

## MAKING EFFECTIVE CITIZENS

**I**F democratic institutions are to work, there must be a constant stream of citizens ever coming forward, not merely interested in public affairs, but capable of putting their ideas effectively before the electorate. If the party system of government is to endure, the general membership of the parties must be able constantly to influence political leaders, at times guided by them and at other times guiding.

The work which the Montreal Debating League is doing in this city is directed towards producing a higher level of effectiveness in our citizens. In the first place, it encourages proficiency in public speaking and debate. It is a commonplace that many intelligent citizens are quite unable to "think upon their feet," and are ineffective in a public meeting. In the second place, the League provokes the study of public problems by its members and ventilates public questions before considerable audiences without charging admission. In the third place, its debaters are trained in the use of parliamentary procedure, and without the right use and general understanding of parliamentary institutions our system would rapidly break down.

The best guarantee of the survival of our Canadian system, with its British parliamentary tradition, is a steady stream of young Canadians flowing into every walk of Canadian life, fitted to take part intelligently and effectively in public affairs. Free institutions place a burden of responsibility upon every able-bodied citizen.

Last night's Mock Parliament revealed again that the Debating League is turning out efficient "parliamentarians". It is one of the avowed purposes of the committee to "spread a respect for parliamentary institutions by its Mock Parliaments". These occasions also provide opportunities for much-needed humour, gentle satire and the rest. Nothing is more necessary at times than a touch of merriment and humorous criticism of public institutions and policies. Civilization requires its "Attic Salt."

The vast majority of those who take part in the League debates are young men. This is eminently as it should be. Furthermore, under the League's auspices a Junior Debating League has been established. The calibre of the men who serve on the Montreal Debating League's committee, who act as judges, who present awards such as the Beatty Cup, shows that the senior citizens of Montreal are interested in this significant youth movement. When age encourages youth, and when Youth Canada takes up the study of Canadian institutions and problems, we need have no doubt as to the future of the Dominion.