

## The Normal Schools.

Mr. Barr (Dufferin) gave notice of motion for an order of the House for a return of copies of applications for admission into normal schools for the year 1901; the date of such applications; the number and names of those admitted; the date on which said applicants were notified of their admission; the number and names of those rejected; the date on which said applicants were notified of their rejection; the cause of their rejection; the number of teachers in training the normal schools can accommodate, and the number of teachers in training now actually in attendance at such normal schools. Speaking to the notice, Mr. Barr said he desired to draw attention to a state of affairs in the Education Department which should be improved. Teachers desirous of entering the normal schools frequently found it necessary that they should know promptly whether they could be admitted during the early part of the second half of the year, so that they might be guided as to entering upon new contracts with school trustees. If they were not so informed promptly they often engaged for a further term, sometimes at a disadvantage. For instance, cases had come to his knowledge where teachers having made application for entrance had declined to renew contracts for further terms, but not hearing from the department, had finally re-engaged in other districts, perhaps at a lesser salary, and had then received word that they would be admitted to one of the schools. It was then, of course, too late, and they had to go on with their duties as teachers, and wait until another session the opportunity of going to the schools. He thought the department should be in a position to let applicants know at once whether they could be admitted to the schools.

## Political Influence Charged.

In considering the question, Mr. Barr said he was afraid that there was another side, another influence which worked to the interest of some and the disadvantage of other teachers. It was a fact which he could prove beyond a doubt that last year teachers who had taken an active part for the Liberal party in the Dominion election had been admitted to the schools in advance of those who had prior claims. He knew of one case in which a teacher had been assured by a party having the patronage of the Government in his district that he would be admitted to the normal school, and that teacher was admitted, notwithstanding prior claims of others. This, he considered, was going too far on the idea, "to the victors belong the spoils." The Education Department should be kept entirely clear of political influence. They had hoped and believed that such was the case in the past, at least they had not been able to point to any evidence to the contrary. But during the past year evidence of political influence had been brought forth. He did not for one moment suggest that teachers should not exercise the franchise or take a more active part in elections if they so desired, but that should in no

way influence their standing in regard to application for admission to normal schools or other necessary dealings with the department.

## The Charge Denied.

Hon. Mr. Harcourt said that the remarks of his hon. friend as regarded the first part of his complaint strengthened the hands of himself (Mr. Harcourt). It proved the contention that the normal schools were so popular that they could to-morrow if they had a fourth normal school admit one hundred more pupils. At present there were three such schools, one each in Toronto, Ottawa and London, with 300 seats. The problem was to provide for 400 pupils with accommodation for only 300. He did not think that Mr. Barr was serious as to his other remarks, and did not believe that any member of the House would seriously say that the department would take any line of action which would interfere with the prospects of the school girls, for nine-tenths of the normal school pupils were girls who did not take any active part in politics. The Minister of Education then detailed the procedure as to the manner in which applications were dealt with. He pointed out that immediately upon receiving them a clerk sent to applicants a vacancy card and a form of application. The card indicated in which school there was a vacancy. It often happened that a month or so after the application had been sent in the same applicant would write asking to be transferred to some other school than that indicated on the card. The Toronto school, owing to the central position of the city, was quite popular, and many transfers to it were requested. There was only one form of vacancy card and application, and all applicants were dealt with alike, on the basis of priority of application. Would his hon. friend assist him as to a fourth school if one was projected? Such a school if built in the northern part of the Province, near where Mr. Barr lived, for instance, would be filled within a few days after its opening. Reverting again to the suggestion of political influence, he assured his hon. friend, in all candor and truth, that there was no warrant, not a vestige, tittle or iota of truth, as to the suspicion. It was a matter of pleasure to be able to say that no one had written to him contending that he or she was entitled to admission because of holding certain political views. (Government applause.) The welfare of the schools ought to be and was above any consideration of politics. The question of education was a matter above politics, and in that light would be administered so long as he had a seat in the House. (Government applause.) The return asked for by Mr. Barr would be brought down.

## A Leading Question.

Mr. Whitney said he would like to make a suggestion with the idea of affording his hon. friend the opportunity of making a statement if he would be so kind. He realized that it was not according to practice that the Premier should be compelled to answer a query such as he proposed to make.