

Hydro Electric and Government Interference

Whatever may be the criticism engineered against the Ontario Hydro Power Administration by outside private interests, the Ontario Municipal Electrical Association—composed of the municipalities that use and pay for the power—has every confidence in the administrative ability of Sir Adam Beck and his colleagues on the Hydro Commission. At the recent annual meeting of the Association Sir Adam received an ovation from the delegates that could not help but give him renewed confidence in the continual fight that he has to put up against the enemies of the hydro. Sir Adam Beck is a strong and determined man, not likely to be deterred from his purpose of solidifying his great power scheme by the insidious propaganda of private interests, who see in the success of the Ontario Hydro system the death knell of their own profiteering projects at the expense of the public, but when he knows that he has

the expressed confidence of those he is serving, he will fight all the better.

The Association at its meeting took advantage of the opportunity to pass strong resolutions against the interference of the Provincial Government in the hydro-electric enterprises. These resolutions are timely because of the tendency of provincial authorities to assume prerogatives in matters purely municipal. In the case of Ontario the hydro enterprises are municipally owned, even though the Provincial Government loaned part of the money, consequently the local councils, through the Electrical Association, have every right to protest against the recent stand of the Provincial Government whose stupid interference has given the opportunity of its enemies to create distrust in the whole Ontario scheme. In the early days of the hydro the government would not have dared to interfere with urban rights. The present government should be made to realize that the cities and towns will not be played with.

The Criminal and the Community

Those who would know something of how the criminal guests of the Dominion are looked after could not do better than study the annual report, just published, of the Dominion Superintendent of Penitentiaries, which is a story of practical reform without gush or maudlin sentiment. It is not only a record of the administration but it suggests prison reforms that are valuable because of the experience of the men who make the suggestions. The report is also evidence of the fact that those who have the custody of prisoners to-day are men of intellect and character who have a sense of responsibility towards their charges, other than mere detention.

According to the report there are 2,150 prisoners distributed in the seven Federal penitentiaries, of whom 629 are foreigners; not a large proportion of the population it is true, but sufficiently large to be distinct class by itself, particularly if added to the number the prisoners incarcerated in local jails. The care of this class is one of the problems of every civilized country. In the old days prisoners were treated with great severity, as a supposed deterrent to evil doers, but to-day more human methods are used, the purpose being to reform rather than punish the prisoner, so as to be more in keeping with the present spirit of democracy. Prison reform associations of course would go much further than the actual administrators. We sometimes think reformers go too far in their propaganda, not so much in their ideas for the uplift of the convicted criminal, as in their condemnation of the administration and its personnel. They seem to forget in their enthusiasm that the criminal is a menace to society, and that unless he is made to feel that crime does not pay—unless he is punished in some way—he will always be a menace to his fellowmen. Too easy a punishment is not good for the criminal and his class. This was proven some years ago in Liverpool, (Eng.), when quite a number of brutal thefts from the person, resulted in many of the thieves being brought before the Recorder, who in England has large powers in criminal affairs. The Recorder,

a kindly man gave each thief on conviction, a long sermon and a short sentence, with the hope that the criminal would reform. What happened? The thieving fraternity got so busy that it became a positive danger to walk the streets. The police in despair urged the examining magistrate to commit those caught to the assizes instead of to the recorder's court. Unfortunately for these rascals, but fortunately for the community, the judge of assize determined to stamp out this system of brutal crime by giving each man on conviction a long sentence **and the cat**. In less than a week after it became perfectly safe for citizens to walk the streets in any part of the city. The cat had been the cure.

Society must be protected against the criminal, but the criminal has a right to expect society to give him a chance to live honestly when he has served his sentence. This is what society does not do; it assumes too much that a man or woman once convicted of crime is always a criminal. There has not been, and there is not now, sufficient concerted effort to assist inmates of prisons on their discharge. Regarding this the superintendent of penitentiaries in his report has this to say:—

"There should be an honest attempt made to assist the inmates on discharge. They go out into the world feeling anxious and discouraged as to their future. Then is the time they require a helping hand, moral support, and a friend. Work should be provided for them and an abiding interest taken in them until they become re-established in society.

"Unless sympathetic supervision is given them in the community, which will assist, encourage, and strengthen them in resisting temptation, they will seldom reform. They must not only be prevented from returning to their former courses, but helped and directed into better ones."

There are one or two organizations that make a practice of assisting prisoners on discharge, the Salvation Army in particular, but this is not enough and we recommend the last paragraph of the above quotation to the municipal authorities.