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QUEBEC MUNICIPALITIES' ENGINEERING BUREAU

ENGINEERS in private practice are viewing with alarm the growing tendency of governments and public commissions to offer "free" or "at cost" engineering services. The latest addition to the official or semi-official bureaus of engineering information—or, as sometimes happens, mis-engineering information—is in connection with the new Union of Quebec Municipalities, which is to be launched at a meeting in Montreal toward the end of next month or early in December.

At a meeting held last month, thirty Quebec mayors or their representatives attended and appointed a committee to draw up a constitution and operating program. The plan of the association has now been prepared and is to be submitted at next month's meeting, to which twelve hundred Quebec municipal officials will be invited. In commenting upon the new Union, the Montreal Gazette says:—

"One feature of the Union, the constitution of which is drafted after those of the sister provinces, is the creation of a special bureau of consultation for all legal, engineering and accounting matters pertaining to municipalities, a feature which is an improvement on all the existing provincial unions."

The advantages of an engineering bureau of the sort proposed for the Union of Quebec Municipalities, are dubious. Assuming that the appointments to the staff of the bureau are kept out of politics, and that the men selected are very capable engineers of high integrity and great capacity for work, the experiment is still doubtful. Any employee of such a bureau tends to get into certain grooves of practice and to develop "hobbies." All work is standardized along certain lines of established practice and there is likely to be extreme reluctance to adopt new ideas. The municipalities are deprived of the competition of brains and skill that re-

sults from the employment of individual engineers or those in private practice. Unless the head of the bureau is also practically the head of his profession, the municipalities are debarred from obtaining the best advice that could be obtained from independent consultations. The head of the bureau may be somewhat in the same position as the "company doctor" in a mining community. Most of the miners prefer to hire their own doctor.

POWER IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

IN British Columbia there is said to be a surplus of developed hydro-electric power. The Vancouver Island Power Co., the Vancouver Power Co., the Western Canada Power Co., and the West Kootenay Power and Light Co., all have considerable power now available, the utilization of which is highly desirable from the standpoint of the capital invested in these companies. A recent suggestion by the "Mining and Engineering Record," of British Columbia, that Commissioner Retallack, who now has charge of the Public Utilities Department of the British Columbia government, should assist these companies in disposing of this power, is a reasonable suggestion and entirely in the interest of industry and employment in the Pacific province.

REPORT ON ST. LAWRENCE RIVER

SIR ADAM BECK, chairman of the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario, states that the report on the location of the dams for the St. Lawrence river power development, at present in course of preparation, will likely be completed within two or three months. He made this statement when interviewed in reference to the possibility of Toronto and all the large ports along the Great Lakes becoming "ocean ports" in consequence of the St. Lawrence power development, as pictured by Franklin K. Lane, U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

The building of the proposed dams at Morrisburg and the Long Sault raises the water level to accommodate boats of from 25 to 30 ft. draft. Sir Adam pointed out that Ontario would have 1,684 miles bordering on the Great Lakes and rivers, which would, as Mr. Lane says, take care of ocean-going traffic.

"The dam at Morrisburg," he continued, "will regulate the levels of Lake Ontario and create a storage system and largely eliminate floods on the St. Lawrence. It will also create a storage sufficient to make available 20,000 sec. ft. during the periods of the year when the water is low, and will raise the level of the harbor of Montreal from two to three feet.

"We have had engineers working on the St. Lawrence for the past three years, and hope to have the final report on the work in the course of three months, fixing the location of the two dams. That will be most desirable from the standpoint of navigation, and will create 2,000,000 h.p. of electricity, 1,000,000 for the United States and 1,000,000 for Ontario."

LARGE IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

WITH but one-fifteenth the population of the United States, Canada does one-fifth the amount of trade. This statement is based upon official figures just published showing the total of U. S. trade for the year ending August 31st. The comparison is made on the assumption that there are about 8 million people in Canada and 120 million in the United States. The report shows that the U. S. exports for the year totalled \$7,415,000,000. Canada's \$1,233,000,000, a proportion of one-sixth. Their imports were \$3,233,000,000, ours \$870,000,000, a proportion of one-fourth. Their total trade was \$10,648,000,000, ours \$2,103,000,000, a proportion of one-fifth.