

# Editorial

## MUNICIPAL CONSULTING ENGINEERS.

O. J. Godfrey, F.C.A., past president of the Dominion Association of Chartered Accountants, has contributed an article to a western municipal journal, in which he makes a direct and unjustified attack upon the engineering profession. To sum up his charges, he alleges:—

- (1) That municipal consulting engineers purposely underestimate the cost of improvements so as to obtain the voters' consent to the projects;
- (2) That the over-expenditures would not occur if the engineers did not get a percentage on the over-expenditures;
- (3) That he knows of no case where the actual cost of waterworks or electric light came within the original estimate made by the consulting engineers.

Of course, Mr. Godfrey's charges were not quite so bluntly worded, but when stripped of their excess verbiage, they are in fact exactly as above stated. As a remedy he suggests that a board of engineers be organized by the province (his argument deals principally with conditions in his home province of Saskatchewan), the board's services to be placed at the disposal of all towns and cities in the province. The provincial officials are subsequently to fix the amounts to be paid by the municipalities to the province for any services rendered by the board.

Mr. Godfrey's three charges are hardly likely to be taken seriously by any municipal official who has the slightest knowledge of the ethics and standards of the engineering or any other profession. To engineers themselves the charges are mildly amusing. They are on a par with some other ideas prevalent among some very narrow-minded laymen, such as that surgeons operate unnecessarily for the fees derived; that lawyers drag cases through pre-arranged red tape in order to increase the legal costs; and that dental surgeons drill holes in perfectly good teeth in order to create something to fill.

Any number of cases can be cited where the costs of finished engineering work have been within preliminary estimates. And frequently it is not the engineer's fault when estimates are exceeded. Additions to the original work contemplated, failure of councils to provide the necessary funds when needed, depreciation due to mismanaged sales of debentures, change in sites, increase in prices of materials while council is "getting together" on the proposition, and many other factors beyond the engineer's control often result in excess expenditures.

Any engineer who would indulge in sharp practice such as alleged by Mr. Godfrey, would be disciplined unmercifully by his fellow-engineers. It is not likely that Mr. Godfrey can quote chapter and verse in substantiating his sweeping but vague charges, but if he can, the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers would no doubt be glad to take prompt action upon any real facts that he is able to produce.

Failing the ill, no remedy is needed. But even if such evils did exist, Mr. Godfrey's proposed remedy is un sound. Socialistic action such as suggested by Mr. Godfrey generally results in monopoly, despotism, inef-

iciency and loss of personal enterprise. This sort of community municipal engineering service has been tried before, not a thousand miles from where these lines are penned, with results that apparently do not outshine individual effort, taking the whole facts of the cases into consideration, and carefully weighing them in the balance.

## THE WAR LOAN.

Aside from the patriotic phase, the Canadian war bond is an excellent investment. Dominion government bonds, in point of merit, rank ahead of all other Canadian issues. Our credit in the United States is better even than that of Great Britain. No one in Canada or, for that matter, anywhere else, doubts the stability of the borrower. Canada will be able to meet the interest on its war loans, past, present and future, without any difficulty. Our shores are free from the invader and, thanks to the British navy, are likely to be. While the Dominion is prosecuting its share of the war vigorously, those who are staying at home are seeing that greater production is achieved from the soil and from natural resources.

However pessimistic the passing phases of the Great War may be inclined occasionally to make us, no one who analyzes the available facts, can doubt ultimate victory or fail to have well-seasoned optimism in the future of this Dominion, of the British Empire and of their securities.

Small subscriptions are an important factor in the success of our war financing. The outstanding feature of the recent British "victory" war loan was the great number of small subscriptions, which helped to swell the loan to record proportions. Our banks have much to do in financing war orders placed here and in carrying the increasing volume of agricultural and industrial production. Financial and other corporations will subscribe liberally to the coming war loan, but it is absolutely necessary that many thousands of subscriptions, ranging from \$100 to \$25,000, should be received in order to make the loan a real success. Dominion war loan bonds are one of the world's best investments and have a patriotic flavor. A subscription to our war loans is not a sacrifice. It is a duty, and incidentally it remunerates the subscriber handsomely.

A large number of small subscriptions to the war loan will be more appreciated by the government than a small number of large subscriptions. The allotment of the loan to large subscribers will be cut down by the government so that all the small subscribers may have their full share of bonds.

There are many thousands of people who have from \$100 to \$5,000 for investment. Their duty is to lend this money to their country. The security of the war bond is excellent, the income yield is high and the bonds are readily saleable at any time, should the holder desire to sell.