

## The Municipal Service Commission of Montreal

The new charter of the City of Montreal, provides for the appointment of a *Municipal Service Commission* composed of the heads of six civic departments. This commission, which will shortly be appointed, will do away with the civil service commission of one man, that was appointed some three years ago by the administrative commission on the recommendation of a firm of American experts who had made a survey of the administration. From the first the experiment was a failure for the reason that the commission, assuming a superior knowledge of departmental requirements, thrust into each department without the sanction of the heads, inexperienced men totally unfitted for their positions.

The new service commission, being composed of the six principal departmental heads should be a success because of the fact that experienced men

will have the choosing of candidates for the municipal service, and they being at the same time responsible for the running of their respective departments are not likely to choose "duds."

Municipal service calls for special training, and unless candidates are assured that that training is going to serve them to good purpose good men are not likely to compete for the service. Such an assurance can only be given by men experienced in civic administration, as are the present working heads of municipal Montreal. There is every hope then of the new service commission being a success. It certainly cannot be any worse than the late commission which was composed of a man who had previously had no knowledge—even residential—of civic administration.

## Development or Exploitation

The new Provincial Treasurer of Quebec (Hon. J. Nicol), introducing his first budget — which showed that the finances of this province were, owing to the sound administration of the late Treasurer (Hon. Walter Mitchell), in a healthy condition—used words which were applicable to every part of Canada. "From now on," he said, "we must not expect to get rich and prosper on high prices, but on increased production. We must sell two bushels of oats where we sold one. Let the leaders of industry, the artisans of the cities join with the farmers; let us get back to work."

The difficulty in the industrial life of Canada, and which has affected her social life, is that huge profits and their capitalization by the drones of the stock markets have been made the goal to work for rather than legitimate returns on production itself, whether that production has been in the form of agriculture or manufactures.

So much has this become the case that finance instead of being the medium of exchange and as such the servant of industry and commerce has actually become the master, to the detriment of the community, inasmuch industrial values have, through amalgamation, become inflated to such an extent that the savings of the people — which we term capital—instead of being used only for the actual development of industry is in reality expended in the promotion of amalgamations, in excessive overhead expenses and on the stock market. To illustrate, an individual small manufacturer, whose property is worth \$50,000 sells out to a syndicate of financiers for \$100,000. These gentlemen in turn sell the plant and goodwill to an amalgamation of firms in the same business—a trust—which they had formed for the purpose, for \$200,000. This is termed good business. So it is for the financiers, who with their glowing prospectus get hold of \$200,000 of the public's money for a business worth \$50,000, or with goodwill \$75,000. Now, if these financiers had been eliminated, at least \$125,000 of invested capital

would have been used for the real development of the country and some community would have benefited.

It has been asserted, time and time again, as a reason — or rather an excuse — for the too many amalgamations in Canada that they lessen the cost of production, and this is true in the very few cases where water has been kept out. Unfortunately, as illustrated in the preceding paragraph, dividends have to be found for the watered stock after heavy expenses for high priced executives have been taken out, consequently these trusts have not been in a position for some time to compete with smaller firms and with imported articles of the same manufacture. The result is many plants are closed down.

Is it not time that the laws allowing such conditions to prevail be changed? We maintain that every employer, be he an individual, a company, or a trust, has a direct responsibility to the community in which the plant is located. It is the duty of the employer to see to it that there be continuous work for his or its employees. We would go further and say that before a plant is allowed to be closed down, that the local authorities be empowered to investigate the reason, and to publish the result to the world. We venture to think that the fear of such publicity would deter many employers from closing down from mere greed or caprice.

The community and the industrial life of Canada are so dependent one on the other that what affects the one affects the other, consequently deterrent influences, such as stock gambling, and over capitalization must be eliminated, if the country is to prosper. Those who control the finances—the savings of the people—must be made to realize that their part in the economic scheme of Canada is to expedite and develop industry and commerce, not exploit it for their own ends, and the laws should be made sufficiently stringent to suppress the use of capital other than what it should be—the development of Canadian industries.