

THE RESPONSIBLE POLICEMAN (Continued)

public mind, the conviction that it was in the public interest, and only fair to those charged with the difficult and often disagreeable duties of the police, to make some provision for them in old age, when, after serving the best part of their lives, they were no longer fit to perform those duties with the energy and efficiency necessary.

Of late years there has been more confidence than formerly regarding the manner in which the police duties of the Dominion are performed. The confidence is shown most strikingly by the number of measures which have been passed in recent years, in which extra duties have been imposed upon the police, and every succeeding year goes to prove that this confidence is not misplaced.

The majority of the large cities in our Dominion of Canada have inaugurated Police Pension and Benefit Funds. Some of these funds have been in existence for many years and have proved to give entire satisfaction, particularly to men growing old in the service.

The City of Toronto has the honor of establishing the first pension fund in Canada when it formed the Police Benefit Association in the year 1882. Then Montreal, Winnipeg, Hamilton, Brantford, and a few other cities, followed, and have pension funds in good standing. Still, there is a large number of cities and towns in Canada that as yet have no superannuation funds established.

As there are many men growing old in the service, it is most essential that Police Benefit and Pension Funds be inaugurated in every police force in the Dominion of Canada. To this end, I would suggest that every chief constable of this Dominion get busy, where as yet no Pension Fund is in existence, and take this important matter up with their Police Commissioners or Police Committees, and get the City or Town Councils interested in the welfare of the police by assisting, at least, in the organization of a local pension scheme by a grant of a certain sum of money. The members of the force could pay a certain percentage of their salaries, and an annual grant should be secured from each municipality for a term of years, until this fund has attained such proportions as would allow benefits to be drawn from it. This is the system that has been generally adopted in Canada. The City of Winnipeg being one of the exceptions, where the City Council has established a Police Pension Fund at its own expense for the benefit of policemen grown old in the service of the city, without any percentage being retained from the members of the force. This action on the part of the City of Winnipeg is most praiseworthy, and commends itself as the right and proper way a police pension scheme should be established. The superannuation fund is or should be of vital interest to the welfare of every police force, and an earnest agitation should be made by the head of every police department, with the powers that be, to secure the best pension scheme possible for his department without delay. A Police Benefit Fund is a great asset to every police department, inasmuch as it is a source of encouragement to good men to remain on the force until their time is up in order to obtain their retiring allowance in full, even though other occupations could be obtained by them with larger remuneration.

It is also an incentive to every chief constable in

obtaining, as well as keeping, a better class of men on the force.

It is also a stimulus to any constable to abstain from any unworthy action or the commission of any offence that might, as it would, injure his standing as a member of a police benefit fund. I believe that the Police Benefit and Pension Fund is of the greatest assistance to every chief constable, not only in securing and retaining of better men, but of a cheerful and more willing service being rendered in the rank and file.

But to return to the question, "when will the good time come for all forces in Canada to be members of the Pension Scheme?" It will come as soon as about a score of chief constables and their forces unite with their citizen friends in a loyal spirit for promoting the general improvement of their respective forces; when a few more of the heads of the departments throw in their lot with so good a movement.

POLICE PENSION FUNDS.

At the Chief Constables Convention one learned that less than a dozen municipalities in the Dominion provided pensions, or contributed to superannuation funds for the police. Both the Dominion and Provincial police forces have pension funds and so have the police of the railroads, but the men who, day and night, are risking their health and often their lives, to protect the streets of our communities (other than the twelve cities mentioned) so that the citizens may live in safety, have nothing to look forward to for their declining years, which come quicker to a policeman because of the constant exposure to the weather. This is poor economy on the part of those in authority, for the reason it breeds discontent amongst a body of men who, above all things, should feel happy in their work. The policeman's uniform is the symbol of law and order, and the man wearing the uniform is supposed to typify the spirit of the administration of the law, consequently he should be above temptation. And so far as we know the most practical method any community can adopt to help its officers to resist temptation is that of a remuneration sufficient to keep him and his family in comfort and the assurance of a pension when his days of usefulness are over. We could never understand why there should be any discrimination between the magistrate who administers the law and the constable who carries it out. Both are public servants about equally useful to the state and the community, yet the magistrate is assured, in every case in Canada, of a pension. Why not the constable?

This brings us to the question of police unions which would seem to be growing in every province in Canada. There are those who fear these unions in the case of a general strike in a city or town in which the policemen have formed a branch. Frankly, so long as a policeman has no security of a present decent wage and no prospect of the means to ward off poverty in the case of sickness, accident or old age, he will be discontented and join a union, even if that union means striking. Eliminate the cause for discontentment and then there need be no fear for the police. In this every council in Canada has a responsibility.