

Editorial

A COMMISSION ON NATIONAL RESOURCES.

The Dominion Government has recently appointed a new Commission, assigning to it a huge task. It is to be a sort of general purpose Commission to take stock of Canada's national resources, to investigate a large number of problems and to report upon their economical and expeditious solution. Among the problems consigned to it are those of increased production, co-operative systems, unemployment, and transportation by rail and water. Their work will consequently be of no small interest to the engineer. In fact, many a Canadian engineer has devoted much time and study to these very problems and has attained a worthy reputation for himself and his colleagues as the advance guard of scientific economy and national development.

The Commission is made up of ten prominent men, under the chairmanship of Senator Lougheed. Men have been chosen that will undertake the task with vim and will devote a great deal of energy to its fulfilment. It is really unfair to these men that they should start their work with a handicap. Having to do with a considerable amount of engineering economics, how much more efficiently might they be expected to persevere in their searches if assisted by the skilful knowledge and training of a capable engineer as one of their number.

The usefulness of an engineer on such a commission was probably never considered. At any rate it is difficult to imagine an advertent government disregarding his qualifications in a case like this, if it is ordained that the Commission shall really be a useful one. It is but another case of the engineer missing by an inch or a mile the recognition which he deserves and which is badly needed for the exercise of that influence so necessary for proper control in the administration of engineering affairs.

THE CANADIAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS AND THE CIVIC OFFICIALS OF MONTREAL.

From the attitude of Controller Cote and his civic colleagues in Montreal, one is at once led to the conclusion that the advice offered by the Council of the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers regarding the proposed extensions to the waterworks and lighting plant has not been received in the spirit in which it was given. Assuredly the men who form the Council of the Society have no axes to grind in the matter or no interest therein other than that of the ratepayers, and their own desire to preserve the good name of the engineering profession.

Recent events relating to the controversy, if such it may be called, were reviewed in *The Canadian Engineer* for October 14th, 1915, the reference concluding with a letter from the Secretary, Prof. C. H. McLeod, to the civic officials, in which letter the Council reiterated its desire to see the whole project reported upon by a board of independent engineers before further expenditure is incurred.

The letter apparently caused the civic officials to adopt a new tactical procedure, for the Board of Com-

missioners invited the Society to send a delegation to confer with the former regarding the subject of their correspondence. It evidently dawned upon them that the Society might entertain objections to certain details of the proposed improvements, and the object of the meeting would be, according to Controller Cote, to find out what these objections were. The Council of the Society replied, however, that as a body it could not, under any circumstances, undertake to approve or to criticize in detail any public engineering work, and that in this case its full duty had been performed when it had urged that the expenditure of large sums of public money upon the enlargement of the aqueduct and the construction of a 10,000-h.p. hydro-electric plant should cease until the project, as now outlined, had been studied and reported upon by a board of qualified, independent engineers. "It has been conclusively established," stated the Secretary in his letter, "by statements recently placed in the hands of the Society by all of the engineers, not civic employees, who were named in Mr. Cote's letter of August 2nd to Mr. Jamieson, that no one of them has ever studied and reported on the second enlargement of the aqueduct and the construction of a large hydro-electric plant, but that on the contrary all investigations by them have been of earlier projects or of isolated portions of the works now in progress.

"In view of the large expenditures which have been made and the proposed expenditure of still larger amounts of public money on a work which has received no engineering support aside from that of its originator and his staff, and realizing that the project is viewed with distrust by many local engineers, who have some knowledge of it but have no access to all the data necessary to the forming of a mature and comprehensive judgment regarding it, the Council of the Society has thought it its duty to recommend that independent, competent engineers be engaged to report on the proposed enlarged development."

At a council meeting on October 19th, Mr. Cote had the letter "filed as a record." Thus, to all intents and purposes a most important voluntary recommendation from a body of men chosen by virtue of merit and ability to represent the engineering profession of Canada and to safeguard its interests, has been ignored.

To quote from the editorial page of the Montreal Herald and Daily Telegraph for October 16th, the Society "has on its Council some of the most eminent engineers in Ontario and Quebec—men who have accomplished much in the development of this country. They courteously say to the authorities of the city of Montreal: 'We are not satisfied that the enormous expenditure proposed for power in connection with the city waterworks is wise. Will you not have it thoroughly investigated before going ahead?' This is a reasonable request, made by men who know what they are talking about. The Board of Control should heed this request. The scheme is too big for us to be able to afford to have it go ahead and be a failure. If it is necessary to spend \$10,000 to make sure we are right, let's spend it. Public confidence in the scheme has been much shaken by the action of the engineer's Council. The way to restore public confidence is to have the best