

# SCHOOL TEST FOR VOTING

Education of Immigrants  
Discussed by Mrs. Howard  
Gray

## PROBLEM OF FOREIGNERS

"The Educational Test for Voting," as introduced in an address by Mrs. Howard Gray of Weston, President of the Ontario Women Citizens' Association, was subject for discussion at a meeting of the United Women Voters held at 21 McGill street last evening, with the President, Mrs. L. A. Hamilton, in the chair. The fundamental purpose of the "literacy test," as Mrs. Gray preferred to call it, is, she said, that we may be a united people. We must create a real Canadian soul if we are to be a great country. And we can never have a united people unless we have a common language. To properly appreciate Canadian ideals the foreign-born must know our language. For this matter narrows down to the foreign-born. It is a very isolated instance when a Canadian reaches voting age without being able to read and write.

From her experience in the West Mrs. Gray drew some very telling points. The population of the Province of Saskatchewan, she said, is fifty per cent foreign. And throughout the West there are exclusively foreign colonies to be found with as large a population as 65,000. These people speak no English, and have no desire to do so. Their idea is, on the contrary, to exclude Canadian language and ideals and to retain those of their former country.

### Not Work for the Schools.

The public school, Mrs. Gray said, is not going to Canadianize these people for us. The home interest is the big interest. The children are only in school a few hours of a few months. To eradicate the foreign ideals and inculcate Canadianism the father and mother must be compelled to learn the language.

In view of the new Election Act, which it is understood, will come up at the next session of Parliament, Mrs. Gray thought the matter ought to be gone into. Prior to 1914, when there was an annual influx of about 400,000 foreigners, the voting qualifications were three years' residence, good character and the taking of the oath of allegiance. In 1914, however a step in the right direction was taken in the Naturalization Act which required five years' residence and "an adequate knowledge of the English language." The interpretation of that "adequate knowledge," Mrs. Gray thinks, should be considered, and a speaking and reading knowledge of English should be required. And while the Naturalization Act applies to the new women voters and to comparatively newly arrived foreigners, the hosts that came into the country before 1914 are not touched by it.

### Prohibiting Foreign Pamphlets.

The question of issuing pamphlets and holding meetings in a foreign language was also touched upon, and in discussion it was suggested that such a thing ought to be stopped within a certain number of years, and that, in the interim, the printing of leaflets in both languages and the presence of an interpreter at meetings might be required.

Mrs. Hamilton said it must be recognized that many of the foreigners were ready and eager to learn our language and to make their contribution to the life of the country. She cited instances of splendid achievements in art and science by foreign settlers in the West. The fault, she thought, had been largely ours. We had not tried to make Canadians of them.

Mrs. W. H. Becker said the immigrants would have accepted a literacy test as a matter of course if it had been required when they first came to this new country, but now there would be more to live down.

The need of a woman Judge, working with a man Judge, in the Juvenile Court, was discussed, and it was decided to bring more pressure to bear in this matter.

"If we're not going to get these things that we want," said Mrs. Campbell MacIver, "we must organize into wards and at the next election put out those men who have blocked measures of progress."

A resolution was passed providing that the Board of Pensions Commissioners be asked to make the payment to the widow of an English

reservist enlisting in Canada the same as that to the widow of a Canadian soldier. At present the widow of a reservist, with two children, gets \$26 a month, compared with \$62 paid to a Canadian soldier's widow.