

Metropolitan Commission of the Island of Montreal

The Metropolitan Commission of the Island of Montreal that was created recently for the supervision of the finances of sixteen municipalities surrounding the City of Montreal marks a new epoch in civic administration, not only in Canada but on this Continent, inasmuch that if successful it will be a basis upon which can be built a system of governing a large metropolitan area without the municipal units losing their autonomous standing in so far as the government of their own community is concerned. The charter of the Metropolitan Commission is fundamentally similar to that of the London County Council, though it is limited at present to the financial supervision of the municipalities that come under its control, with the exception of Montreal itself which is independent of the commission, other than contributing towards its cost, and to the funds and credit necessary to place three of the municipalities now under the commission on a sound financial basis. To protect Montreal's interest the City Council elects eight out of fifteen members of the commission—one member to be the City Comptroller and seven selected from the Council itself.

Included in the sixteen municipalities are the cities of Lachine, Westmount, Verdun and Outremont, the council of each of which must select from among the members a representative to sit on the commission. The other municipalities affected select two representatives who must be a member of one of the councils. To complete the Commission, though he has no vote, one member is appointed by the Provincial Department for Municipal Affairs. The M. C. I. M. then can be said to be fairly and proportionately representative of the municipalities under its control, and as all the members have had a large experience in the civic affairs of their respective communities, the commission is fortunate in starting off with the right personnel. To still further strengthen its position the Commission at its first session appointed as legal adviser, Mr. C. L. Laurendeau, late city attorney of Montreal, and as secretary-treasurer Mr. E. T. Samson, who as secretary-treasurer of Outremont had much to do with the drafting of the charter.

The Commission has extensive powers. For instance no municipality under its control "may contract a loan or issue bonds unless it be specially authorized by a resolution of the Commission" other than temporary loans in anticipation of the collection of their annual revenue. It can, of its own initiative, float loans upon the taxable property of any of the municipalities for meeting the debts of any or all the municipalities. As a check on the commission itself all its bond issues must be submitted to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the expenses of which, after approval, are apportioned among the various municipalities and "especially the interest and the contribution to the sinking fund. . . . in such manner that the charges and expenses shall be born entirely by the municipalities for whose benefit they have been incurred." Should a municipality fail to meet its just proportion of any expenses or charges incurred, the Commission has power to levy and collect a tax sufficient to cover such expenses.

The reason for the creating of the commission was that certain small municipalities adjacent

to Montreal, had through extensive improvements increased their debits to such an extent that to save them from bankruptcy the city was asked to annex them. This Montreal was prepared to do provided other adjacent municipalities, such as Westmount and Outremont, were also annexed. Naturally they objected, and other ways and means had to be found to serve the delinquent municipalities. Hence the metropolitan commission, under which the stronger municipalities help the weaker.

Of course, as already said, the Commission is an experiment and its success depends on the spirit in which the members work together for the common benefit of the whole district. As a number of the members are the actual originators of the idea we can confidently hope that every opportunity will be taken to insure the Commission's success.

A PREVAILING FASHION.

In a course of an address delivered recently before a meeting composed of the gentler sex a lawyer, according to the local report characterized the city manager movement as the latest and prevailing fashion in city government. Whatever may be said for the "manager" form of government, in terming it a "fashion" is hardly recommending it the serious attention of Canadian citizens. Fads and fancies and "fashions" may be alright to discuss in the abstract but when it comes to serious business regarding municipal administration something more solid must be advanced to change our present systems.

THE SOCIAL WORKER.

Probably the most tragic sight that one can see in this land of broad acres is the low class tenement in some dirty narrow street. Yet in most of our industrial centres this tenement, often multiplied by the thousand, stands as a question mark to our boasted civilization. The men and women and children that live in the tenements are not there from choice as a rule, but because of circumstances over which they have no control. To a degree they are the brothers and the sisters of those who live in the better parts of the city, but so selfish is human nature, and so limited our sense of responsibility, that we are inclined to accept the "slum" and its evils as a necessary part of our community life.

Fortunately for Canadian citizenship there are those splendid men and women who are continually striving in every town and city to better the conditions of the "submerged tenth," and though at times it would seem that their efforts were in vain, they are by their insistence gradually bringing home to the citizens as a whole a deeper sense of their responsibility in the matter of providing more decent habitations and better surroundings for the poorer part of the community. The social worker to-day is a scientific worker. He, or she, is educating both the inhabitant of the slums and the inhabitant of Mayfair to their dual responsibility to the community. To the one the social worker gives hope to the other the opportunity to serve.