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## The Journal of Commerce

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### Special Articles

**How the New Taxes Affect the Treasury's Position.**

By H. M. P. Eckardt.

**The Situation in Britain.**

By W. E. Dowding.

**The Food Value of Flour and Breakfast Foods.**

By R. Harcourt.

**The Milling of Rice.**

By F. B. Wise and W. Broomwell.

**The Beet Sugar Industry.**

Editorials:	Page
Strangling Reform .....	1
Asquith Triumphs Again .....	1
Mr. Wilson Acts .....	2
Prohibition Troubles .....	2
The Bilingual Question .....	2
Wilson and Roosevelt .....	2
How the New Taxes Affect the Treasury's Position .....	3
The Beet Sugar Industry .....	4
Mentioned in Despatches .....	5
Among the Companies .....	6-7
The Situation in Britain .....	8
Telephone Congratulations Over 2,000 Miles of Wire .....	8
Bank of England Statement .....	9
Bank of France Report .....	9
"A Little Nonsense Now and Then." .....	9
Germany's Sun Under a Cloud .....	10
Bank of Nova Scotia Changes .....	10
The Thrift Movement .....	11
Canadian Bank Clearings .....	11
Saving the Old Boys .....	12
Good Reasons for Insuring Now .....	12
Enthusiasm .....	13
Federation of Insurance Men .....	13
Is the Tax on Insurance a Tax on Thrift? .....	13
Effects of Cyanide on Bread .....	16
The Food Value of Flour and Breakfast Foods .....	17
The Milling of Rice .....	18
Empire Trade After the War .....	19
Western Grain Inspections .....	19
Wants to Build Ships .....	20
Commodity Markets .....	21-22-23
Shipping and Railway News .....	24

## Strangling Reform

FOR old-fashioned dyed-in-the-wool conservatism commend us to the Legislature of Ontario, if the action taken the other day by a committee on an Ottawa city bill correctly represents the views of that body. The age in which we live is generally called a progressive one, but this can hardly apply to things which come under legislative control at Toronto. There are progressive elements in the city of Ottawa which, after much discussion and deliberation, determined that certain reforms in the system of city government were desirable. It was well understood that an attempt to secure the adoption of these measures for the whole Province would not succeed. The Ottawa people recognized that they would not be justified in attempting to impose their views on the people of other cities where the subjects had not been so fully considered. They thought they were very reasonable when they asked that they might be permitted to manage their own city on principles which they believed to be just. After discussion in which the chief public bodies of the city participated, and after securing the approval of the people by a direct vote, the city authorities sent to the Legislature a bill designed to effect several changes: the granting of the suffrage to women in municipal affairs on the same terms as to men; the creation of the office of city manager; the election of representatives by the system of proportional representation. These proposals received scant courtesy at the hands of the Legislature's committee at Toronto. The merits of the suggested changes were not discussed at all. The proposals were rejected on the ground that changes in the municipal system, if made at all, should apply to the whole Province and not to the city of Ottawa. Such an assertion of the principle of uniformity is a fatal barrier to progress. Uniformity is in many things desirable, but when it is invoked to prevent a progressive community from having the system of government which its people desire, it is carried too far. One can easily understand the unwillingness of some communities to make such changes as were proposed at Ottawa. But even those communities should be glad to see the new methods applied and tested by the rate-payers of any city who have studied them and have faith in them. Take, for example, the question of proportional representation, which is now engaging the attention of the most thoughtful minds in every democracy. How could the adoption of that system in Ottawa do harm to the citizens of any other part of Ontario? There is no good reason why uniformity should be insisted upon in such a matter. On the contrary, it is much to be desired that the new principle, the theory of which commends itself to most intelligent readers, should be put into practical operation in our country to enable the public generally to study

it. The proposal of the capital city of the Dominion to try out some of these progressive measures should have been welcomed by the Ontario Legislature, instead of being unceremoniously thrown out.

## Asquith Triumphs Again

ONCE more the British Prime Minister has come triumphantly through the storm. The waspish Northcliffe press has repeatedly invented crises that were to end in the overthrow of the Asquith Ministry. Frequently the crisis was entirely imaginary. Occasionally it meant complications and difficulties which in less skilful hands would make serious trouble, but which disappear under the master touch of the Prime Minister. A few days ago Mr. Asquith himself frankly informed the House of Commons that a question had arisen on which there were differences in the Cabinet, and that these might prove unsurmountable. He asked for a few days for further consultation. The difficulty was understood to be in relation to conscription. Mr. Asquith had always held that conscription should only be resorted to in extreme conditions. He evidently thought that the moment for taking the extreme step had not yet arrived. Before the expiry of the delay for which he had asked, an official statement was issued to the effect that the crisis had passed, and a united Cabinet had agreed to a further postponement of conscription—an announcement that has given much satisfaction to the country, for the breaking up of a Cabinet which is a coalition of all parties would at this stage of affairs be a disaster.

The unpleasant feature of the question is that Mr. Lloyd George has permitted himself to be placed in a position in which his loyalty to the Prime Minister has been questioned. When a Liberal journalist of the prominence of Mr. A. G. Gardiner, of the London Daily News, is moved to address an open letter to the Minister of Munitions, accusing him of conspiring against Mr. Asquith, it is evident that there is a strong feeling in the Liberal ranks. Mr. Lloyd George has rendered splendid service as a Minister. Let us hope that whatever has caused the present friction will be satisfactorily explained, and that good relations between him and his colleagues may be restored.

On the other side, it is particularly gratifying to find that the Conservative leader, Mr. Bonar Law, has given Mr. Asquith loyal co-operation. Once or twice Conservatives in the House have shown a disposition to unreasonably criticize the Government, and Mr. Law has deemed it necessary to intimate that such attacks were unfair. The hint dropped by him that he could not retain his leadership of the party if such criticism continued seems to have had a wholesome effect.