

# The Municipal World

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K. W. McKAY, EDITOR,

A. W. CAMPBELL, C. E. } Associate  
J. M. GLENN, LL.B. } Editors

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Address all communications to

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## Municipalism or Centralization an Important Question.

In the February number of the *Canadian Magazine*, the editor of the *Ottawa Citizen* discusses at length a book on "Anglo Saxon Superiority," by M. Edmond Demolins of Paris. The development of socialism is referred to, and it is said to be a failure in England on account of the system of self-government. In many of the European countries, notably France, the State has assumed control of local government to such an extent that a position in the civil service is a goal to which every young man aspires.

French education aims at training young men for these positions, the result is that there are more candidates than offices. The unsuccessful become lawyers, journalists and politicians and their private misfortunes are expressed in public discontent. The independent pursuits of agriculture, trade and commerce, the industrial and mechanic arts are despised. The English system of education and self-government results in individual independence and self reliance.

In conclusion the writer refers to the Canadian system, and says that there are many indications of the spirit of dependence among ourselves, the most notable being the struggle for office when a change of Government takes place, and that the eagerness to enter the civil service is not confined to any one party. The increase in the number of officials in Ontario and centralization in Toronto, effected by withdrawing many of the privileges formerly possessed by the municipalities, and transferring them to the Provincial administration is given as an instance. This is looked upon as an encroachment by the central authorities upon the functions of municipalities, and the consequent

impairment of the independent life and usefulness of these bodies.

The recent appointment of a Provincial Municipal Auditor is referred to as follows:

"Let us take a recent example of centralization to be found in the Statute book of the Province; one not specially harmful nor particularly important, but which illustrates well enough what we are saying. There have been from time to time a number of defalcations by municipal treasurers, and it has usually been found that their accounts have been audited in a perfunctory manner. Last session the government appointed a new official to be known as the provincial municipal auditor, whose duty it is to frame rules respecting the number and form of books of account to be kept by the treasurers, the system of book-keeping to be followed by them, and a provincial audit of their accounts. What does this provision imply? Simply a want of faith in the power of municipal bodies to manage their own business. The ratepayers are treated as if they were children. How is a healthy and sturdy manhood to be developed unless people are held responsible for the results of their own laxity or neglect? If councilmen are unfit for their places let their constituents select others who are competent, and if the people will not take the care and trouble to do this, by all means let them suffer the penalty, and let them suffer it in their pockets, oftentimes the most sensitive part of the human organization."

## Investment of Court Funds in Drainage Debentures.

Chapter 13 of the statutes passed this year, amends the Judicature Act by adding thereto the following section:

161a. The Supreme Court of Judicature for Ontario may, if it shall see fit, authorize the investment of any of the funds standing in court in the purchase of any debentures issued by any municipality in Ontario under, or purporting to be under, the provisions of the Municipal Drainage Act, or by any county or union of counties in Ontario under any other authority and in case any such investment shall be so made the debentures so purchased shall not thereafter be questioned and shall be deemed to be valid to all intents and purposes.

## San Jose Scale Act.

This Act, passed at last session of the Legislature defines the duties of Fruit Tree Inspectors appointed by municipal councils as follows:

8. For the purpose of enforcing this act, it shall be the duty of every inspector appointed under the *Yellows and Black Knot Act* to make careful examination and inspection for the occurrence of the scale within the municipality for which he is appointed and to report forthwith to the Minister of Agriculture every case of infestation, and neglect to make such report shall render the inspector liable to the penalties imposed under section 11 of this act.

The penalty under section 11 is not less than \$20 nor more than \$100.

## Election of Warden—Leeds and Grenville.

The counties council of Leeds and Grenville had considerable difficulty in electing a warden, owing to the fact that the County Councils Act does not state how to ascertain the district having the largest equalized assessment. The council was evenly divided, and being unable to decide who had the casting vote, a legal opinion was obtained, which after a general review of the situation stated:

It is further obvious that in order to comply with the statute some way must be found out of arriving at the equalized value of these portions. Only two practical methods have been suggested or have occurred to us. The first way is, take the acreage of the portion and value it at the rate per acre at which the township is equalized and so reach its equalized assessment.

The second way is to ascertain the actual assessed value of the portion of the municipality and having ascertained the proportion which the actual assessed value of the whole municipality bears to the equalized value of the whole municipality apply the same proportion to the assessed value of the portion of the municipality included in the division and in this way obtain the equalized value of the portion.

Applying the principles we have above laid down for our guidance, and after carefully considering both ways, our opinion is that the first way, namely, taking the acreage of the portion at the equalized value per acre at which the whole township was equalized is the proper course to be adopted and we recommend the Council to adopt this course.

It is unfortunate that section 19 of the Act does not specify the method of ascertaining the largest equalized assessment, as in the event of such a case again occurring the same difficulty will arise and can only be definitely determined by an amendment to the Act.

This opinion was not sufficient to enable the clerk to determine what to do, and on Friday the council adjourned to Wednesday the 2nd of February, to enable him to obtain further legal advice, which when received was not considered sufficient. The clerk, however, finally decided on the senior member of the largest district, who being one of the candidates, soon broke the tie by voting for himself. In addressing the council the warden stated that he had been placed in an unenviable position, that he had never sought the office but happened to be the choice of his party.

During the discussion that preceded the election of warden it was stated that too much prominence could not be given to the fact that the law is defective and should be amended to prevent a similar deadlock in future elections of county wardens.

Section 11 of the Act respecting the keeping and auditing of school accounts, R. S. O., 1897, chap. 228, makes it the duty of every municipal treasurer within five days after his appointment to office to inform the Provincial Municipal Auditor of his appointment and of his full name and post office address. For the information of treasurers recently appointed, the address is J. B. Laing, Esq., Provincial Municipal Auditor, Parliament Buildings, Toronto.