

repentance, any purpose to conduct the conflict with proper regard to the rules of honorable warfare, Mr. Wilson would have been willing to have his country remain neutral. In the end the brutality and trickery of the Germans made the entrance of America into the war unavoidable. Probably he felt from the beginning that this would be the end, but none can truly deny that he labored long and faithfully to give the Germans every chance of repentance and reform.

Montreal's Proposed Commission

SIR LOMER GOUIN has evidently been giving very serious and careful consideration to the municipal situation in Montreal, with a praiseworthy desire to find some system that promises a better kind of city government than we have at present. Probably the plan which he outlined to a committee of the Quebec Legislature is as good as any other that can be desired. There is, however, a pathetic side to it. The acceptance of the scheme proposed by the Premier necessitates the sorrowful acknowledgment that the greatest city in Canada is found to be incapable of self-government. We are all participants now in a great struggle, the object of which, as defined by the President of one of our allies, is to "make the world safe for democracy." Apparently though we may—let us hope that we will—make the rest of the world safe for democracy, we are not able to make Montreal safe for it, but must be content to have here in the commercial metropolis of Canada something not very far removed from the system of autocracy against which we are warring. For it is not a democratic government that is proposed; it is only a shadow of that. We are still to have a Mayor, chosen by the people, but instead of enjoying the present power of the chief magistrate, or the greater power that the present incumbent of the office has long dreamed of, he is to be shorn of nearly all authority, and left with little more duty than the wearing of his official robe and the drawing of his salary. We are to have aldermen too, as at present, elected by the voters of the several wards, but care is taken to leave them little or no power. The real control of city affairs is to be vested in five commissioners, three of whom are to be city officials of the present organization and two are to be appointed for four years by the Provincial Government. The three officials are to be at one stage the servants of the aldermen, for it is the aldermen who appoint them, but once the three officers are chosen they become the masters, since nothing less than a two thirds—or possibly three fourths—vote of the aldermen can over-rule anything that the commissioners determine to do. It is a strange form of government, and probably an unparalleled one. Necessity is said to be the mother of invention. Perhaps the manifest necessity of some great improvement in the management of Montreal's affairs is the best excuse for the effort, queer though its form may be, that Sir Lomer Gouin is so earnestly making to give the city a satisfactory system.

One thing that goes far to recommend the Premier's proposal is that the three city officials—the legal adviser, the comptroller and the treasurer—are all excellent men, and if we assume, as we may, that the two new men will be wisely chosen by the Provincial Government the city will have a strong and capable commission, which ought to be able to give Montreal a fresh start in her municipal life.

Troubles of the Food Controller

THE Food Controllers everywhere are finding their tasks difficult and are meeting abundant criticism. Our Mr. Hanna became weary in what he believed was well-doing and stepped down. Mr. Hoover, in the United States, is adding to his reputation for energy, but is hardly increasing his popularity. Over in England Lord Rhondda—perhaps better known as Mr. D. A. Thomas, the Welsh colliery owner—is very much in the public eye and receives some brick-bats among his bouquets. Mr. Burke, the chairman of a commercial company, in addressing his shareholders the other day, paid his compliments to the Food Controller in vigorous terms. Here is a specimen of the criticism:

"Perhaps you have heard that there is a Food Controller. He appears to have a good Press agent, who keeps him prominently in the limelight. (Hear, hear.) Well, I am not going to utter one word against Lord Rhondda personally. He is a well-intentioned peer, who is trying to feed the people on printed forms. But he is struggling with an impossible task and working with impossible tools. He is in the hands of officials picked up in the Temple, the clubs, or Heaven knows where, and placed in control of great trades requiring technical knowledge and experience of which they are utterly destitute. (Hear, hear.) Lord Rhondda himself knows everything about coal and little or nothing about food. That is why they made him, not Coal Controller, but Food Controller. (Laughter.)

"Well, now I am going to state some plain facts about his Department. It is time that the public knew the whole truth about it, and if one of our M.P.'s will move for a committee of the House to investigate its working I will undertake to offer some very startling evidence. I am speaking with full deliberation, but with full knowledge, and with a deep sense of responsibility, which I do not ask even my colleagues to share. I am prepared to substantiate everything that I feel it my duty to say.

"This food control is partly a folly, partly a sham, but it is altogether a crime against the public, and especially the poor. (Hear, hear.) I say it has raised prices. I say it has hoarded stocks. I say it has created artificial as well as real scarcity. I say it has profiteered. In addition to the excessive food taxes so unwisely levied by Parliament, it has imposed charges on food which amount to illicit taxation. I say it has wasted public money. I affirm—and about this there will be no dispute—that it has been a blundering, ineffective, and costly administration. * * * If traders are not allowed to conduct their business without all this ignorant interference, the people will not be fed. All the queues are preventable. Most of the scarcity is preventable. The whole of the red tape—the whole of the army of officials—some of whom ought to be elsewhere—(laughter)—might be scrapped to-morrow with advantage to the State. But they will not be scrapped, because they have all snug berths. The danger is they will go on interfering with the food supply until we have little left to sell and the people have little left to eat. In that case one more noble lord will get a step in the Peerage.

But then there will be placed upon the stage a new act in this tragedy of food control—the stagnation of trade and the discontent of a disillusioned people."

Our own Food Controller has not escaped criticism, but, after reading this sample of English comment on the British control system, Mr. Hanna will admit that he has been let off easy.

Control of Bond Issues

IT IS pointed out, in support of the Dominion Government's order prohibiting the issue of securities without the consent of the Minister of Finance, that the action is similar to that which was taken at an early stage of the war by the Imperial Government as respects the issue of securities in England. This might be a good reason for the Canadian action if the only question involved were that of the expediency of conserving capital for the most urgent purposes. But there is no such question. The object of the Dominion order is entirely proper. It is necessary that whatever surplus funds are available shall be preferentially reserved for the services of the war. The only question now is whether the Government at Ottawa have, under the constitution, the power to make such an order with respect to Provincial and Municipal securities. The power of the Imperial Parliament is unlimited. But Canada has a constitution quite different from that of the Mother Country. Our Federal system creates a division of legislative authority. The Parliament of Canada has a limited power, and the Legislatures of the Provinces have their limited powers. There is a fair ground for the Provincial contention that the Legislatures, not the central Parliament, are the only authority that can deal with the issue of Provincial or Municipal securities. The question raised is a very interesting one to students of our constitution. But we hope to hear that the Dominion and Provincial authorities have come to an understanding on the subject and that the constitutional question, interesting though it is and with promise of large profit to the legal fraternity, may be dropped.

Margarine

CONSIDERING the long fight that was required to obtain for the Canadian people the right to buy and use oleomargarine—margarine it is now commonly called—it is interesting to note that the British Government attach so much importance to the use of the article that they are requisitioning all vegetable oils and fats suitable for the production of it, and are making arrangements for the establishing of new factories for margarine making. Before the war Great Britain produced 50,000 to 60,000 tons of margarine, and imported about 70,000 tons from Holland. And all the time we Canadians were taught to think that it was wicked to use such a thing! Now Great Britain, besides importing largely, is making five times the quantity produced before the war.

The City Council of Montreal, which occasionally receives hard knocks from critics of municipal affairs, seems to be regarded by the Dominion Government as a good training school for Dominion official life. When a Grain Commissioner was needed a few months ago a Montreal alderman was chosen, and now another alderman of the city receives the Montreal Collectorship, the blue ribbon of the customs service.