

Commissioner A. Wells Gray of South Vancouver

It has been well said that every public crisis produces the man to deal with it, and municipal Canada during the last decade has had the experience of difficult situations and the right men to handle them. The success of these men has had its influence in showing the possibilities of municipal government—the difficulties to overcome and the results to be achieved, with the consequence that there are to-day in Canada real big men, who are grappling with questions, which though municipal in nature, are such as to test their capacity to its fullest.

Such a man is ex-Mayor A. Wells Gray, of New Westminster, B.C., who was recently appointed by the Provincial Government of British Columbia to administer the city of South Vancouver, whose affairs are in anything but good shape. This is a working class suburb of Vancouver, meaning that there is a large army of unemployed to be taken

care of in addition to the great financial burden—two tests that will try the administrative skill of the new commissioner. Fortunately Mr. Gray has had a large experience to qualify him for the job. For nine years Mayor of New Westminster, after serving many years as an alderman, a prominent member of the local Board of Trade, a School Trustee, a vice-president of the Royal Agricultural and Industrial Society—such were some of the local activities of this Canadian citizen. In addition to this he has had the benefit of the experience given him as Secretary-Treasurer of the Union of British Columbia Municipalities.

Commissioner Gray has, in his make-up, the rare combination of organizing ability, knowledge and tact, three useful talents for his task as a municipal administrator. He has, too, enthusiasm, without which all his talents would be of no use. Municipal Canada cannot have too many Grays.

The Montreal Tramways System

Some months back we published an article on the Montreal Tramways system which brought in many inquiries because of the uniqueness of the organization in so far as it affects the public, particularly in regard to service and protection. The tramways system of the commercial metropolis, while administered by a private company, is under the direct supervision of a commission appointed by the Provincial Government. This seeming contradiction of terms relating to administration may be explained as follows: The Montreal Tramways Company, which controls the huge tramways system of the metropolitan district, is, by contract with the city, responsible for both its policy and administration to the above commission, from which body appeal can only be made to the Public Utilities Commission of the province. So well has the arrangement worked out that it can truly be said that the City of Montreal has in its tramways system all the benefits but none of the defects of public ownership. And last year's financial report bears out the statement.

The great difficulty in the administration of public utilities (whether public or private owned), is to define and work out a balance between service and profit. Public utilities are established primarily to give public service; when owned by private interests the administration expects to secure profits according to the service given to the public, when publicly owned a public utility in the past was not expected to make profits. But latterly a feeling has grown that however wide its range of usefulness any utility, such as a tramway, benefits only a limited number at the expense of the community as a whole, consequently provision should be made to ensure not only sufficient profit to cover any contingency, and to allow for a sinking fund, but enough to pay taxes. Much of the change in sentiment towards service vs. profit-making has been brought about by so many public owned utilities that are administered for service only, becoming a burden on the rates. In the Montreal tramways system the balance between ser-

vice and profit leans slightly in favor of service, in spite of the fact that it is privately owned. This is because of the well defined conditions of the contract, conditions which it is the duty of the commission to see are fully carried out not only to the letter but in the spirit.

At first sight it would appear that such a system of tramway administration was unworkable, and probably in the hands of small men it would be unworkable, but with the executives of the company and the three commissioners being all keen business men, there is a co-operation that works successfully in giving an excellent surprise to the public, and fair returns to the company.

TREE PLANTING IN CANADA

This is the season of the year when tree planting is being actively carried on throughout Canada. In Ontario and Quebec, farmers are improving their woodlots by planting seedling trees sent out from the provincial forest nursery stations at St. Williams and Berthierville, respectively; and in both provinces there is considerable activity in regard to municipal forests, particularly in Ontario, where the first planting work is being done on some of the newly established county forests. In the Prairie Provinces about five million seedlings and cuttings, all told, will be sent out from the Indian Head and Saskatoon forest nursery stations of the Dominion Forestry Branch. These are all for planting shelter-belts on farms. Besides this, these same nursery stations are sending out a considerable quantity of planting material and tree seeds for planting and sowing on different Dominion forest reserves. This is only a beginning in reforestation, but it indicates that the tide is at last turning in that direction.

He who plants a tree lightens the burdens of his fellow-men: He who plants a tree erects to himself a living monument and makes bold an attempt to leave the world more beautiful than he found it.