

Development of Municipal Institutions in Ontario.

Continued from last issue.

the district treasurer five shillings per day for their services. The quarter sessions still maintained the authority they formerly held in reference to the administration of justice, the location and alteration of highways and other matters general to the district. This was the municipal system in vogue at the time of the rebellion of 1837, when the abolition of separate provincial governments brought about Legislative Union.

In 1839, the township commissioners, provided for in the act of 1835, were named town wardens. The change whereby the people were intrusted with the freest of action in the elections of municipal officers, viz., the clerk, assessor, collector, commissioners or wardens, does not seem to have been much in the direction of popular self-government, but any act that took from the nominative magistracy any of the powers they exercised was appreciated. This system was continued up to the year 1841, when the legislature of the united provinces endeavored to create a municipal system that would meet all the requirements of Upper Canada.

In 1840, the authorities recognized the necessity of leaving the people free to control their own internal affairs and giving up that system of paternal government which had worked so unsatisfactorily. Some difficulties arose in dealing with this question on account of the position taken by Lower Canada. During the suspension of the constitution in French Canada, an ordinance had been passed by a special council to provide for the better internal government of the province by the establishment of local or municipal institutions therein.

The province was divided into districts, and the governor and council determined the number of councillors and appointed the warden. Consequently, the system in operation in Lower Canada was entirely controlled by the government. It was the desire of the Upper Canadians, who had been gradually educated for more popular local institutions, to elect the warden and their officers. This furnished the basis of the Municipal Act of 1841, which was introduced by Mr. Harrison, provincial secretary, and which provided by district councils to be composed of one or two members, to be elected at the regular meeting in each township, and hold office for three years, retiring in rotation. The council was required to meet four times a year. The warden, treasurer and clerk were appointed by the governor of the province. Every by-law passed had to be approved of by the provincial authorities. The governor had the power to dissolve district councils at any time. To the district councils was transferred the powers of the quarter sessions with reference to the administration of municipal affairs.

By the Act of 1849, district municipalities were abolished in favor of counties and county councils composed, as at present, of reeves and deputy reeves.

The Fifth Form in Public Schools.

The most important educational question discussed during the last session of the legislature was that of the point at which the public school course should end. Is it in the interests of public education that the teaching of the subjects included in what is known as the fifth form in the public schools should be encouraged, or should the department and the profession rather favor the relegating of this work, as far as possible, to the high schools? While the minister of education, if our memory serves us, always expressed himself in favor of having the work of the fifth form carried on in the public school, wherever the conditions are such as admit of its being done effectively. It must be confessed that some of the regulations seem rather adapted to produce the opposite effect. The refusal of the department to appropriate money for fifth form examinations in schools, in which but one teacher is employed, is probably wise. There can scarcely be a doubt, we suppose, that it is practically impossible for a single teacher, however able and industrious, to teach fifth-form work efficiently without detriment to the work of the lower classes, and so to the great majority of his pupils. But whether this refusal should not be offset with some special inducement to the employment of assistants wherever practicable, so as to make it possible to extend the course to the end of the fifth year without loss, or rather with positive gain to the lower forms, is an important question. Seeing that the amounts of the grants to public schools has not been increased during the last twelve years, while the sum total of the expenditure for educational purposes has been largely increased, there certainly seems to be some ground for the charge that the common schools are hardly getting their share of this most practical kind of encouragement.

It is also understood that the holding of fifth form examinations in public schools is not encouraged in towns and cities in which high schools and collegiate institutes are maintained. The reason given is, of course, that the duplication of the teaching and examinations is unnecessary, and consequently a waste of money and labor. But is this so? The argument is valid, it seems to us, only on the supposition that all the pupils who would have taken the year's work in the public school had it been taught there, will, failing that, avail themselves of the high schools. Will such be the fact? We doubt it. Nothing seems to us more certain than that there are many boys and girls who would continue for another year in the public schools, were that necessary to complete its course and reap all the advantages it

offers, who will not enter the high schools. Various reasons suggest themselves. The high schools are not usually free. They are generally associated in the minds of parents and pupils with the idea of preparation for the university or for a profession. Their courses are not adapted for those who can remain in them for but a year, etc.

We are proud of our High Schools. We regard them as one of the strongest links in the educational chain. We doubt if for good teaching and efficiency they are excelled in any country. But nevertheless, or rather for that very reason among others, we do not think that they can take the place or do the work of the fifth-form in the public schools. Nothing could be better for them than that their pupils should enter at a more advanced stage of preparation, and that they should thus be enabled to carry them a stage further in the intermediate work. But the real question is, what is best for the country? The ideal of public education is the greatest good of the greatest number. Can anyone doubt that if a much larger number of our public schools were well equipped for carrying their pupils forward for another year, a largely increased number of the boys and girls of Ontario would be led to take advantage of the fact and would therefore receive another year at school before going about their life work? For obvious reasons this last year would be worth considerably more from an educational point of view than any preceding year. Any incidental result, too, would be that a considerably larger number would be stimulated to enter the High Schools and thus the number of citizens possessing a higher education would be increased in proportion. Few thoughtful persons will, we believe, be willing to maintain that the end of the fourth-form in the public schools is such a goal as should satisfy us as an education for the great mass of Canadians. and yet it is beyond controversy that under present arrangements this is the goal which the great majority of parents set before themselves for their children.—*Educational Journal.*

The county council of York, under the direction of the public school inspector, has recently issued a may of the county. A copy has been placed in each school room. An exchange referring to the matter, says: From a business standpoint, the geography of our more immediate surroundings is of much greater importance to us than a knowledge of some far-away mountain or desert which may never exist to most of us, but as a mental conception, give the children a thorough training in the geography of Canada, and especially of the grand Province of Ontario, begin with your own county.

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In order to present a full and correct statement of the finances of the municipality on 15th December, every councillor should see that all accounts against their respective corporations are settled up, or the amount made known, to be entered as a liability.