitration has been going on until they saw the published deliverance of the arbitrators. The *Empire* says: "The appointment of arbitrators was quietly made, their meetings were held without public notice and in private, no reporters were present, and even, as we understand, the evidence of witnesses was under the seal of secrecy." If this be true, as in the main it undoubtedly is, it is surely a strange method of procedure in a democratic country and under a popular Government. One of the chief safeguards of the people in regard to both public legislation and the administration of justice is publicity. The proceedings of the Legislature are open to the public. The courts are open. Every citizen is entitled and enabled to know the facts and reasons on which the laws he is compelled to obey are based. If a man is apprehended and tried on a civil or criminal charge, the public is not satisfied, no matter what its confidence in the judges, with learning the verdict; it demands the fullest opportunity for knowing the exact evidence and arguments which led to conviction or acquittal. Can it be supposed, then, that complaint will be silenced and confidence established in regard to a matter which directly affects the pocket of almost every ratepayer, with the mere pronouncement of a small board of arbitrators, whose inquiries are prosecuted in private, and who do not even publish the evidence upon which their conclusions are formed? In saying this we make no reflection upon the competency and impartiality of the arbitrators, who are, so far as we know, gentlemen deserving of every confidence, but the method of procedure is a singular one to be adopted by a Liberal Administration.

THE gravamen of the hostile criticism to which the action of the Education Department in respect to the text-book business is exposed is not that the prices of the books are, as a rule, exorbitant, whatever may be the case in regard to particular books. The condemnation of the system is that it is unbusiness-like, autocratic, and prolific of opportunities for favouritism and caprice. We know of no other self-ruling Province or State in which the virtual control of the educational book trade is taken out of the hands of the publishers and placed under the hand of a member of the Government. Nor do we know of one in which the head of the Education Department, no matter what his literary acquirements and educational experience, is empowered to determine by his own absolute fiat what text-books shall be used and by whom they shall be published, and even to go to the absurd extreme of designating individual authors to prepare special text-books, which are thus virtually authorized before they are brought into existence. This system it is which, to our thinking and, we venture to say, to that of most impartial persons who have studied the question, is wrong in principle and mischievous in practice. It can be but a question of time when the educational opinion of Ontario will condemn it in no unmistakable terms, and insist on a return to safer and wiser methods—methods which will stimulate instead of crushing wholesome competition in the production as well as the publication of text-books, and no longer leave it in the power of a Government Department either to make or mar the fortunes of firms or authors. Beside these questions of principle or method the practical results of the system in specific cases are comparatively unimportant, save as illustrations. But as illustrations some of the facts brought out by the report of the arbitrators are, to say the least, suggestive, as for instance, the fact that of twelve text-books published for the Department by a single firm, at least three are published without profit, and a fourth at an actual loss, while a fifth, on the other hand, will bear a reduction of forty per cent. on the retail price. The questions suggested are many and perplexing. Why should any firm supply the people of Ontario with school-books without profit, or at a loss? Why do not the arbitrators insist on an increase of price for these books, as well as on a reduction of price for those on which the profits are excessive? Does not the arbitration rule work both ways? What guarantee have the arbitrators or the public that the best appliances for improving quality and cheapening production are used by these firms, now that the pressure of competition is removed? Why is no mention of the school readers, about which so much has been said in the Legislature, made in the arbitrator's report? We hope it is unnecessary to add that these criticisms are offered in no spirit of hostility to either the publishers or the Department, but simply in the interests of what we conceive to be sound political and educational methods.

