

frequently, however, the wage scale is less, and a balance is arrived at in this way.

Hon. Dr. MacLean, minister of education for British Columbia, was recently called upon to consider the question in the case of the employees of the provincial printing office, which comes under his department. The employees requested an increase in wages, pointing out that their remuneration was below the regular union scale. The minister, however, refused any change on the grounds that the employees affected were working from five to nine hours per week less than employees of commercial enterprises engaged in similar work. He stated that he would be in favor of placing the government's work in this department upon a strictly commercial basis and paying the union scale. Otherwise, he said, an additional financial burden would be added to the province.

The minister is quite right in his view that work of this kind should be carried on with methods similar to those employed by private companies; otherwise there are always labor difficulties over the comparative advantages of the two classes of employment. When a government or municipality engages in work which is usually performed through private sources it must observe the conditions of private enterprise or be unsuccessful.

This applies not only to the question of remuneration but also to office hours, etc.; and where the government comes into contact with the public, it should offer just as good service as could be rendered by private enterprise. One of the worst blights on public ownership has always been that government and municipal departments are notorious for their inefficiency. This has been the result of a number of causes, some of which are permanent, but all of which may be removed if the reforms are sufficiently radical. The Civil Service Commission of the Dominion of Canada has done good work in maintaining a standard of competence among government employees, and its authority has recently been greatly extended. But the commission has no control over the management of any department, nor should it have. This responsibility rests with the minister at its head, but in reality the deputy minister, who represents the continuity of the department, is more familiar with the conditions. That a government department can be operated with a fair degree of efficiency has already been demonstrated, but there is still a large field for extension of the principle.

### CONSTRUCTIVE WORK IN FIRE PREVENTION

During the past year we have heard much lamentation over Canada's great fire loss; but it is only quite recently that positive steps in the direction of fire prevention have been taken. It is a new field of public work, and it is well, therefore, that we go slowly, lest we become hampered with a multiplicity of regulations, issued by different authorities, and clogging the healthy development of economic and social life. The work so far accomplished has been for the most part an examination of the causes of fires, and of the conditions which promote fire waste; it is only by studying the germs that we will be able to eradicate this disease which has permeated our economic life. Once the causes of fire waste have been classified in the order of their importance, fire prevention becomes a simpler matter.

On August 30th, a convention was held in Toronto of representatives from all over Ontario, and a fire prevention league formed. At the same time the annual convention of the Dominion Fire Chiefs' Association had

just been completed in the same city, and the Ontario municipal convention was also being held. From a study of the discussions which took place at these meetings it becomes apparent that it is municipal responsibility that is emphasized, and that the initiative for fire prevention must proceed from the municipalities. The most that the provinces or the Dominion can do is to co-ordinate local action. It is evident that the necessary co-operation requires the formation of some organization of municipalities, or of local associations formed for the specific purpose of fire prevention.

But the root of the movement must go even deeper than the municipalities. Action must proceed from the public itself, and the public can be aroused to action only by a course of systematic education. It appears that carelessness is the most fertile cause of fire loss, and carelessness is an individual disease which requires an individual cure. The fire departments of Canadian cities and towns are admitted to be among the best in the world, and their insufficiency in the prevention of fire waste has become only too evident. The eradication of the original causes will reduce the waste, and perhaps make possible a reduction in the expense of fire protection.

Something can also be done through the medium of municipal by-laws, towards removing fire hazards, that is those conditions which cause a fire to become a conflagration. Government action in this direction must be permissive, municipal action positive, because regulations cannot be framed which would satisfactorily cover the varied conditions which exist throughout any of the Canadian provinces.

### OAK BAY DECIDES NOT TO SPEND

At a recent meeting of the council of Oak Bay municipality, B.C., the erection of a new school at the Willows was considered. The proposals were for a building to cost \$45,000, of which \$15,000 would be provided by the province. Taking into consideration the present excessive costs of construction, the council decided to postpone the work. They had been negotiating with the school board regarding a temporary structure to cost \$10,000 or \$15,000, but the latter body would not consider this.

### MURRAY-KAY TO BE REORGANIZED

In order to bring \$250,000 fresh capital into the company, the reorganization of Murray-Kay, Limited, is planned and arrangements have been practically completed to that end.

It is proposed that the common stock of the old company be wiped out and that the preferred stock be reduced to 50 per cent. of its present value. The common stock outstanding amounts to \$1,500,000 and the preferred to the same figure, a total of \$3,000,000. The \$1,500,000 of preferred would be reduced to \$750,000 and there would be a new issue of preferred of \$250,000 to be sold at par with a bonus of two shares of common for each share purchased, thus absorbing a new issue of \$500,000 of common, which would go to those putting in new capital and giving them the voting control.

It is understood that Richard P. Gough, president of Sellers-Gough, Limited, and of Jas. A. Ogilvy, Limited, Montreal, also vice-president of the Home Bank of Canada, is to be president of the reorganized Murray-Kay Company, and it is tentatively understood also that the syndicate which Mr. Gough is heading will obtain enough of this stock to give control.

Winnipeg is to have a new \$1,000,000 stock company. Letters patent have been issued to "Clements Loan and Investment Company, Limited," to carry on the business of a general loan and investment company. The president of the new corporation will be John Richard Clements and the incorporators include Louis Ray Clements, Charles Herbert Clements and Alexander McLeod.