

advertisements soliciting designs we should not expect to see a satisfactory result attained. The subject of the competition is an interesting one. If the committee would arrange under proper professional advice a competition under clearly defined and proper conditions, something highly satisfactory to the corporation and creditable to Canadian architecture would perhaps be the outcome. Considering however the strenuous efforts which the aklermen have been putting forth of late for the purpose of reducing sufficiently the estimated expenditure for the current year to bring the rate of taxation down to what will be regarded as a not too extravagant figure, it may be considered extremely doubtful whether the expenditure of any money upon an undertaking of this kind will at the present time be tolerated.

PLUMBERS whether rightly or wrongly have obtained the reputation of charging well for their services. The comic papers are accustomed to tell us that to allow the plumber to gain an entrance to one's house is equivalent to placing a mortgage on the property. In view of the manner in which the plumber's desire for profits has been magnified in the press it is not a matter of wonder that in the eyes of the public he should have come to be regarded as an individual whom it is well to keep clear of. It is the duty of the plumber to seek by every means to prove that he is not the extortionist which he has so often been pictured to be. One method of doing this is to watch closely the workmen, and see that they do not charge for more time than is required to do the work upon which they are engaged. Some workmen will bear watching. On more than one occasion recently the writer has seen journeymen plumbers and apprentices stretched out on benches in the public parks, with their kit of tools for a pillow, idling away hours of precious time, which of course is duly charged up to the customer. Such practices are largely responsible for heavy plumbing bills, and for the complaints of extortion preferred against the plumber. In his own interest as well as that of his client the plumber should first personally inspect the work, see what is required to be done, how much time is required to do it, and then give his workmen to understand what is required of them.

It was perhaps rather a curious coincidence that at the very time the members of the Ontario Association of Architects were endeavoring to get their Bill amended for the better protection of the public against unqualified practitioners or "jobbers" of the profession, there should have been brought up Bills for the purpose of making close corporations of two or three trades. It certainly was unfortunate, for when the House had listened to the arguments of the undertakers, that on sanitary grounds no one should be allowed to bury but a select few who combined for the purpose of keeping the business in their own hands; and to the suggestions that only qualified milkmen should be allowed to sell milk, it became fearful that every separate trade would be seeking to hedge itself in with special statutes. By the time the Bill of the Ontario Association of Architects was reached, the House was in a regular panic, while misapprehension thickened the air like a fog. Under these circumstances the committee in charge of the Bill saw it would be useless to present it, as members of the House were not in a fit state of mind to weigh it on its merits; they therefore decided at the last moment to withdraw it. The O. A. A. therefore remains in *statu quo*, but the work that is being done by it is of too great value to be stopped; the efficient training of capable students is a matter which should be viewed with great interest by the public, and they should be glad to know that the examinations will still be held annually as heretofore, and none will be admitted to membership unless duly qualified.

THE opening of the tenders for certain street paving contracts in Toronto has lately been a subject for a great deal of talk and not a little "flying into print," while the irregularity of the proceedings has opened the door for a great deal of grumbling on the part of "home" tenderers, not upon the merits of the case only, but upon, so to speak, a side issue, namely, the admission of a tender from an "outsider." The tenders were publicly advertised for and ordered to be sent by registered letter through the post. That being the case, to admit a tender in any other way was utterly indefensible and unfair. As is well known, a tend

was submitted—"handed in"—after the appointed time, and it was this one that secured the contract. When it was found that such had been the case, the only fair way of dealing would have been to advertise again, that all might have had an equal chance. It is a very great mistake to say that it is for the good of the city that outside tenders should not be admitted. Nothing could be worse than to exclude them; they have many advantages. Tendering is likely to be more honest if not confined to a few. Combines are by this means prevented. Though we should like to see local men doing the work, yet if their prices are so high that a firm from a distance can give us work as good for a lower figure, our "home" tenderers will learn that it is necessary for them to improve their plant and otherwise to put themselves in a position to give the best work for a more reasonable price. But, while favoring the admission of outside contractors on an equal footing with resident contractors, we emphatically protest against any advantage being according to them.

DEPUTATIONS representing twenty town and city municipalities waited upon the Ontario Government a month ago to ask for legislation which would enable them to grant exclusive telephone privileges for a period of five years in return for a percentage of profits of companies to whom privileges might be given. This step was taken in view of the judicial decision recently given affirming the illegality of such action on the part of municipalities. The petition of the deputation was opposed by the legal representative of an automatic telephone company, which was not a matter of wonder. It was altogether surprising and amusing, however, to see a delegation from the Toronto Trades and Labor Council present in opposition to the granting of the required legislation. The telephone has been properly termed a natural monopoly. One efficient telephone company in a town or city is more satisfactory to the public than two or more companies would be. The existence of more than one company makes necessary the renting by every telephone user of as many instruments as there are companies in order that he may be in a position to communicate with every other telephone user. This means additional expense and trouble. It means, so far as the companies are concerned, that they will be unable to make a fair profit, and consequently will not be in a position to pay any tribute to the municipality. Thus it is that with exclusive privileges granted to one company, telephone users get a better and more efficient service, the telephone company is able to make a fair profit, and the municipality is enabled to exact in return for the exclusive privilege, a considerable percentage of the net earnings of the company with which to lighten the rate of municipal taxation. Strangely enough, there are found people like the Trades and Labor Council, who, while always complaining of their condition, will refuse to allow anybody to assist them in paying their taxes. The legislature, like a wise parent, saw where these short sighted people's interest lay, and granted the municipalities the power they sought for.

A WALK through the older business portions of Montreal convinces one that there is need of very decided improvement in the business blocks there, to say nothing of the narrowness of the streets which, if it is possible, certainly should be attended to. As to the buildings themselves, we may expect to see in the course of a decade considerable changes. Many of the warehouses and wholesale houses are very old and quite unfitted for the business of the day, and consequently the rentals they bring in are very low, and though the majority present very solid stone fronts the interior upon inspection proves to be very much decayed. The handsome blocks of the Grey Nun's warehouses off St. Sulpice street throw the buildings of St. Paul street into the shade. Unless owners bestir themselves and modernize their buildings it is not at all unlikely that the principal business firms will move west. There is indeed a slow and general movement in this direction, and it would be a good thing for the city if, for instance, a few good streets, wide and roomy, were cut through Griffintown, displacing some of the hundreds of poor dwellings that swarm here and are somewhat deleterious to the city's health. The westerly movement is only a continuation of that which has been in progress for the greater part of the century. The quaint buildings to be seen in Hochelaga were vacated in favor of the newer St. Paul street and its surroundings, and these will probably be left for still further west blocks. A