

## The Toronto World

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## TELEPHONE SYSTEM AND PUBLIC CONTROL.

Altho the special committee of the house of commons, by a majority of seven to five, refused to authorize the railway commission to order telephone connection between competing systems, it is so far satisfactory that Mr. Emerson, on behalf of the government, declined to accept the amendment. It was, of course, conceived in the interest of the Bell Company, whose concern it is to retain and strengthen the monopoly it enjoys, not by law, but by its unscrupulous methods. Some excuse for the amendment might have been found had the proposal subjected the company to pecuniary loss. But as a connection can only be obtained on terms which would no doubt include adequate compensation for the service rendered the standing plea of confiscation is not available. Nothing remains but the usual determination of a public service corporation to place its own private interests above the rights and convenience of the public.

The telephone situation is closely analogous to that of the railways—if there is any difference it is that against the contentions of the Bell Company. The simple fact is that because the company is over-capitalized it cannot give service it should at the low rates which the limitation of its capital to the proper cost of construction would have allowed. Now its aim is to freeze out all municipal and other systems which offer service at reasonable rentals. It wants to do this by limiting these systems to their own local areas and by refusing intercommunication and the use of trunk lines. Between public needs and rights and the company there is a gulf which government control may narrow, but which can only be effectually closed by the nationalization of the whole telephone systems of the Dominion.

Thanks to Mr. Aylesworth, this solution of the problem has been turned down, and the Bell Company authorized vast increase in its capital. A great opportunity of completing the postal department by the inclusion of the telegraphs and telephones has been lost and can never return in equally favorable form. That the government itself has been compelled to recognize the public character of the telephone service is evident from the proposal to place the rates and terms of connection between systems under the control of the railway commission. Control thus exercised can never be satisfactory, and the citizens of Canada are rapidly being converted to the belief that public ownership and operation is the proper remedy. This is the conviction of the parliament and governments of Britain without distinction of party. It has been left to the so-called Liberal government of Canada to set itself on the side of the corporations against the people.

## ENFORCE LOCAL OPTION.

Premier Whitney's course in regard to the liquor question has been strong, straightforward and statesmanlike. During the general election campaign he gave no pledges and made no promises. Nevertheless, the bill of this year, altho in part subjected to sharp animadversion by extreme critics, will, there is every reason to hold, be ultimately and generally recognized as a valuable measure of reform. Many who were at first inclined to minimize its importance and doubt its intention are now convinced that if honestly and vigorously administered, its operation cannot but advance the cause of temperance throughout the province.

## The success of the restrictive clauses of the act depends on the vigilance and honesty of the local inspectors.

But to quote the old Roman maxim—quis custodiet ipsos custodes—"who will keep the keepers themselves"—this was provided for by the creation of the post of provincial inspector, whose special duty it is to see that in all districts where local option has been carried the law is strictly enforced. Experience has over and over again shown that personal responsibility is the best means of securing efficient service. It will now exist in the car-

rying out of the Liquor Act. Imperfect laws faithfully administered are better than ideally perfect statutes laxly enforced. The provincial government, if it is determined to compel obedience to the law, will need no other justification for the Liquor License Act.

## A PUBLIC DANGER.

If the laws of Ontario permit a company to bring live wires within arm's length of a public thoroughfare, without liability for personal injury caused by contact, accidental or otherwise, on the part of a child of tender years, then the laws are bad, and must be changed. It is pretty safe to say that in no other civilized community would similar conditions be tolerated. Common sense, which even statute-makers should regard, compels assent to the proposition that machines or appliances so situated as to be or become dangerous to the public ought to be properly fenced or protected. If they are not, liability for damage caused through the absence of protection should certainly follow.

The decision of the Ontario court of appeal, that no ground of action lay against the Toronto Electric Light Company for injuries sustained by a boy eight years old, who touched a live wire strung only fourteen inches from the railing of a bridge, deserves the immediate and serious attention of the attorney-general. Contributory negligence in a child of that age, or any circumstances disclosed, should not be available to a corporation whose plain duty it was to obviate the possibility of accident.

## HAPPY TRINITY.

No fault will be found with the appointment of H. B. Spotton as high school inspector to succeed Mr. Hodgson. He has made his career as an efficient teacher. He is well liked by his brethren in the profession, and has special qualifications as a science master. As an enthusiast for science he will follow naturally in the footsteps of John Seath, who has been called to higher duties.

It may be said that the department of education has chosen a happy trinity in Seath, Wetherell and Spotton, combining all the excellent capabilities of the former inspector and adding force to the supervision and the advancement of science instruction, without which Ontario cannot hope to fit herself for her undoubted destiny.

## What Hodgson had, Wetherell has;

and what Seath has he holds. Educational inspection should go ahead with fervor.

## "THE MINISTER OF CHILDREN."

Efforts are being made in England to secure the creation of a new department of government, to be presided over by a cabinet minister, to look after the welfare of children. A few hysterical people in the United States, some time ago, demanded of a somewhat hysterical president that he establish a like portfolio and put it in charge of a woman. Possibly because we already have fourteen cabinet ministers—against nine in a neighboring country with seventeen times as many people, no such proposal has yet appeared at Ottawa.

