

MONTREAL SECTION

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MONTREAL MUNICIPAL SERVICES.

Another Projected Incorporation—Jubilee Bridge Railway—Asbestos.

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The present sessions of the Federal and Provincial Governments will in all probability be productive of decisions or acts which will have an important effect upon the status of the City of Montreal, in its relations with corporations which require the use of the streets to carry on their undertakings. As recently pointed out in these columns, it seems to have been established within the past few weeks that the charter of the Montreal Electric Company places that company in a position of superiority to the will of the entire population, not only of the City of Montreal but of Westmount, in the matter of placing poles and using the streets.

A further menace to the rights of the city is contained in the attempt which is to be made before the Legislature by the Canadian Light and Power Company, to have removed from its charter the clause whereby it can only exercise its functions in the streets by the consent of the Municipal Council. Within the past few days, yet another instance of a similar nature has been disclosed. It would appear that the Canadian-Liverpool and Western Railway Company is applying to Parliament for a bill of incorporation for powers which seriously infringe on the rights of Montreal. The company will have a capital of \$1,000,000, and seeks powers to construct and operate a railroad from a point on the Transcontinental Railway near the St. Maurice River to the southern shore of Lake St. John, then down the Saguenay River to its mouth, and on to Quebec City and Montreal.

The powers asked for also embrace those of navigation, elevator and electric lighting and power companies. Whether the former portion of the powers asked for are merely to divert attention from the latter portion, it is difficult to say. Be that as it may, the portion which more especially affects the City of Montreal is the fourth clause, wherein power is asked for to acquire electric or other power or energy which may be transmitted and delivered to any place in the municipalities through which the railway is authorized to be built, and receive, transform, transmit, distribute, and supply such power or energy in any form and dispose of the surplus thereof. It is stated here that should the powers asked for be granted, it would manifestly give the company rights of the nature possessed by the Montreal Electric Company, whereby they may ignore the wishes of the city in matters pertaining to their utilization of the streets. The names associated with the enterprise are: Samuel Guy McClenahan, of Montreal; George S. May, Donald G. Stewart, Thomas Bremner Rankin, and William Johnston, all of Ottawa.

To Protect Municipal Powers.

At a result of the conditions referred to, a meeting of the mayors of all the municipalities on the Island of Montreal, was held here early this week and combined action for the protection of the municipal powers was decided upon. It was decided to petition the Quebec Legislature to insert a clause with this end in view into all charters granted hereafter to public service corporations. Failing success in the above, the Government will be asked to appoint a commission to control all works, rates, services, etc. The city will also ask power from the Quebec Legislature to build a municipal conduit and to impose heavy fines upon companies which do not abolish their poles and bury their wires after proper notification. This is a subject about which there has been much discussion for some years past, and it is thought that the city will require special powers to compel the public service corporations to recognize its authority.

A further step towards the acquisition of the Montreal Water & Power Company will also be made at the coming Legislature. The City Council will ask for power to consummate the deal. It is estimated that about \$4,000,000 will be required for the purpose. In addition to this, the city will have this year nearly \$4,000,000 in borrowing power, over one-half of which will be used on public works, such as street pavements, etc., and one-quarter of which will be used in improvements to city waterworks.

A company is in progress of organization here, the operations of which will be extended to other Canadian cities,

such as Toronto; Ottawa, Winnipeg, and will probably also include the capitalists of those cities as its organizers. The company is for the purpose of operating taxicabs. Investigations are now going on for the purpose of deciding what class of vehicle is most appropriate, as well as for the purpose of ascertaining the best means of overcoming climatic difficulties. Unfortunately certain by-laws are in force in Montreal, and possibly in the other cities, which at present prevent these taxicabs being operated, and it will be the purpose of the company to have these by-laws abrogated or amended at the earliest possible moment.

Echo of a Recent Trial.

Mysteries in the operations of the law have been brought home to local financiers very vividly during the past week, by the announcement of the change in venue in the case of Mr. Phillippe H. Roy, and by the decision of the Grand Jury in the case of Mr. W. G. Browne. It will be remembered by those who have been following the litigations resulting from the suspension of the Bank of St. Johns, that the president, Mr. Roy, former Speaker of the Quebec Legislature, asked for a change of venue, alleging that the feeling against him at St. Johns ran so high as to prejudice his interests. As a result, the case was removed to Montreal. When the case came up here a few days ago, Mr. Roy's counsel declared that the feeling of resentment in St. Johns had ceased to exist, and as a consequence urged a change of venue back again to St. Johns. This was granted, although this will occasion a long delay awaiting the next term of the King's Bench at St. John's, next October.

In the case of Mr. W. G. Browne, as shown in these columns a week ago, the Judge discharged him for the reason that the evidence went to show that when the accused, while acting as General Manager of the Sovereign Bank, attached his signature to certain monthly statements rendered to the Government, he did so without any knowledge that the figures therein contained were false. As can be imagined, therefore, no small sensation was caused by the return by the Grand Jury of the Court of King's Bench of true bills on three indictments, charging Mr. W. G. Browne with having wilfully made false returns to the Department of Finance at Ottawa. This disagreement between the Grand Jury and the decision of Judge Leet, was, to say the least, somewhat unusual. The accused, and once acquitted, will now have to take his trial before the Petit Jurors.

Another step in the coupling of the north and south shores of the St. Lawrence, at Montreal, by means of an electric railway across the Jubilee Bridge, has been taken in the order which has just been placed by the Southern Counties Railway with the Grand Trunk Railway for six electric cars. These cars will measure 56 feet long and are being specially designed as observation cars in order to allow passengers crossing the bridge a good view of the city, the river and the surrounding country. Work will be commenced on the cars immediately, and as soon as they are finished they will be placed in commission.

Rumoured Asbestos Merger.

The advance which has lately taken place on the Stock Exchange in the price of Asbestos stock, was the first intimation the street had of what would seem to be a merger of the companies concerned in the production of asbestos in the Province of Quebec. Before long the details of the deal will be published. Meantime, it is announced that the officials of the British Canadian Asbestos Company are calling a meeting of the shareholders to take place about the middle of the month. At this meeting, an offer will be considered for the company's property in the Black Lake district. The report is that the shareholders will be offered \$2,000,000 for their interests. The merger may have a bond issue of \$7,500,000, with preferred stock amounting to \$1,875,000 and \$8,000,000 worth of common stock. The bonds will be offered at par, with a stock bonus of 25 per cent. preferred and 25 per cent. common. The group of men concerned in the merger, it is understood, is very similar to that which organized and carried to a successful issue the Shawinigan Company, and to some extent the Great Northern Railway, which was afterwards sold to the Canadian Northern. H. H. Melville is said to be the moving spirit in the new organization, there being associated with him J. E. Aldred, J. N. Greenshields, K.C., Hon. Robert Mackay, William MacKenzie, H. M. Whitney, and others. The others are stated to be Americans and Scotchmen—mainly Bank of Scotland interests—and a number of Canadians.