

about keeping down expenses merely by ceasing to do necessary work for the health and convenience of our cities. That foreshadows a process of decay. What is needed is not to stop the expenditure, but divert it into the right channels and use it efficiently."

Municipal Taxes

Mr. C. J. Yorath (page 103) raised a number of issues in this contribution. He calls for a basis of taxation which is broad, equitable and scientific. He further appeals "for municipal administration to be placed upon a sound business basis." These two most important matters have been and are engaging the attention of many students. North American municipal governments seem to be in a state of flux. I think it may be stated without equivocation that there are a greater variety of forms of municipal administration in North America than in any other country, and few of them are given sufficient time to prove their superiority before changes are made. Civic Improvement Leagues were created in Canada to study the subject. Municipal Associations exist in every province and several powerful municipal organizations are energetically discussing the problems in the United States. Taxation is a matter which appeals to all, because we cannot evade the tax-collector. But it cannot be claimed to be equitable or scientific even if it is broad. Mr. Yorath would render inestimable service if he propounded a method of taxation which would be equitable. The Western municipalities adopted single tax in a limited way, whereas few Eastern authorities have departed from the ancient rule of taxing every form of improvement. I will refer to taxation in relation to fire prevention later on. It is important that municipal administration and taxation should receive fuller attention, because they are vital for the proper development of our cities and towns. Town planning is a comprehensive study which includes the above.

Fire Losses

Mr. George Gilbert, Mr. Henry Lye and others dealt with fire prevention. It is a grievous fact that the losses by fire are stupendous; that these losses are paid for directly and indirectly by the public who are already loaded with the high cost of living; that the education of public opinion on the need for regulations with regard to the use of building materials is most important, and that the burden of the responsibility for fires does not fall upon the rightful shoulders. Two points only I intend referring to. It would be a useful measure if the government were to issue model building codes which may be modified, extended or otherwise improved by the local authorities, provided the regulations were standardized to the approval of the governmental departments. Building regulations are now drafted by the municipal authorities and can be enforced, modified or set aside by the simple expedient of passing resolutions and often without doing so. The absence of uniform regulations affords an opportunity for those who desire special concessions, to pitch one municipality against another. But if reasonable uniformity of requirements were to be established, such a condition could not often occur. Moreover, one reason for the low fire losses in European countries may be attributed to the fact that building regulations are uniform; they cannot be set aside by the authorities; they are usually administered without discrimination; and they must receive the governmental sanction before they can be enforced or altered.

The other point is that of taxation in relation to fire risks. It is a curious anomaly that he who creates the greatest risk pays the least taxes, and he who builds substantially and therefore at a greater cost, pays the most taxes. Furthermore, in a majority of cities and towns water mains are laid as local improvements which are assessed according to the frontage, in which case the cheap building owner bears a similar share of the cost as the owner of an expensive building. Now, water mains are much larger than they need be for a domestic supply. About two-thirds of the cost is incurred for fire protection. The substantial building needs the least protection. If taxes and local improvements were equitably assessed, the owner of a cheap building would have to bear a higher proportion of the cost of maintaining expensive yet efficient fire brigades and water works, than the one who

erects a substantial structure. This would soon touch the vital part of the owner's anatomy and fire hazards would automatically be reduced. At present the incentive (due to our present basis of taxation) is to build cheap structures because the taxes will be lower. Supposing the cost of municipal fire organizations and two-thirds of the initial cost and maintenance of water works were assessed against such building, it requires not much foresight to anticipate many improvements, reduced fire losses, and a great relief to industrial and social Canada. No criticism is offered to the proposals to make the owners of buildings which have been consumed by fire responsible for the losses incurred because Mr. Lye has done so effectively.

R. O. WYNNE ROBERTS.

BANKS ABLE TO FINANCE COUNTRY'S NEEDS

Optimism as to the immediate future of Canada is indicated by the action of Canadian banks in deciding to immediately equip themselves with additional capital in preparation for the future.

The Federal and local governments are about to put under way new works calling for considerable capital expenditure; agriculturists are seeking funds for the extension of the areas under cultivation and the increase of live stock, and the manufacturing industries of this country will require large credits. The railways for nearly five years have made their requirements for new rolling stock smaller than was prudent and must come into the market for money—millions of dollars—for the increase of rolling stock and new mileage. Merchants expect large trade, and manufacturers look for a greater volume of export business.

The sudden end of hostilities leaves the banks in thoroughly sound and liquid condition, but quite evidently quite able to use more capital. The Royal, the Union and the Bank of Hamilton have all promptly recognized this by the putting out of new issues of stock.

JAPANESE OUT FOR TRADE WITH CANADA

The Vancouver board of trade has lately received a large number of inquiries from Japanese concerns who seek to get in touch there with manufacturing, exporting and importing firms. One Japanese firm states that it imports carbolic acid, woollen cloth, asbestos, linoleum, artificial silk, wool and agricultural products, while it exports Japanese silk goods, cotton, hosiery, oils, knives and chemicals.

Other concerns in Japan seek local firms dealing in brushes and porcelains, also Vancouver firms importing electrical, chemical and artistic household porcelains. Another firm wants to establish connections with firms interested in silks, beans, starches and other agricultural and marine products. Japanese firms manufacturing silk goods and dealing in watch glasses, violin strings and bridges, yarns, buttons, cotton goods, earthenware, also write wanting to establish connections. Another concern asks to get in touch with manufacturers of pulp.

Among the letters received by the board has been one from the Consulat-General de Belgique at Ottawa announcing the formation of a Belgian co-operative company having for its object provision for the re-equipping of Belgian industry. He intimates that the company is looking for specified offers concerning machinery, implements or raw material of every kind.

The Monarch Life Assurance Co. announces that applications received at head office during January, 1919, amounted to over \$600,000 and policies issued to over \$560,000. This represents an increase of completed applications over the corresponding month of 1918, of 63 per cent., and policies issued of 74 per cent.