

MUNICIPAL OWNERSHIP IN CANADA.

Mr. A. G. Christie, of the Department of Engineering at Johns Hopkins University, has an interesting article on "Public Ownership" in the August number of *Industrial Management*. Having given considerable attention to the municipal operation of civic utilities in Canada and the United States, he says:—

"Municipal ownership in Canada, particularly in Western Canada, has met with a considerable measure of success. On the other hand, successful municipal ventures in similar utilities in cities of the United States have been relatively few in number, while many have proven partial or complete failures."

According to this writer, it is generally admitted that American municipalities have failed to keep their plants up to modern requirements and that they have consequently given indifferent service at high rates. The explanation advanced for these disappointing results is that political interference has prevented efficient management by competent executives. The reasons which Mr. Christie gives for the comparative success of public ownership in Western Canadian municipalities are specially worth consideration. He notes that the thousands of British immigrants in the population were accustomed to municipal ownership in Great Britain, where service upon local boards is regarded as an honor. It is the custom in British cities for prominent men to seek rather than shun civic responsibility. They introduce business methods into municipal affairs and are incurably opposed to the spoils system in civic politics.

These excellent British ideas of public responsibility have been readily accepted by Canadians and Americans on the prairies and has thus become a real factor in the life of Western Canadian cities. It is also pointed out that the West is a country of young, optimistic and venturesome citizens, who are neither afraid of experiments nor overawed by vested interests. But, we are told, the principal basis for the success of municipal ownership in the Canadian West is the spirit of co-operation which is a predominant characteristic of the people. The co-operative idea has taken full hold of them. Westerners are used to "getting together" for the promotion of any movement which will advance the price of real estate or benefit the community in any way. Mr. Christie says that there is less class distinction, and therefore less political corruption, in Western Canadian communities than in the older centres of the United States. He continues:

If the prominent men and women of a city have a public spirited interest in municipal affairs and render helpful co-operation in governmental matters, other citizens will do the same. If only criticism is offered by the leaders, then the public will become suspicious and will soon adopt a hostile attitude toward the management of their own utilities. It is essential, therefore, for continued success in municipal control that this friendly co-operative spirit shall be maintained by the leaders of business and social life.

After referring to the success of the Ontario Hydro-Electric Commission, the writer draws the deduction that efficiency in municipal ownership is due, not entirely to new conditions in urban life or to the rapid growth of population such as are found in the West, but also to the executive capacity of those who manage the undertaking, and the wholehearted support lent by the public. This is not the first time that Mr. Christie has written of Canadian public utilities, to which he has given a great deal of study. His conclusions are of particular use at a time when the City of Toronto approaches the problem of taking over its street railway system. The franchise of the Toronto Railway Company has over three years to run, but it is time that we began to consider ways and means of acquiring and operating the plant. It is clear that the citizens can secure a much better service than that which they now "enjoy" if they follow the advice laid down by Mr. Christie. It is essential that there be an absolute separation of the management from politics, that the soundest financial and accounting methods be adopted, and that an enlightened public opinion give the project cordial and constant support. "One-man control" under the supervision of a competent State Commission has been recommended as the most effective working principle.—*Toronto Daily News*.

EXPLOITATION OF THE PEOPLE'S HERITAGE

In our last issue we took up the subject of the attempt on the part of a private corporation to secure a charter to dam the St. Lawrence River at Coteau Rapids. According to its last bulletin, the Commission of Conservation has already taken action with, we hope, good results. The Bulletin report is as follows:—

"The Commission of Conservation has made representations to the Minister of Public Works pointing out the inadvisability of granting to the Power Development Company, Limited, the right to develop power from the St. Lawrence river at the Coteau Rapids, and the Hon F. B. Carvell has assured the Commission that this matter is of such public importance that nothing will be done by his Department till every person in Canada has had an opportunity of being heard and pressing their views.

The water-power situation in Quebec and Ontario should be fully considered before any action is taken to grant rights of development to private interests similar in character to those being sought by this company. Such consideration would show that the power situation has developed very rapidly within the last few years, and so far from there being an excess of power capable of being developed at easily accessible points, it is certain that within the next twenty years, all the power that can be developed at points where it can be conveniently used will be required for use in Canada.

The company which has heretofore been granted the right to make use of the Cedar Rapids has developed a very large amount of power estimated to be about 100,000 h.p. Of this amount so developed purely from Canadian waters the company has sold and delivered to the Aluminum Company of America an amount varying from 50,000 to 74,000 h.p. Indeed, it has been authorized by a permit issued on April 1, 1916, to export up to 100,000 h.p. This enormous quantity of energy is being sent out of Canada and is of no benefit whatever to Canada except in so far as the profits thereon represent dividends to a few shareholders. Whatever the power situation is in Montreal, there can be no shortage which is legitimately due to lack of power development.

In Ontario, the question of fuel has become an increasingly serious one, and the time will come very soon when electric power will be largely used for the purpose of operating the railways in that province and for other purposes for which coal is at present employed.

It is, therefore, unwise and imprudent to allow large Canadian water-powers to be developed with the object of exporting the power to the United States. The time will undoubtedly come when the power will be required upon the Canadian side of the line and the creation of vested interests in the United States will give rise to serious embarrassment and international complications when it is withdrawn for use here. A situation similar to this has already arisen at Niagara Falls.

COST OF MILK INSPECTION IN TORONTO.

The total cost of milk inspection to the City of Toronto amounts to 3 3-5c per head of population. The total amount saved per head of population by cutting out adulteration amounts to over 75c a head. Any man who can save 75c with an investment of 3 3-5c would consider this to be a pretty sound business proposition.

CLEANLINESS IN HANDLERS OF FOOD.

Clean hands and clean clothes are an outward indication of clean habits. These and these only are the kind of butchers or other handlers of food that you should patronize.

It is very probable that people of clean appearance will cover foods while the premises are being swept, and will also protect such from cats, rats and mice. The days when cats were seen lying in the middle of a candy shop window or sitting on a basket of grapes are fast disappearing, though this has been witnessed recently by the writer. Citizens themselves can do more than health inspectors by calling the attention of proprietors to unsatisfactory conditions, for after all, the store-keeper is primarily after your patronage.