



REFLECTIONS

BY STAFF WRITERS

THE POLITICAL GAME

POLITICS is an interesting game, if one views it not too seriously.

The other day, Mr. Whitney announced that the general election in Ontario would be held in June or September. He was perfectly truthful, but none of the Conservative henchmen seemed to take the statement seriously. They are all preparing for an election in June.

On Wednesday of last week, the Hon. Mr. Leblanc, leader of the Quebec Opposition, asked Premier Gouin when the general election in that province would occur. He answered that it might be held in June or October, or there might be another session. He intimated that it would be impolite for him to announce the date without consulting with the Lieutenant-Governor.

The Ontario Government might delay the general election until January, 1909, the Quebec Government until January, 1910. Yet both are preparing for an early appeal to the people. The reasons for an early election in Ontario are more apparent than in Quebec. In the latter province, the reason given in private conversation is that Premier Gouin would like to go to the country before Premier Laurier makes his quinquennial appeal. He thinks, so it is said, that the Liberal representation from Quebec is not likely to be so unanimous after the next federal election as it has been during the past twelve years; therefore he desires to make his return absolutely certain prior to the Laurier appeal.

This jockeying for position on the part of the Conservatives of Ontario and the Liberals of Quebec is highly interesting as well as politically instructive. It sheds some light on what is likely to happen when the Dominion Parliament is dissolved in the autumn.

THE READJUSTMENT OF WAGES

LABOUR, like capital, has had an era of rising profits. As was repeatedly pointed out in *The Canadian Courier* last year, that era has been closed. Since June of last year, wages have been declining. In a few isolated cases, such as the G. T. R. telegraphers, there was an increase but the general tendency has been in the opposite direction.

The first decline in wages, in a period such as this, is brought about by letting out high-priced wage-earners and filling their places with lower-priced men. Then follow general discharges, with re-engagements at lower rates. The final stage is general reductions by large employers.

It is to be hoped that Canada will not reach the third stage. The Canadian Pacific is almost the only large corporation attempting to reduce wages on a large scale and with them the circumstances are exceptional. In the first place the C. P. R. has always paid higher wages in the East than the other railways, and in the second place they have many employees in the West where the general rate of money-wages has a downward trend. The high wages of the new country are always slightly lowered as civilisation advances and normal conditions spread. It is to be hoped that this case will remain exceptional and that the revival in trade, which is manifest if not fully decisive, will result in the present rates of wages being fairly well maintained through all branches of industry.

POLITICS OR POLITICAL WISDOM?

LAST year the Ontario and Dominion Governments combined their operations in regard to immigration into Ontario. This year, the Dominion authorities must work alone, as the Ontario administrators have withdrawn from an arrangement covering several years. Further, the Ontario people are doing all they can to show that a large number of the immigrants who came to Ontario last year were "undesirables." Is all this politics or political wisdom?

The Hon. Mr. Hanna took occasion to point out in the Legislature how the foreign population of Ontario were contributing more than their fair quota to the prisons and asylums. Now, Dr. Bruce Smith,

Inspector of Prisons for Ontario, follows the line taken by his chief and says that the increase in the number in jail is due entirely to "Canada, especially Ontario, being made the dumping ground during the past year for some most undesirable immigrants." He comes out boldly against the Dominion regulations. "There must be something wrong with our immigration regulations that will permit such apparent neglect in the inspection of persons seeking and obtaining passage as immigrants to this country." Among the figures given in his report are those for drunkenness. The commitments numbered 4,774 persons, the largest number since 1888. As it is well known that Canadians are gaining in sobriety, this increase must be mainly due to those who come from Great Britain and the Continent. Being lonesome and living in forced idleness may account for their over-indulgence to some extent, though much of it is due to deeper causes.

Whether or not there is political motive behind all these protests of the Ontario authorities—and we do not believe that there is—there is a warning in all this for the people generally. We must not urge the authorities at Ottawa to rush in new citizens; must rather discourage such a course. Every government does mainly what the people desire, and the Dominion Government is no exception.

THE WOMEN OF RUSSIA

THERE is no better method of making men and women realise what a blessed thing it is to live under the British flag than to read some of the stories which come from Russian refugees. The other day in New York, the authorities refused to allow a socialist and unemployed gathering in Union Square, and when it was held without permission there was trouble—and a bomb. In Britain, they do better and there are fewer bombs than in the United States, which in turn has fewer than any large European state. But in Russia it is all bombs.

Of course bombs are unjustifiable in our eyes. When every individual has equal liberty they are unnecessary and wicked. But there is something to be said for the people who use them in Russia. Perhaps not enough to fully justify them, but the argument is not all one-sided. In his "Heroes and Heroines of Russia," recently published, M. Jaakoff Prelooker tells a tale which makes the blood run cold. In regard to the police treatment of women who dare preach and teach what the bureaucracy forbids, he gives pictures which rival those of Belgian conduct in the Kongo. The story of Madame Breshkovskaya, the "well-beloved grandmother" of the revolutionists, is more thrilling than a dozen novels. This daughter of a Russian nobleman has lived through twenty-three years of prison life in Siberia, has passed through the "Black Hole," and still survives to tell her experiences. Mdle. Vera Figner lived through twenty years of horrors in the Schlüsselburg fortress, which swallows scores of political lives every year. No person who enters that abode can have any communication with the outside world. The women who rebel against authority are not only sent to prison, but they pay a higher price than even death itself. The story of Marie Spiridonova, who went out to avenge the unspeakable wrongs committed against the women in Tamboff by the Cossacks, and who shot the Vice-Governor responsible for the outrages, is one which will make even men shudder. M. Prelooker has done much to elucidate the Russian situation and to explain why women play so important a part in the tragic events which are making Russia red. Doctrines, faiths and principles may well crumble to dust in such a situation as this man describes. When injustice and inhumanity link themselves together for the aggrandisement of authority, the day must necessarily be evil.

THE GENTLE ANARCHIST

NEW YORK has been undergoing a painful experience with several bomb experts, who, not content with the enlightening Liberty statue in the harbour, wish to spread the principles of freedom by strewing the fragments of peaceable citizens about the square.