

Provincial Legislatures.

There is no more conspicuous evidence of the enormous development of Western Canada than is furnished by the fact that West of the Great Lakes no less than four Provincial Legislatures are in Session debating the requirements of their respective districts and making history by their legislative Acts. The personnel of these legislatures, the vast range of topics discussed, the energy displayed, and the practical outcome of the sessions all impress the observer with the importance of the country, and the constitutional manner in which the various assemblies have settled down to their work. Responsibility is writ large on their programme. In spite of the bitterness of political antipathies and the charge of corruption so frequently heard, it is impossible to follow the debates as reported in the public press without realizing that in the main our Legislative Assemblies are imbued with a deep sense of responsibility and that when the chaff is blown away the net result of their deliberations is to add many valuable measures to the statute books of the Dominion. The work of a Legislative Assembly is widely different from that of a Dominion Parliament in that it deals mainly with what may fairly be called business matters of a local character as opposed to matters of general or national policy. For this reason many of the debates are interesting only to those persons who happen to have a financial interest in the business immediately under discussion. Much of the legislation is the result of consultation with large delegations representing these several interests. At one time it is the lumbermen, at another the mining men, at another the agriculturists who petition the Government, and when all interests have been weighed legislation results having for its aim the upbuilding of local industries and the safe-guarding of public interests.

Public Utilities.

One of the most important business

transactions of any legislative assembly has been the recent purchase of the Bell Telephone interests by the Manitoba Government. All through the prairie country the idea of public ownership has a strong hold. It has been proclaimed for years, but the first practical outcome is in the purchase of the telephone system. Some averred that the price paid—\$3,500,000—is excessive, but it should never be forgotten that in a progressive country the value of a good property increases every year, and the wise government once it has made up its mind on the matter of policy, purchases today on the best terms it can, well knowing that in any event the figure will be higher next year. Dilly-dallying with the purchase of public utilities which the people have decided to acquire is a poor policy, and this in many instances resulted in depriving communities of such common necessities as water, gas and light for many years.

The Drink Question.

One other question of importance seems to be attracting widespread interest at the moment; not only in England and the United States, but in Canada, the forces opposed to strong drink appear to be gaining strength. There is a more practical outcome. The era of talk seems to have been succeeded by that of action. Everywhere men are being elected to public bodies, pledged to restrict the drink traffic, and everywhere the number of saloons is being reduced and the license fee raised. The Alberta Legislature is considering a proposal for rendering illegal throughout the whole of its territory the sale of strong drink except at public dispensaries established under Government control and administered by Government commissioners. Alberta has always been noted for its determined attitude on the temperance question; it is by far the most temperate Province in Canada. The proposal under consideration may be a drastic one and its adoption may not come the first time of asking, but it is more than likely that inside of ten years some such measure will be adopted not only in Alberta but in other Provinces of Canada.