

and to give efficiency to. As a lawyer, he could comprehend and interpret the laws relating to public instruction and give his decisions thereon, and which unfortunately has been a large share of his duty.

ADVANTAGES OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM.

As a business man he could direct the workings of the departmental officers; as a Minister, backed by a majority in the Legislature, he could command for his administration an adequate monetary support and also an easy passage of any bill necessary to improve or extend the system over which he presided. It was his position in the Legislature which made him immensely superior in power and effectiveness to the late superintendent. But the Public Schools, with their complex relationship to trustee boards, township and county municipalities, and Provincial authorities, their text-books and courses of instruction, their inspection and the certification of their teachers; and the High Schools, with their, if possible, still more complicated support, courses of instruction, and connection with the local municipalities and the Province; in other words, all the mechanism of the system, outside of his own office, was something beyond his knowledge, and—I say it without disparagement—beyond his attainment. The Committee is a perfectly legal body appointed by virtue of a statute, and as long as it is employed in examining candidates it is exercising legitimate functions. Beyond this it cannot legitimately go, but by the Order in Council it is made a Board of Reference or Consultation, to which the Minister may refer all matters of an educational nature; he does not, however, by this order agree to bind himself, nor in practice does it seem that he intends to bind himself, to any of its findings. It is this use to which the Committee is put, not contemplated by the statute that authorizes its existence, which has been objected to all along, and which raised such a storm of opposition against the Committee of 1876. And it is this which we contend is illegal, unfair to the great body of education in the Province, and derogatory to the dignity of the Committee itself. It covers up an arbitrary exercise of authority on the part of one who, by reason of his position, cannot be acquainted with the details of the system which he manipulates, with an understood endorsement, which may or may not have been given, of a body of educational experts. If this Committee were to have any real consultative authority, it should have the power of coming to final decisions upon all matters referred to it, and should be responsible, in some way or other, for these decisions to the public. It should not be subjected to the indignity of giving the weight of its wisdom and its experience to a decision only to see its advice rejected. And again, if responsible to the public, the public should have some voice in its appointment, and should have some certainty of knowing whether these mentors of the Minister are, by professional standing, scholarship, character, and experience in educational administration the best men that could be selected.

IS THE PRESENT SYSTEM BEST?

After careful consideration of this subject, I cannot believe that this system of administration of the school law by a party chief is the best system that can be found. It certainly possesses two advantages which no other system can possess. It ensures a fair financial support of new educational schemes, without the humiliation of the head of the Education Department coming to the Government to ask for it; and it ensures the ready passing through Parliament of any reasonable educational bill. But it necessitates every few years the placing at the head of the educational system—a system so complex that none but a trained expert assisted by trained advisers can fully understand it—one whose political eminence precludes the possibility of his being such an educational expert. It necessitates as a matter of course, and without reference to their intrinsic value, the support of the acts of this gentleman by his political party friends and the public journals which favor the Administration to which he belongs, as also the hostile criticism, and oftentimes downright condemnation, of these same acts by his political opponents. It necessitates the erection and continuance of a perfectly irresponsible and arbitrary authority over our educational system, or else the bringing of every petty regulation in regard to the internal economy of the school system to the arbitration of a direct party vote in the Legislature. It necessitates the Minister, in making a choice of suitable occupants of positions of emolument within his gift—positions requiring professional reputation, experience, and credit in their incumbents—to be submitted to all sorts of party wire-pulling and intrigue; and it inflicts upon successful candidates for such positions, who, it may be, are per-

fectly guiltless of any such unworthy canvassing, the stigma of party servility. It tends to create in the public mind a suspicion that in the authorization of certain text-books rather than others the Minister is guided by the political faith and allegiance of the authors and publishers, rather than by the suitability of the books authorized. It tends to create too the suspicion that political influence is a weightier argument to convince the Minister's judgment than principle or reasonableness. It gives to party journals an opportunity to magnify every little act of Ministerial common sense and judgment into a matter of supreme and unequalled beneficence; or, on the other hand, to distort every little departmental delinquency into an enormous offence against liberty, morality, economy, or what not. It makes of our educational system, which it should be the highest care of our wisest statesmen of all political parties to cherish and protect, a tilting-post, to be thrust at by any party writer or speaker. By the inevitable lack on the part of the Minister of practical acquaintance with the working of the laws and regulations which he administers in the school-room, the trustee board, the rural section, and the local municipality, this system which we are criticising makes him dependent upon the advice of others; and this being obtained from whatever quarter he chooses, it may or may not be disinterested; it may or may not be prudent and well-considered, and so is most likely to be inharmonious with other acts and regulations previously authorized, and thus creates dissatisfaction and disgust.

THE SCHEME SUGGESTED.

Let me now briefly detail to you the scheme, which, while it is not free from objections, still will be far less objectionable than the system under which we are working at present. I do not take much credit for originality in it. It is the system which was legislated out of existence in February, 1876, with some essential differences:—*A Chief Superintendent to be appointed* whose powers shall be very much the same as those of the late Superintendent, after the Act of 1874, who shall be essentially an executive officer to administer the local system in accordance with the Acts of the Legislature and the decisions of the Council of Public Instruction. *A Council of Public Instruction to be appointed*, which shall consist of:—1. The Chief Superintendent. 2. The Provincial Secretary for the time being. 3. One High School Inspector, who shall retire annually, to be succeeded by the others in rotation. 4. Two representatives of the High School Masters, retiring biennially, one each year. 5. Two representatives of the Public School Inspectors, retiring biennially, one each year. 6. Two representatives of the teaching profession in general, retiring in the same way, to be chosen by the Managing Committees of the County Teachers' Associations, each committee to give but one vote. 7. The President of the Provincial Teachers' Association for the time being. 8. A representative of the University of Toronto, and of each University of the Province, as well as of each College affiliated to the University of Toronto. 9. Six appointees of the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, retiring triennially, two each year. The disqualification of teachers and inspectors not to be continued; and the members of the Council residing outside of Toronto to receive their travelling expenses incurred in attending meetings. The Council to have full and final authority, under the Act, over all matters relating to text-books, programmes of study, hours and days of instruction, discipline, certification of teachers, examinations for promotion and otherwise, and all other matters relating to the internal economy of Public and High Schools; also, under the Act, to make regulations for the distribution of the High School fund; also, to have charge of, and make regulation for, the government and discipline and other internal economy of the Normal and Model Schools, and to have the appointment of the masters and teachers thereof; also, to have the right of nominating to the Lieutenant-Governor, as vacancies may occur, suitable persons to act as Inspectors of Separate and High Schools; also, to be empowered to report to the Lieutenant-Governor, from time to time, full information in respect to the status and working of the educational system of the Province, and to recommend to him any improvement of the school law which in the wisdom of the Council may seem necessary.

A vote of thanks to Mr. Bryant for his paper was passed.

DISCUSSION ON THE PAPER.

Mr. Reid, of Mount Forest, said it was the policy and not the men against which criticisms should be directed. He thought Public Schools should be more largely represented than suggested in the paper. That measures should be passed through the Legislature with readiness, and that the educational system should have