

criterion of efficiency in city government. The Mayor is at least able to say that the tax-rate has not been increased, for the very good reason that the law prohibits its increase within a specified number of years. An alderman of the former regime in search of popularity, having conceived the very bright idea that to limit the tax-rate by law to its then figure would make a good appeal to popular favour. It is clear, however, that when work needs to be done, expenditure cannot be curtailed. If the tax-rate can't be raised, the assessed valuation of property may be increased, or money may be borrowed. St. John has resorted to both expedients. The work that has been done could not otherwise have been accomplished, and the people seem to be generally well satisfied that they are getting value for the expenditure, which is after all much more important than the tax-rate. Moreover, the increased assessment is warranted by the actual increase in property values.

ONE outstanding feature of the new system is that the people seem to be kept in much closer touch with civic affairs than ever before. The frequent meetings of the city council, the reports of the commissioners regarding their several departments, the discussion of proposed policies and expenditures, fully reported in the press, leave the citizen no excuse for not knowing what is going

on at the City Hall, or how the business of the city is being managed; and, whether because of this, or because the novelty of the new system has not yet worn off, it appears that more interest than formerly is now taken in civic affairs.

Public interest in the Department of Safety has been aroused by exhaustive investigations held by the very active commissioner of that department. The commissioner, unfortunately, has not direct, or complete, in fact scarcely any, control over the Police Department, because of the fact that the Chief of Police, though paid by the city, is appointed by the Provincial Government. When preparing the new city charter, the Citizens' Committee sought to change this, by providing that under the new system the Chief of Police would be appointed by the city, but, the legislature preferred to leave it in the hands of the Government. Disclosures made by Commissioner McLellan's enquiry, and the lack of harmony between the City Department of Public Safety and the Police Department, which it should control, have led to renewed agitation for the appointment of the Chief by the city council.

Many advocates of Commission Government lay great stress upon the fact that under that system capable men are more likely to engage in the city's service. While St. John was fortunate in its first selection of city commissioners, the circumstances attending the initial election were somewhat ex-

ceptional, and it remains to be seen whether succeeding elections will excite the same degree of interest, or ensure the continuation in office of the men who have made good. One advantage of the commission plan is that it provides a certain degree of continuity in service—makes possible a more permanent policy. Yet, even under a four years' tenure of office, a commissioner is only just beginning to realize the full benefit of experience, when the candidature of some popular but less qualified aspirant may compel his retirement. Some misgiving on this point is felt as March approaches, when the Mayor and two of the commissioners will have to appeal for re-election or retire.

THE working of Commission Government in St. John, however, seems to indicate that its greatest advantage is not so much in any superiority of the personnel which it secures, as in the fact that by providing for the constant and undivided attention of the people's representatives, to the city's affairs, it ensures prompt despatch of business and a degree of celerity in dealing with matters of public concern as they arise from day to day which was never known under the old system.

Were the question of Commission Government again submitted to vote in St. John it is probable that the decision of three years ago would be confirmed by a largely increased majority.

Premier Murray, of Nova Scotia

Who as a Prominent Politician Takes a Broad, Human Interest in the Most Political Province in Canada

No. 33 in the Series "Personalities and Problems"

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

fat old cherry-trees. He has never climbed the mile-long hill that leads back out of Bear River



"He is a human cyclopaedia of Nova Scotia."

FROM Yarmouth to Sydney and from Halifax to the last cove in the Bay of Fundy they know him, the long-gear, strong-built, hefty-voiced man from Grand Narrows, N.S.; Premier of Nova Scotia since 1896 and acquainted with the politics of the most political province in Canada since he was a knee-breeches lad wading after prawns when the tide went out.

They take politics seriously in Nova Scotia. And they take Premier Murray as just about the broadest-gauged thing that modern politics is able to evolve in that part of the world. When he is in Halifax, which for several years has been most of the time, he is the most important citizen in town. He has rooms at the Halifax Hotel. His law office in North Sydney he keeps conveniently steam up on the switch, in case any day the Bluenoses decide to eliminate him from the front ranks at the Legislature.

