

the right to place their names on the voters' list, can be effected in the time and with the facilities provided. This is, however, a matter of detail. It should be easily adjusted with the help of the practical men on both sides of the House. But on general principles, it will, we think, be conceded by most thoughtful men, on either side of politics, that no better method for securing the vote to the largest number of those eligible, and rendering fraud and personation difficult, has yet been devised, than an effective registration system. There can be little doubt that the method will before many years be adopted in both Dominion and Provincial politics. The leading features of the Mowat Bill, which aims simply to make trial of the system within a limited area, and for a certain class of voters, has the approval, we believe, of some of the most thoughtful Conservatives in the Province. The *Empire* charges in so many words that it is a device to help the Ontario Government, and that it is particularly designed to deprive the party in Toronto of the advantage in numbers of manhood voters which they claim to have gained under the old system. But why may these same young men not be relied on, if they value the franchise, or have enough patriotic feeling to entitle them to the rights of citizenship, to take the small amount of trouble necessary to register their names? In the face of a near election, there is little danger that many would neglect the precaution. At the same time, it is clear that all this unseemly struggle and mutual suspicion might have been happily avoided, had the Government been magnanimous enough to refer the matter to a mixed committee, empowered to bring in a joint recommendation, such as would have commanded the support of all the best men on both sides.

Sir John Thompson's lucid speech on the North-West School Question last week must have gone far to convince all reasonable persons that the Catholics of the Territories have little cause for complaint. In several instances the arrangements complained of as a denial or deprivation of the rights of the minority were shown to have been made by the representatives of that minority, or with their full concurrence. For instance, with regard to the complaint touching the selection of school books, he stated that the selection was made by the Roman Catholic division of the Board of Education before the ordinance complained of, that of 1892, was passed, and had not been disturbed since in any important particular. From the statements of Mr. Haultain it appeared that no text-books have been struck off which the Roman Catholics wished to retain, and none added to which they objected. So with regard to the books upon which the teachers' examinations were held, Sir John said that no cause of complaint could exist against the legislation of 1892, because in 1891, although the mem-

bers of the Roman Catholic section of the Board had the right to prescribe the books for the examinations for Separate School teachers, they declined to exercise that right, and a resolution in favour of an uniform system was passed upon the motion of a member of that section. The Premier's speech was avowedly made with reserve, yet one can hardly read it without receiving, or at least having confirmed, the impression that the complaints are more of Quebec than of North-West origin, and that in many cases they are the result of afterthought. Sir John's explanation that the disallowance of the Act of 1892 would not disannul any regulations made under that Act previous to its disallowance, since disallowance takes effect only from the moment of its proclamation, presents what to the lay mind seems a rather strange state of things. If his remark on this point is rightly reported and we have correctly understood it, it would seem as if all a local legislature has to do, in order to escape from the effects of disallowance of a doubtful Act, is to make with all haste such regulations as will put into operation the provisions of the Act, and then await its disallowance with equanimity. Probably his remarks on this point have been misreported or misapprehended.

The majority report of the British Royal Labour Commission will probably be disappointing to many. More definite and positive recommendations were no doubt expected, particularly with reference to such matters as appointing official arbitrators, establishing boards of conciliation, or arbitration, and regulating the hours of labour. Conservative—we do not use the word in the party sense—views have evidently prevailed. Beyond recommending a few mild, tentative measures, such as giving a public department power to appoint an arbitrator to act alone or in conjunction with others, the majority do not go. Some of the enormous difficulties which confront any attempt at advanced labour legislation are very clearly brought out. For instance, it would seem a simple thing enough for Parliament to put it in the power of any trade to settle the hours of labour by a vote of the trade. But the practical difficulty in defining who constitute the trade and should have a vote under such legislation, is no doubt very great, if not insuperable. The Commission have no doubt done wisely in not attempting to propose any stricter law for the prevention of intimidation by picketing, etc. It is pretty evident that the line can be drawn only at violence or threats of violence. As the Commission point out, moral compulsion may be carried to great lengths in ways which the laws cannot control, and cannot usefully attempt to control.

Perhaps the most difficult subject which the Commission had to consider is that of "sweating." The minority report declares

in favor of immediate and strong measures to stop the sweating system, the excessive hours of labour, etc., and to raise the standard of life among the oppressed working people. But the radical union men are sometimes disposed to be even more cruel than the capitalists in their treatment of all workmen who do not come up to their standards. This is a case in which extremes meet. The union workmen, intent only on the interests of their own class, and the philanthropists, whose sensibilities are shocked by the hardships and degradation of the "sweated" work people, are alike apt to forget to ask what would be the effect of the sudden closing up of the sweating establishments upon those poor workers. If it were only a question of a law to compel the sweating employers to grant shorter hours, pay better wages, and improve the character of the places in which their business is carried on, the thing would be easy enough. But the trouble is, that the sweater's employees are usually of a kind who cannot find employment in the better class of establishments because of their want of skill or strength, or their general inefficiency, and who cannot even obtain situations, to say nothing of earning better wages, under the stress of competition with skilled workmen. The question often with them is that between life under their terribly hard conditions and life without even the present wretched means of support. Hence it will no doubt be usually found that those who are suffering horrible hardships and privations in the sweating shops will be the first to deprecate any legal interference with their employers, because that would mean absolute starvation for them. In some of the cities, philanthropic ladies are forming themselves into societies or bands pledged not to patronize those who are believed to deal in the products of the sweaters' toil. On the same principle the practice of buying the cheaper goods is sometimes denounced, even from the pulpits. These philanthropists deserve much credit for their humane motives, but they evidently should carry their kind feelings, or rather suffer their kind feelings to carry them, a little further, and ask themselves what would be the fate of these wretched, underpaid, and overworked people, who produce the cheap goods, were everyone to suddenly refuse to purchase them. The reply of the unions is short and to the purpose. "Let them go under, or go where they can. Our business is to raise the condition of the skilled and able-bodied labourers." The recommendation of the majority of the Commission would reach the same end by a somewhat slower process—gradual extinction of the lowest class of work places in which the sweated industries are carried on. Perhaps nothing better can be done, for these places are a menace both to the health and to the morals of the communities in which they exist. But it is well at least to see all that is involved in heroic measures before being in haste to use them.