

Civic Co-operation

A very interesting and so far successful experiment is being tried out in Chicago and which we would commend to municipalities in Canada. The plan, which was formed twelve months ago and which in short is co-operation between the local authorities and private citizens towards greater efficiency in the control of health, sanitation, fire prevention and police protection, is first that the different departments work together in carrying out ordinances relating to the above essentials of a municipality and second that accredited citizens should be furnished with a summary of city by-laws and a card of credentials signed by the authorities requesting them to assist and co-operate with these authorities to bring about the desired results.

In the case of Chicago the selection of civic co-operators was left in the hands of the Industrial Club, a body of eighty business men of Chicago, and it is expected that the movement will grow so as to soon embody a large volunteer body of citizens who will work on a well organized plan for the common good of the community.

The Committee on co-operation recently issued a pamphlet from which the following examples taken from co-operators reports give an idea of the practical nature of the plan:

Engine and concrete mixer left in street after the completion of a building; reported by telephone; obstruction removed and the street cleaned up the following day.

Asked neighbours to assist in removing ice from sidewalks; was surprised at the hearty response.

Janitor shaking rugs on sidewalk was shown co-operator card; promised not to do it again.

Stopped boys breaking street signs, hitching on railway trains, building bonfires, and steal-

ing grain from boxcars; helped a neighbor who had been created by a tradesman; stopped a peddler from beating horses.

Assisted a man who fell and broke his leg; policeman in charge of ambulance thanked me and was glad to see my card.

Several street and alley conditions reported and at once corrected by ward superintendent; gave him my card number.

Reported intoxicated person on elevated platform to ticket agent when alighting from the next station; action was secured when co-operator card was shown.

Neighbour shown card; corrected unsanitary conditions in backyard; also assisted in keeping walks clear of ice.

Man stopped throwing ashes in alley when shown my card.

Condition in alley reported to policemen who promised to take care of it and asked if I was a co-operator; said I was not, and he told me I had better join; I wish to be enrolled.

It will be seen from the above examples that a sense of responsibility is created in the minds of those citizens who take out co-operators cards and the fact that each one must send in reports periodically checks any abuse of the privilege. Furthermore, the authorities have real aids in a body of responsible citizens who can at once appreciate some of the difficulties that have to be met day by day in the administration of our municipalities.

MUNICIPAL UNDERTAKING PAYS.

In the year 1915-1916 the Glasgow Corporation tramways, in spite of increased working expenses, etc., and the payment of £80,437 in allowances to dependents of employees serving with the forces, made a net profit of £43,548, payable to the common good.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER TO A CITY CLERK.

"Sometimes, when I sit back in my chair, I think over the different temperaments of our municipal men between the Atlantic and Pacific; of their ideals, their aspirations, and their ways of striving to attain their ends.

The westerner hustles and pushes, and thinks the east is mighty slow. The easterner goes slow (apparently) and quietly smiles at the western hustle and wear of energy.

It is all very interesting to one in close touch with municipal men in the east, middle, and west, of our wonderful country. As I have said before, I say with greater emphasis again—municipal men, our Canadian municipal men are the virile, active men of Canada, the men with ideals, public spirited, and the real backbone of our political institutions.

They get many kicks and cuffs, and heaps of slander from the incompetent, the indifferent, and the incapable; and from a host of community parasites.

However, general public opinion has advanced wonderfully of late, and we all are just beginning to find out that whole-hearted interest in municipal affairs is the foundation stone of all good government."

THE CITY MANAGER PLAN OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT.

A combination of the commission plus city manager would seem to be the ideal. It would eliminate what is regarded as the principal objection to the straight city manager scheme, namely, the fear of one-man power. With the commissioners acting as a group through one controlled executive, the whims or fancies of any one man would be neutralized by the combined judgment of the other members of the commission. Furthermore, if any one member of the board happened to be selfishly interested in the passing of certain acts the passing of every act by the group makes it impossible for any one to put such deals over. In this way the manager would become servant and executor rather than boss.

LATE HIGH CONSTABLE BISSENETTE.

Probably the oldest police official on this continent, both in point of service and age died last month in the person of High Constable A. Bissonnette, of Montreal, who was eighty-five years of age at the time of his death and had held his office continuously for sixty-three years. Though he had been in poor health for a number of years in consequence of his breaking his shoulder when recapturing a boy who had broken away from him, he did manage to attend the court house until a year ago. Mr. Bissonnette was very popular with the public and his well known figure will be much missed from the local courts of justice.