

## Provincial Aid.

To the Editor of THE MUNICIPAL WORLD.—

DEAR SIR,—In your April number of THE MUNICIPAL WORLD, your article headed "Provincial Aid," attracted our attention. Although ignorant of the plan on which the expenditure of \$1,000,000 by the government in aid of good roads will be made, you unhesitatingly say it is for the benefit of the farmers. We who are in close touch with the farming community, and know the burdens under which they now labor, unhesitatingly express our disapproval of the whole scheme. Our opinion is, that the matter of roads should be left with the municipalities to superintend without any interference on the part of the government, or even of a county council, and, with your kind permission, we purpose, in this short letter, to set forth some of our reasons for holding opinions which seem to be at variance with the expressed views of THE WORLD, and with a great many of the daily and weekly papers published in our towns and cities.

In your article to which I have referred above, you state that the Premier's announcement, that is, to spend \$1,000,000 on good roads, has met with universal satisfaction. Such is not the case. Blenheim, one of the largest and wealthiest townships in Oxford, contains nearly 1,500 ratepayers, and, almost to a man, they are opposed to any such scheme. We know whereof we speak, for a petition has been circulated in this township praying the government to make no change in the law, whereby the county councils cannot take over certain roads from the municipalities without the consent of those municipalities. And so long as that law remains as it is at present, this township will look after its own roads, and ignore the small grant to be offered. In the other municipalities in the county a similar feeling prevails; our county council, itself is equally divided on the question. The farmers feel that the cost of the whole scheme will be borne most by themselves, and they don't want it.

Now, Mr. Editor, let us consider the cost. In Oxford the system, it is anticipated, will include one hundred and seventy miles of road. At an estimated cost of, at least, \$2,000 per mile, these one hundred and seventy miles would cost \$340,000. This estimate is based upon the cost in the county of Hastings, and is in accord with the opinions given at the Good Roads Convention, held in Toronto last December. Of this \$340,000 the government would give us our share of \$1,000,000, or about \$25,000. Blenheim's equalized assessment amounts to over one-ninth of that of the whole county, so that we in Blenheim would be assessed for about \$40,000, and as part payment we would get about \$3,000. To bring this down to the individual, we find that a farmer assessed for \$5,000 would pay about \$87, and of this amount the government is generous enough to make him a grant of not \$7. This outlay would give Blenheim only seventeen and a-half miles out of a total of over one hundred and seventy-five miles. The other roads would still have to be maintained by the township in addition to our part of the county roads system—the latter at a cost of \$800.00 per mile. Is it any wonder that the ratepayers object to such a scheme? We believe that, if the matter were fairly placed before the ratepayers in other townships, that they would stand aghast at such an expenditure.

But the cost only is the least objectionable part of the plan, though that is bad enough. The proposed legislation is an infringement on the rights of the people. We all know that, in matters of legislation, as well as of trade, the tendency is to centralization. Just as trade has centered in one or two large towns in each county, at the expense of the villages, so is there a tendency for our Provincial government to control everything in the province from Toronto, and take away from the local councils privileges which they highly prize. The proposed system of county roads is a most glaring example of that pernicious tendency. In the event of the scheme becoming law, the government at Toronto will control our leading roads,

just as they control our schools, and this is but the first step in a course which will lead to abolition of township councils. For, with the control of roads taken from them, what further use have we for a local council? Following this course, our boasted democracy would soon become an oligarchy. What right has the Ontario government to control our highways? What right has it to compel us yearly to pay a sum of money for keeping them in repair, without the taxpayer having a voice in the matter? There is a principle at stake here which is worth contending for.

In Blenheim we claim to be as progressive as in any part of Ontario. The people read and think for themselves. Our roads will compare very favorably with those in any part of the province, and we are well satisfied with the existing conditions. With active, energetic and painstaking councillors, who study the best methods of road building, and employ road-making machinery, our prospects for good roads are bright, indeed. We believe in agitation along this line and in good literature on the subject—the kind of articles, for instance, which appear monthly in THE WORLD. The people throughout the whole province are taking a deep interest in this subject. Then our market places and railroad stations are within short distances of every one. There is no agitation in the rural districts for a change. This agitation comes from the towns. In Oxford, as we stated above, the county council is equally divided. The seven in favor of the county roads system are, with one exception, representatives of urban municipalities; those opposed are from the townships.

Now, Mr. Editor, the chief object in view in writing this letter, is to place the other side of the question before the councils in other townships, so that they may consider the costs and the consequences of allowing the government to take a step which will lead to depriving the people of privileges which are of first importance in a self governing province. Thanking you for your valuable space,

BLENHEIM COUNCILLOR.

## Long Standing Litigation Ends.

The long standing litigation between Cornwall and the Waterworks Co. has at last been settled. The matter has been fought out in the different law courts since June, 1897. The Waterworks Company completed their system in 1886, and a mortgage of \$80,000 was put on the same, the Farmers Loan and Investment Company being trustees for the bondholders. In June, 1897, the town decided to expropriate the works and a Board of Arbitration was agreed upon and awarded the company \$86,492, with \$2,000 costs. The Waterworks Company appealed on the grounds that the bondholders were not notified. This appeal was dismissed. The town then paid into the Ontario Bank the amount of the award, placing the money to the joint credit of the company and the mortgagees. Both refused to accept the money, and the company instituted an action to get possession of the works. This action was not tried until after Judge Street's decision, that the award was valid against the company. The action of the company was dismissed as premature, but held that the payment to the bank was not a valid payment of the monies under the award, and it was directed that this money be paid back to the town. The statutes provide, that if the award is not paid within six months

the property shall revert to the original owners, and that all the costs of arbitration shall be paid by the corporation. This six months had elapsed at the time of the decision that the money paid was not a valid payment. The company then commenced a new action on this ground to recover possession of the works, and this is the action which has just been settled by the town agreeing to pay \$110,000; this amount to cover the award, costs and interest, and the complete cessation of litigation, and the works are to be handed over to the town. As against this \$110,000, town has received the revenue of the works during the last three years. The total costs involved in the litigation amounts to over \$22,000.

## Arrogant Corporations.

When charter powers were conferred upon our telegraph and telephone companies very little concern was shown by legislators for the rights of municipalities. Perhaps the men in office who granted the charters cared little for the future. That they were careless as to safeguards in the public interest has been amply demonstrated by results. These companies are defiant when facing municipalities, and arrogant when managing a lobby in which the pliant legislator shines as a pilot. It was shown in parliament the other day when the subject of the nationalization of the telegraph business of the country was brought up, how few friends the telegraph companies have. One year ago the Bell Telephone Company had the astounding audacity to attempt to secure legislation at Toronto that would enable it to raise its rates, though at the same time its stock was selling away above par—it being now quoted at 180. These corporations use the public streets and pay nothing for the privilege. They keep their property in a disgraceful condition, and when remonstrated with sneer at objections from municipalities. The latter, however have recently shown a desire for co-operation along defensive lines, and those corporations that are exhausting the patience of civic bodies are inviting reprisals which may come much sooner than they expect. Companies operating under charter obtained either at Toronto or Ottawa cannot with safety affront the people to whom they are responsible for honest and beneficial service. Particularly must the telegraph and telephone companies be made to realize that they cannot flout municipalities at will. The people will in the near future require to be reckoned with if tax-dodging and other abuses of which we have to complain are continued.—*Gall Reporter.*

"Diamond Jubilee," the Prince of Wales' Derby winner, is not in it to-day with the Imperial favorite, "Little Bobs."