

public to enjoy the glories of Strathcona Park. Of the government can do no such thing, and presumably, therefore, all the expenditure on Strathcona Park has been thrown away. Now, surely Mr. Bowser as attorney-general, could have foreseen such an impasse. If it was not his business to see that the government had a clear title to the park, whose was it? If no money is to be spent on the upkeep of the park, will not the roads and trails all disappear in the usual tangle of undergrowth? Will not the work all have to be done over again when the title is cleared?

COLORLESS CANDIDATES

Perhaps this is not so much an illustration of incompetency as of a condition which has been emphasised time and again in these articles. That condition is the neglect of business by the attorney-general in order to buttress and bolster his political and personal power. It is against or for his power the electorate must decide at the coming elections. It will be admitted that there is really nothing to distinguish a Conservative from a Liberal in our provincial legislature. The terms really do not apply at all. They are merely a convenience. Also it must be admitted that, it is quite probable that, given similar conditions, the Liberal party, if it had been in power, would have erred in almost exactly the same manner as the Conservatives, as far as policies are concerned. That, however, is in the past and does not concern the electorate. What does concern the electorate is the future, and the men who are going to tackle our problems in that future. This is what the people have to decide, and their responsibility is by no means light. For it is difficult to choose between men, both of whom may be merely party politicians without any individualism, initiative or imagination. So many candidates are only the colorless imitation of the heads of their party. They are only megaphones mechanically grinding out records. They cannot originate. Their idea of politics is to get elected through the operation, manipulation and organisation of their party affiliations.

CHARACTER VERSUS PARTY

The party form of government is undoubtedly the best in a democracy. It has its weaknesses, but it is possible to correct a party by defeating it at the polls. Democratic government by a brilliant coterie of individuals, none of whom could find a basis of agreement, would be impossible. The business of a premier is to gather round him the best administrators of his party and keep them working together. They can come to him with their ideas, and those ideas can be discussed by the executive as a whole. The executive can give its supporters opportunity to discuss its policies. All this is commonplace, but nevertheless must be kept clearly in mind when choosing a candidate. The candidate is apt to promise a great deal. He is apt to dwell on his independence—but unless he has an independent mind, unless he can think things out to a logical conclusion, he is dwelling on something which does not exist. His abilities are mortgaged to his party, which can foreclose at any time. It is of immense importance at this coming election to select the best men, but, unfortunately, the best men, as a rule, seldom can give their time to politics, and if they do, they are seldom nominated by their conventions. Independence is not appreciated at a convention. There is, however, one test which can be applied to all candidates, and that is character. How do the candidates compare in character?

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CONSCIENCE

It is probable that the elections will turn entirely upon this question. As has been said, the Conservatives stand on their record. Very well. What records have their candidates in a place like Vancouver for instance? The premier we all know—he has been dealt with. But as men like Messrs. Leek, Duke and Dr. McGuire are nominated, how is the electorate to discriminate between their character and that of their opponents? Now it is at this precise point we arrive at the dividing line between the two parties. The Liberal candidates have no political past—with the exception, perhaps, of Mr. Ralph Smith. The party has a past which it can safely be claimed has been obliterated by the Conservative record. 'As for this record Mr. Bowser is fully responsible.' He has failed to move with the times. His political ideas are still governed by those prevailing when he first tried to enter Dominion politics. He believes that parties depend on patronage for power. The coming election is a fight against patronage. It is a fight against the pettiness of ward politics. It is a fight against men who are bound to a tradition which must not survive if we are to prosper. To them as to Mr. Bowser, politics justly measures which they probably would repudiate with scorn if connected with their private life. Their private conscience and their public conscience are two totally different things.

OUT OF HIS OWN MOUTH

Are we to go forward to our destiny with courage and confidence, or with this present load of uncertainty clinging like a millstone about our necks? The Conservative party is entirely in the hands of Mr. Bowser and his special clique. Messrs. Welsh, Duke, Leek and some others are typical of that clique as far as Vancouver is concerned. Mr. Tisdall and Dr. McGuire, while they may not exercise patronage, are merely echoes of the premier. Mr. Tisdall is perhaps the best choice, he and Mr. McGowan who has a certain independence which would be of greater value if Mr. Bowser were eliminated. But the Sewerage Board, the License Board, the School Board, all have the Bowserian henchmen. The taint is at the fountain head and it runs through the whole party. The Conservative party, as a party, may not be responsible for the Dominion Trust scandal—which hit British Columbia harder than the war—and which cannot be forgotten merely because two years have elapsed between it and the election. The Dominion Trust failure and Mr. Bowser's speech in his own defence thereon are together the most damning indictment of his standard of political morality ever uttered in a legislative chamber—and the most extraordinary feature of it all is that Mr. Bowser never has realised it and never can.

THE REAL ISSUE AT THE ELECTIONS

Do the people of British Columbia desire to have the Dominion Trust scandal perpetuated? Do they desire that their attorney-general, the head of the department of justice, should act for the Pacific Great Eastern Railway, Messrs. Foley, Welch and Stewart, the Pacific Great Eastern Development Co., or any one of the contractors or companies which have special favors to ask of the provincial government? Supposing the Pacific Great Eastern Railway were to go into liquidation? Do they desire Mr. Bowser to spring to its defence, as he has already sprung to the defence of his other clients? Apparently the Conservative party, or at least the executive organisations of that party, acquiesce and favor this state of affairs.