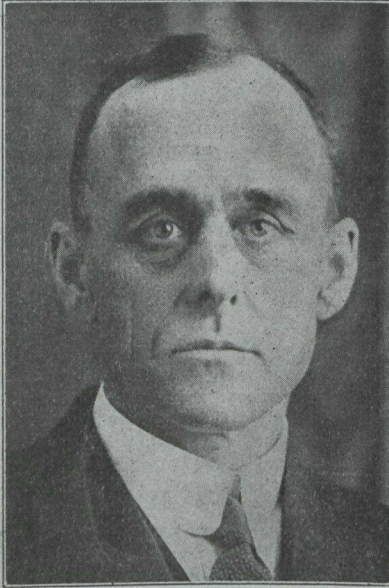


## SOME BIG MUNICIPAL MEN

By AJAX.

**ALD. ROBT. RYAN, OF THE CITY OF THREE RIVERS,  
P. Q.**

First Vice-President of U. C. M.



It has been well said that it is men not measures that build up the community and the nation, though many would be reformers think the reverse and consequently never get anywhere with their schemes for improvement. Robt. Ryan, alderman of Three Rivers, P.Q., Vice-President of the U. C. M., and manufacturer, believes in both men and measures, but above all he believes in action and lives right up to his belief. He is also a splendid example of the good understanding prevailing between the English and French-speaking citizens of the Province, of Quebec and consequently a living contradiction to the

foolish assertions which appear at times in the press of other provinces, that English-Canadians are only living on sufferance in French Canada. Robt. Ryan, though the only English-speaking alderman in an almost French community, has through his virility and honesty of purpose so won the confidence of his fellow citizens that they have backed him up in all his schemes for the betterment of the town. And such schemes—and such results.

In 1911 when the Alderman first entered the council, Three Rivers was just a happy-go-lucky community. Now that is all changed. Three Rivers to-day is one of the coming cities of Canada. It has been galvanized into such progressiveness and aggressiveness that its ambitions now fall only short of the stars. Its citizens are so proud of their town that they will not tolerate anything that would impede their many plans for its material and social progress. And Alderman Ryan is the man who has done all this. He it was who instilled into the minds and hearts of his fellow citizens that civic pride so necessary for civic improvement. At first his colleagues laughed at his ideas when he urged changes to the then system of administration. Now they laugh with him and fully make up for their first lack of confidence by saying amen to every proposal he places before the council. But there is a special reason for this. Before presenting any plan Alderman Ryan works it out to the last analysis, so that he is prepared to answer any and every question on the subject, and then it is accepted. The Alderman goes further, and herein lies his success as a civic administrator. He sees personally that the plan, after adoption by the council, is properly carried out. Surely this is constructive local statesmanship.

Personally, Robt. Ryan is a man who puts his whole being into everything he undertakes. No half measures for him. When he entered the Town Council, seven years ago, he knew next to nothing of municipal government, but he soon got over this drawback by securing every book and magazine he could—including this Journal—on the subject and studied them thoroughly so that to-day he is one of the best informed and posted men on local government, not only as it affects Canada, but practically every part of the world where municipal government is in force. He has studied to some purpose too. To illustrate: One of Alderman Ryan's plans was that each alderman should act as chairman of a committee, and that all the other aldermen should be members of same committee. The plan was adopted, and this is how it works out. Every alderman has a specific duty as chairman of one committee—either as finance, police, roads, health, etc. He reports as such

to all his colleagues as members of that particular committee. In other words, each alderman is in practice a commissioner. The system, which has worked out well in Three Rivers, is an admirable one as it eliminates all the objections of commission government, particularly the one of too much power being in the hands of a few, and retains the best features inasmuch as it places the responsibility on the right man when anything goes wrong.

In business, Alderman Ryan is a glove manufacturer—he being proprietor of the successful firm of the Robert Ryan Co., Three Rivers. He is also managing director of the Vulcan Knitting Mills, Ltd., of the same place, and it was as a business man that Mr. Ryan saw the advantages of helping the small man to manufacture for himself, and so prepared another scheme which has worked out successfully both for the town and the tenants. The town built a large factory building and equipped it with electric power, a complete sprinkler system and a large steam plant for supplying heat and steam for industrial purposes. This factory is let off to small manufacturers; according to their requirements. Every foot is taken up, and no wonder when the council, through its industrial bureau, does its best to see that the manufacturer gets all the trade possible. Another scheme of the alderman's—though this is still in the formative stage—is a municipal farm; practically a model farm run as an educational institution for the benefit of the farmers within a given area, and those citizens who want to take up farming to pay.

Mr. Ryan is a great believer in child welfare, he rightly maintaining that the community is responsible for every child born within its area. He would have every mother have the benefit of a trained nurse at the public expense, if necessary, and no doubt taking the success of his other plans as a criterion he will soon have Three Rivers setting the example to other municipalities.

The alderman for a number of years has taken a keen interest in the Union of Canadian Municipalities. He has never missed an opportunity to attend the conventions and at the London meeting his fellow administrators unanimously elected him to the first vice-presidency, which puts him into line for the presidency. And so one might go on recording the activities of Robt. Ryan, but enough has been said to indicate the tremendous force of this purposeful man. Absolutely without ambition for himself and single-minded in his love for his fellow citizens he has consecrated himself to their welfare. That he has succeeded so well in the town of his adoption—he was born near Quebec of Irish parentage—is because his people have had concrete evidence of his sincerity and the practicability of his plans. And there is no reason why Robt. Ryan should not be equally successful in the larger field of municipal Canada, for he is always ready to give the benefit of his experience to others—and his experience is worth much in these days of civic reform.

### MUNICIPALITIES TOO OFTEN VOTE FOR CHEAP CONSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS.

School buildings are just as susceptible to serious damage by fire as other structures, and should be as well built and protected as other buildings. The record of fires in schools in Canada shows that, during the last four years, a fire has occurred every week in a public school or residential college. The direct financial loss resulting from these fires amounts to more than \$1,250,000. A careful study of conditions shows that less than one per cent of our schools are in any sense fire-resisting and that over 60 per cent are built of wood.

The safety from fire of these 28,000 public schools of Canada, in which over 1,500,000 children receive their education, has received little attention outside of cities and towns where building ordinances govern methods of construction.

The people, as a whole, favor efficient fire protection in schools but, when it comes to the question of a single building, the local public almost invariably votes for the cheapest type of construction. Up to the present, loss of life in the schools of Canada has not been such as to arouse a strong public sentiment in favor of improved construction.—J. G. S.