

such changes have been made they are in the same direction. All agreed that there was so much waste, and that dishonest contractors were allowed so many opportunities of defrauding the public with impunity, because the executive functions of the city government were discharged through committees of the Council, and direct immediate personal responsibility either did not exist or was not felt.

In the Dominion.

And, if it be answered that, although the above be true of the States, yet such a state of things is not possible under British rule, the report of the same Commissioners upon their own Province, the Province which is supposed to be the leading one in the Dominion (Ontario), will have convincing weight:

While the work of the civic departments is done under the immediate supervision and direction of committees of the Council, it cannot be expected that men of large business experience will be found willing to become members of the Council. We have not in this country, as they have in England, a large number of men who, having acquired a competency, have much time at their disposal and sufficient strength and energy left to enable them to take an active part in municipal affairs, devoting their time to the benefit of their fellow citizens. The demands of business on the time and attention of even our most successful business men is so great that there are few who must not make a sacrifice in order to devote even part of one or two afternoons or evenings in the week to the general business of the city. To expect that men of that class will undertake the work of canvassing the electors in the manner usually most successful in order to obtain a position requiring so much self-sacrifice, seems absurd.

We, too, hear complaints of extravagance and waste, and sometimes of petty or of gross jobbery. Taxation and expenditure increase enormously, but our system of sewerage remains imperfect, our pavements and sidewalks in wretched condition, the streets of some of our towns indescribably filthy, our water supply unsatisfactory. Can anything be done to secure a better and more economical administration of the affairs of our cities and towns? Should we adopt the principle found to work so well in several cities of the United States, or any modification of it? If not, what should we do?

In British Columbia.

Seeing that we have the same system of municipal government in B. C. that has been found imperfect in other places, and not claiming that we are any better, and protesting that we are no worse, than our neighbors, it is natural to expect that the same evils and abuses which have arisen elsewhere are existent amongst ourselves, or would be existent under the same conditions.

The fact that a commission of enquiry has issued in connection with the city of Victoria is a sufficient admission of the above. The presence of the New

Westminster Enabling Act, and of certain peculiar indemnifying clauses of the Municipal Act, 1891, in our statute book, is corroborative evidence.

Personal Corruption.

It is true that personal charges of the nature of what is usually associated with the term "boodles," are absent amongst us; but it would require a considerable amount of assurance to affirm that our municipal representatives enter the Council with the sole motive of the welfare of the whole community.

Under the ward system of representation, this is, of course, practically impossible; but we must admit that even the good of the ward he represents is not always the sole reservation of each Alderman or Councillor. If it were so, what would be the meaning of the popular phrase, "Having an axe to grind," which is so commonly used of such?

There have been Aldermen and Councillors who have not been ashamed to confess that they went into their Council with the object of spending the city's taxes, not so much for the good of the whole city, but in the improvement of the wards they represented, and more particularly in opening out new streets and laying down sidewalks adjacent to the property which they themselves possessed.

It is also a matter of strong suspicion that other Aldermen and Councillors represent the interests of sections of rate-payers, strong monopolies, labor organizations, private companies, and even private firms, more than they do those of the whole people at large. It may, for instance, be not true, or it may be quite the reverse, that, in one of our cities, the C. P. R. and all its interests, at one end of the city, predominate in the minds of a few Aldermen, to the detriment of the city at large, and especially of the other end of it.

How far such a state of things may be due to the system, and how much it may be a natural outcome of imperfect human nature, it would be difficult to estimate. But it is, nevertheless, true, that, in order to minimize such evils, the best plan is to make the system as perfect as possible.

A municipal government by angels would be perfect in spite of the system; what is required is to make the system