

LIBERALISM AND INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION

AMONG the outstanding achievements of Liberalism in Canada is the creation of a Department of the Federal Government to further the well-being of the masses of the people. Other governments established Federal Departments of Finance, of Trade and Commerce, of Railways and Canals, of Customs and Inland Revenue; but it remained for the government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, true to the well-being of the many, which is the main concern of Liberalism, to establish in 1900 the Department of Labor.

Achievements of Department of Labor.

The record of the Department of Labor in the establishment of the Labor Gazette, of anti-sweating and fair wages policies on government contract work, in the enactment of legislation for the protection of workers against false representations at home and abroad concerning opportunities of employment, of legislation for the prevention and settlement of industrial disputes, of legislation for the investigation of combines, monopolies, trusts and mergers, of legislation suppressing the opium traffic, and the use of habit-forming drugs; and the efficient enforcement of all these and many other measures during more than a decade of Liberal administration, constitutes one of the most hopeful and inspiring chapters in Canada's history.

Investigations Brought Valuable Results.

Beside this chapter might be placed the interest aroused in problems affecting the well-being of the masses through the many important investigations extensively conducted under the auspices of the Department of Labor during the Liberal regime, such, for example, as the investigation into the method of carrying out government clothing contracts in Canada and abroad, the investigation into the question of Oriental immigration and its effect upon the future interests of the Dominion, the investigation into the condition of telephone operatives in the province of Ontario, and the condition of operatives in the cotton mills of the province of Quebec, investigations into the fraudulent practices of employment agencies in the cities and sub-contractors in construction camps in unorganized districts, investigations into rents, wages and prices, and the cost of living. These and many other inquiries of less outstanding prominence constitute but a part of the investigation of industrial conditions in Canada for which the Liberal government was responsible while in office, and which at the time and ever since have operated to improve the lot of the workers in Canada.

Contrast Between Parties is Fundamental.

What a contrast between the constructive legislative work of Liberalism in its concern for the people, and the total absence of any legislation of the kind by the Borden administration since it came into power nearly five years ago! What a contrast between investigations instituted by Liberalism for

the purpose of bettering social and industrial conditions and the kind of investigations which the Conservative government has instituted with the hundred and more Royal Commissions it has appointed since assuming office!

It would be a mistake to assume that a contrast so marked was a matter wholly of circumstance or accident. The reason goes deeper than that, and may be found in the fundamental difference between Liberalism and Conservatism as attitudes of government. As has been frequently pointed out, Liberalism by its very nature assumes to promote the well-being of the masses of the people; Conservatism by its very nature assumes to safeguard existing privilege. **Liberalism is primarily concerned with people; Conservatism is primarily concerned with property. Liberalism cares for men; Conservatism for money.**

Vocational Education—The Liberal Record.

Possibly no better example of the natural attitude of the two parties towards a question of great national importance is to be found than exists in that of the Liberal and Conservative governments respectively towards the question of Industrial Training and Technical Education, or, as it is sometimes referred to, Vocational Education. Recognizing that a nation's population is mainly made up of the workers in its trades and industries, that their happiness is largely dependent upon their earning capacity, and that their earning capacity is dependent upon the efficiency of industrial processes and individual skill, the late Liberal government, true to Liberalism which seeks to ever widen the opportunities of men, sought to arouse public interest in the national significance of Industrial Training and Technical Education in Canada by appointing a Royal Commission with practically unlimited powers to investigate the needs of trades, industries and communities in Canada, and the methods by which similar needs were being most efficiently met in other countries of the world. Seven Commissioners in all were appointed. On this Commission were representatives of Labor, of Capital, and of the Public. The Commissioners spent a couple of years in careful study of the whole problem. Opportunities were afforded to all classes to present their views, and the Commission while travelling abroad was afforded every facility for favourable observation and study.

As a result of its work, the Commission published a voluminous and comprehensive report which was unanimously agreed to by its members. In this report the great need of advancing industrial scientific research, and of furthering Industrial Training and Technical Education in all the provinces from the Atlantic to the Pacific in accordance with a broad statesmanlike policy has been brought home to the Canadian people. Recommendations have been made which if carried out would mean a gain to every industry and calling and to every worker in Canada.