

record in which deputies have been chosen to represent colonies which they have never even visited, their electoral campaigns being managed by officials on the ground. The deputy, owing his election to the officials, is thereby committed to their support; and the exertion of influence proceeds in a circle, sometimes with exceedingly vicious effects.

In all the represented colonies except Cochin-China the native element has a decisive numerical preponderance; and even where it has not equal weight with the French it is nevertheless strong enough to control the elections. This the French inhabitants regard as a substantial grievance; for the natives contribute only insignificant sums to the exchequer, and, with a few unimportant exceptions, furnish no recruits to the military establishment; whereas the colonial Frenchmen bear the brunt of financial and military burdens, and yet are allotted only a minor share in the choice of those who assume to represent the wishes of the colony in the councils of the nation. Hence the system which was designed to harmonize the interests of the two elements in the colonies seems to have exerted an influence in exactly the opposite direction. As a theory, the extension of the franchise to tropical natives had much that served to commend it to the French people, particularly in view of the prevailing democratic temper of 1848 and 1870; but in its practical workings it has been productive of discontent, anomalies and even abuses. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu does not hesitate to condemn the electoral system of the colonies as an "absurd institution;" and there seems to be a growing conviction that there is ample room for its reform.

One aspect of the question which has elicited discussion in recent years relates to the bearing which the system of colonial representation has upon the question of political development within the colonies themselves. In the colonies of France the march to colonial autonomy, or toward anything approaching autonomy, has been extremely slow; in none of them is there yet the faintest recognition of this principle. Elective assemblies have, it is true, long since been established in several of the dependencies; in some the members of these local bodies are elected on a basis of manhood suffrage pure and simple, in others by complicated plans which provide, or attempt to provide, for the representation of interests rather than for the representation of numbers; but in none is the elective organ able to exercise any important control over the actions of the executive. One may even doubt whether the influence of these elective