But that will probably be a distant day. Murray has a constant, comfortable majority in the House, and if he hadn't he would not be likely to worry. He looks like a man who could hold on indefinitely with a fag end of a majority. He is one of the big calibres in that peculiarly party-politics province, where most of the time the steam gauge registers 240 pounds' pressure to the square inch in the boiler. Furthermore, G. H. Murray is the kind of man that makes a convenient safety-valve to blow off steam when the pressure gets near the explosion point.

This may be a very technical metaphor; but it's very expressive of the broad versatility of temperament possessed by Premier Murray. Besides, he knows that remarkable little province of big production about as intimately as a farmer knows the farm on which he was born. He knows the fisheries on the Bay of Fundy, the apple-growers in the Annapolis Valley, the miners in Glace Bay, the blast furnace men in North Sydney, the lumbermen on the docks, the old-timers in Halifax, the officers at the citadel, the dock-wallopers in the harbour, and the people that the Government of Nova Scotia are fetching in from Great Britain to occupy the farms left idle by an adventurous population. He has his paternal eye on every province in the Dominion, where the Bluenoses have gone following the example of their forebears from Scotland; on several States in the Union, where Nova Scotians have driven stakes. And he has learned to look upon these migrations of the native-born with the calm eye of a philosopher. He is a human cyclopaedia of Nova Scotia, to which he has stuck when thousands of his fellow-citizens were slamming away in ships to Boston and New York and the ends of the earth.

SO far as I could learn from an hour's conversation with him there is only one district of Nova Scotia where he has never been. That is Bear River, down near Digby, on the Annapolis Basin. He does not know the road from Digby to Bear River, among the sublime hills and the

to the squidgy little town of fish-boats and cherry-trees, where the big boats haul up from St. John. But he knows more about it than the tourist who spends his summer money among the hills of Digby. Talk to him about the derelict farms that once were populous with homesteaders and are now on the market because the young men have gone swaggering away to Boston or Winnipeg or Vancouver, and he knows exactly why they are vacant and cheap and such a problem to the Government of which he is the head. And he knows precisely what the Government is doing to re-people these fat, fertile homesteads that have in them much more to the acre than the wheat lands of the far west.

G. H. Murray is elective head of a province that is as chockfull of problems and peculiar people and red-hot politics as a Yarmouth weir is full of had-dock. And he has made a lifelong study of the most diversified set of people and conditions in Canada. He is naturally proud that Lunenburg is the greatest fishing village in America. He exults in the fact that the rolling-mills of North Sydney are able to turn out steel rails for the construction of transcontinental systems. He admits with great joy that the apple-growers of Annapolis Valley understand apples better than anybody else in America. He contemplates with calm satisfaction the many industrial little burghs that have begun to send the manufactured products of Nova Scotia over most of Canada. He is as likely as any to rave about the great climate of Nova Scotia, where people that have a mind to grow to be a hundred years old. He regards with a patriotic eye the panoramic hills that stand sentinel over the fat and feculent valleys whose soil wealth no generation of people have begun to estimate. He chuckles over the progress made by his own Government in dealing with the land problem and as naively asks you, "Now, what is the Land Act in New Brunswick? I guess they are doing something over there—but whatever it is, don't forget that the Government of Nova Scotia put through the first act dealing with that problem."

AND when, like a good-humoured gull, you have gone through the farce of trying to enlighten the Premier of Nova Scotia on what New Brunswick is doing to repopulate and reclaim its idle lands, half the time blinking to yourself that he knows more about it in a minute than you do in an hour—you gradually wake up to the fact that he knew all about it before you began and only wanted to see whether you were seeking enlightenment or merely pumping him for information.

The difference between the Land Act of New Brunswick and the Land and Loan Act—if that is the exact title—of Nova Scotia, is just about as much as you might expect between these two rival provinces. The N. B. Act provides for buying up abandoned farms and waste land by the Government at a low figure, improving by ditches and fences, etc., and re-selling to immigrants. The N. S. Act neither buys nor sells land. It merely