RECENT discussions reveal a strange discrepancy in the school laws of Ontario, in so far as they bear upon the relations between Public and Separate Schools. According to the *Globe's* exposition, which is very clear and is said to have the sanction of the highest authority, the Attorney-General, the preparation of the Assessment Lists is the work of two officials, viz., the Assessor and the Municipal Clerk. The former collects and supplies the material from which the latter constructs the final lists, in accordance with which the taxes are collected and distributed between the two classes of schools. The singular and remarkable feature of the business is that these two officials entrusted with different parts of the same work, are required to proceed on quite different principles. The assessor is instructed to set down as a Separate School supporter every ratepayer whom he knows to be a Roman Catholic, or who claims to be such, or who is said by some one else to be such. The municipal clerk, on the other hand, though he uses the assessor's list in making up the roll for the collector is instructed to rate as Separate School supporters only those Catholic ratepayers who have given written notice that they wish to be so classed. Others, though they may be known to be Roman Catholics, are assessed as Public School supporters. Contradictory though these instructions are, it would appear at first thought that the Public School supporters, at least, have

nothing to complain of, as the municipal clerk's rating, coming after that of the assessor, and disregarding or correcting it in the matter specified, would work wholly in favour of the Public Schools. The supporters of the Separate Schools might, indeed, complain with apparent reason, that the clause of the law prescribing the assessor's course was delusive, seeing that the advantage thus conferred with the left hand is immediately snatched away with the right. The *Mail* points out, however, another peculiarity in the law which must go far to modify the effect of the above provisions, if indeed it does not quite turn the scale again in favour of the Separate Schools, viz., that while the notification of the ratepayer's wish to be classed as a Separate School supporter does not need to be renewed annually, that given by the one who wishes to have his name withdrawn from the Separate and placed on the Public School list has, so far as appears, not only to be annually renewed, but to be given two months earlier than the other.

RECENT announcements indicate that Premier Mercier has decided to call an autumn session of the Legislature, to be followed by dissolution and an appeal to the country. The forthcoming struggle will be watched from without with much greater interest than usually attaches to Provincial elections. The rumours of dissensions in the Cabinet and party, as well as the burning questions of race and religion whose heat has been greatly intensified by the attitude and legislation of Mr. Mercier's Cabinet, will give to the contest almost a national character. But unless the Premier fails in his accustomed astuteness, the probabilities seem altogether in his favour. The fact that he has decided to precipitate the election is adduced as a proof of his trepidation, but it may with greater plausibility be regarded as an indication of his confidence. The statement that he will propose a readjustment of the constituencies, with a view to adding eight to the present number of representatives, affords pretty good evidence that his political hand has not lost its cunning. It is quite probable that the readjustment and increase are needed to more nearly equalize the representation, but the temptation to manipulate the new divisions and sub-divisions in the interests of his party would almost surely be too great for a party leader with even higher moral standards than Mr. Mercier to resist. What a pity the Constitution had not provided some impartial machinery for determining constituencies and readjusting representation, instead of leaving it in the hands of the Government for the time being, thereby making it often possible for an unscrupulous first Minister, by a careful study of arithmetic and geography, to maintain himself in power for an unlimited period. Even should Premier Mercier, by a supreme effort of moral heroism, make the divisions with perfect impartiality, it would be forever impossible to convince his political opponents of the fact.

VICE-CHANCELLOR MULOCK, in his address at Convocation, admitted that the adoption of a general scheme of matriculation, "founded on sound principles," is desirable, and said that the Provincial University would heartily co-operate in such a scheme. Whether his dread of "denominational control" would lead him to conclude that no scheme devised and worked by a Board on which the denominational universities were represented could be founded on sound principles does not clearly appear. It may be worth while to observe that there is a somewhat important distinction between "denominational control" and control by a denomination. Nothing could be more undesirable than that the Provincial University should ever again come under the control of a denomination. It was rescued many years ago from such a position only after an arduous struggle, in which, it should be borne in mind, most of the denominations took part. They were, in fact, the chief agents in bringing about the complete secularization which makes the institution the University of the whole people. Nor should it be forgotten that some of the denominations were among the most uncompromising opponents of the subsequent movement for the partition of the University endowment. The recollection of these facts gives pretty good ground for confidence that the representatives of these bodies are not likely to inaugurate any movement looking to the undoing