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Special Articles

The Economic Union of Central America.
By Prof. W. W. Swanson.

The World's Average Wheat Yields.
By Ernest H. Godfrey, F.S.S.

The Loans of the Banks—Why They Have Not
Risen.

By H. M. P. Eckardt.

World Trade Conditions After the War.
By Alba P. Johnson.

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Another Western School Question

THE Manitoba school question was, in its day, a very disturbing one in Parliament, and in the country. Later, Western school questions were very prominent in 1905, when what are now the Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan received from the Dominion Parliament their Provincial constitutions. Since that time the Dominion has had, to a large extent, a happy exemption from such troublesome controversies. Occasionally somebody declared that these school questions had not been settled, but the public generally have been glad to regard them as disposed of, and certainly they have ceased to engage the attention of the Dominion Parliament.

A school question has arisen in Saskatchewan which is occupying a large space in the press, and more than a little of the utterances of the pulpit. But it does not arise under the conditions anticipated by the opponents of the Autonomy Acts of 1905. In the somewhat heated controversy of that time the opponents of the Ottawa Government's policy took the ground that the education question should be left unreservedly to the Provincial Governments and Legislatures about to be organized. The Dominion Government, while recognizing that education was one of the subjects assigned by the British North America Act to the Provincial Legislatures, pointed out that under that Act there were certain reservations for the preservation of existing school privileges to any religious minority, and as such minorities had for many years enjoyed separate school privileges under the ordinances of the North West Legislature—the body about to be abolished—it was contended that these privileges should be continued in the new constitutions. The present trouble arises, not from any restriction of the authority of the Legislature of Saskatchewan, but from the manner in which that Legislature has used its powers. The opponents of the measure now under discussion explain that they do not complain of the state of affairs as existing under the Autonomy Act until a recent date. Their complaint is that the Saskatchewan Legislature, in the exercise of its power, has gone beyond what the Autonomy Act contemplated, and established new conditions that are regarded as objectionable.

In view of the opinion held by many in 1905 that the granting of the separate school privileges of the Autonomy Act would lead to the establishing of an extensive dual system in the new Provinces, it is interesting to note, on the authority of the Premier of Saskatchewan, that the separate schools—including Protestant and Roman Catholic—of that Province to-day, ten years after the passing of the Autonomy Act, amount to one half of one per

cent of the school system of the Province.

The dispute that is now on arises from the passing of an Act by the Provincial Legislature defining the liability of taxpayers respecting the support of separate schools. This Act provides that where a minority separate school—whether Roman Catholic or Protestant—is established all the residents of the district of the minority faith shall pay their taxes for the support of such school. Opponents of the measure claim that this destroys an option which, they allege, the minority taxpayer previously had—that is to say, if he was in accord with his brethren of the same faith he could pay to the separate school, while if for any reason he preferred the public school—the school of the majority—he could turn his taxes to the support of that school. The question is discussed in long sermons and long newspaper articles. Out of so much contention it is not easy to draw the essential points. There is incidentally a question concerning the distribution of school taxes payable by companies in districts which have both public and separate schools. But the main point of the controversy seems to be whether, prior to the enactment of the recent amendments, the minority tax payer had the option of paying to either school. In a case that came before a local judge a decision was given which recognized such option, and this probably was the cause of the passing of the present law. On the other hand it is claimed that the new Act really creates nothing new; that it "clarifies" and defines what had always been the practice. It is argued that the minority—whether Roman Catholic or Protestant—having the right to establish a separate school are, in their own proceedings, governed by the ordinary principle of majority rule; that a vote must be taken at the meeting of the minority to determine whether or not they desire a separate school, and that if a majority of the residents of the faith concerned determine to have a separate school, all of that faith must accept the decision and pay their taxes for the support of the school. It is claimed that this was the practice in Saskatchewan for many years, and that it was sanctioned in legal proceedings, though no written judicial decisions on that line appear to be available. A decision to the contrary by one of the local judges and the passing of a so-called "clarifying" Act, have brought about the present controversy.

The point is made in the discussion that in Ontario the Roman Catholic citizen has the option of paying his school taxes to the public school or the separate school, as he may prefer. Replying to this, the defenders of the Saskatchewan law say the school systems of Ontario and Saskatchewan are so entirely different that the practice of one Province is not adapted to the other. In Ontario it is only the Roman Catholic who has a right to a separate