Under our constitutional system the matter of education is referred to the various provinces, which in turn have been generous in providing schools. Illiteracy will soon be extinct in many parts of Canada. Beyond providing schools, however, our governments are not overly concerned about children. It is assumed that they will find every possible need provided for by the dictates of parental affection.

This assumption does more credit to our sense of propriety than it does to our powers of observation. Many children are poor; many are neglected; many are the victims of parental neglect; many are the victims of parental neglect; many are the victims of parental neglect.

Miss Dothem beamed on the gentleman. "congratulate you, sir," she said, "upon your extremely large and affectionate family." "Large and affectionate?" he stammered. "Yes, indeed," said Miss Dothem. "No less than twelve of May's brothers have come steadily during the winter to take her driving and sleighing, while the two older ones were most assiduous in escorting her to the theatre twice a week."

## Close Season for Parliament.

The Lowestoft, England, Town Council passed a resolution urging on the House of Commons the necessity and importance of parliament rising in June in the interest of the public generally and the British holiday resorts in particular.

## Now the question is, who represents

J. Castell Hopkins on the board of governors?

It will be in order for The Globe to nominate R. L. Borden, M. P., for the presidency of Toronto University.

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proposes to make them harder to get.

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the simple life, the call of his alma mater would not go unheard and unheeded.

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governors one can tell at a glance who Mr. Gurney's nominee is, namely Rev. J. A. Macdonald.

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the country, so long as I have the patronage of the stamp licenses," says Hon. A. B. Aylesworth.

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wants a man to lead in the hunt for criminals. The scent cannot very

opportunities of temptations to systematically blight or crush the joyous heritage of childhood. Yet, in Toronto concrete cases are not lacking that suggest the absence of ideal conditions. The Martin murder and other deeds of violence against helpless infancy recall the fact that our city is unprovided with a foundling hospital; the Josie Carr case was perhaps abnormal, but it suggests a wide field of enquiry; during the nights of bitter cold last winter there stood, at the corner of King and Yonge-streets, selling papers, a little mite not over five or six years old. Inspector Archibald and the police of Toronto could add many a chapter to the mournful annals of the tragedy of childhood. Yet these sad instances occur among a generous people, anxious only to avert them. Many noble deeds are upon the credit side of the account. We may differ in many things from John Ross Robertson, but in the presence of his great, unselfish benefactions to suffering children, not only our city, but all Ontario, will rise up and unceasing.

It was Christ who, above all creatures, first recognized the claims of childhood. He took upon himself the form of helpless infancy; in one of his sermons, a children's game is taken as a parable; little children tugged at His gown, and unafraid, reclined upon His bosom; the father's right of life and death withered before His teachings and example. The medieval church, with all His faults and failings, protected the rights of children, and altho monarchical in form, no accident of poverty or lowly birth foreclosed the humblest lad from reaching its highest place. But social evolution has relegated to the state many fields of effort which, at one stage, the church pre-empted as her own. Is it not fair to ask whether the state is doing its full duty to her children; may not this demand for a minister of children, however unheeded it may seem, have underneath it a modicum of sense?

It is a matter of surprise that the popular unrest—rather sweepingly denounced as socialism—does not centre itself upon the rights of children. Herbert Spencer pointed out that if public schools could be justified at all, then logic demanded that still more be done, "free schools." One may counter question, "why not?" Mr. Whitney, for example, has more than once suggested that such legislation might not be unadvisable. But Mr. Spencer went further:

"If children are to attend free schools they should, if necessary, be sufficiently nourished by the state to endure the confinement, to follow intelligently what they are taught; they should be decently clad."

Even so. It is recognized in London and New York that a child should not go to school without breakfast; and, if his parents furnish none, the state must do it. If breakfast, why not dinner and supper? And how about clothes?

It is easier to state a principle than it is to apply it. But one thing is indisputable, and that is that every child, say from birth to the age of 14, is entitled to air and sunshine to whose some food and decent clothing, to education, to surroundings clean and decent in every way. This provision is the imperative duty that rests upon society. It is, therefore, a function of government. It is idle to feed the mind and starve the body. Nor is the mind fed properly if for many hours the child is exposed to cruelty and indecency. True, the state dreads to invade the rights of the family, but the rights of the child are paramount.

"Dicken has been denounced for caricaturing his father, as Mr. Micawber and his mother, as Mrs. Nickleby. He never forgot them for the neglect that might have made him a mere vagabond or criminal and robbed him of the pleasures that he afforded them. Yet the caricatures are not ill-natured, and the world can well forgive the flighty parents of a gifted son who gave a new birth to Christmas for English-speaking people, and from his own experience quickened our sympathy with children and aroused our sense of duty to them."

The fruit crop is backward, but the crop of June brides is on time to the minute.

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