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Canada's Water Powers.

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By T. J. Jarman.

New Banking Merger Proposed.

Important Changes in the Fur Industry.
Britain's September Trade.

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The Montreal Tramways

THE recent disclosures in the proceedings of the courts and in other inquiries conducted by judges have given the public abundant reason to look with suspicion upon negotiations at the City Hall respecting the franchise renewal desired by the Montreal Tramways Company. It has been made clear enough that in certain transactions the wishes and interests of the Tramways Company received much more consideration than the interests of the citizens of Montreal. A knowledge of these facts should show the city authorities the necessity for now pursuing a course, in all matters concerning the street railway, that is above suspicion. If there is haste in the making of a new contract, if there is disregard of reasonable precautions for the protection of the public interests, there will naturally be a strengthening of the unfavorable impression that has been created by past events. The negotiations now taking place at the City Hall are hardly assuming a shape that will be satisfactory to the thoughtful public.

In the earlier discussions of the Company's application two things were almost universally acknowledged as essential to the making of any arrangement for a new franchise. One was that before the city authorities could make a new contract they would have to call in the aid of tramway experts of high standing in other cities. The other was that whatever arrangement might be made between the City and the Company would be subject to a referendum, so that the citizens would have an opportunity of voting directly for or against the scheme. There was hardly a dissent in any quarter from either of these things. They were largely taken for granted. Candidates for civic honors put these features forward in their campaigns, and gave the people assurance that this was the way in which the important question would be treated. To-day both these safeguards are being thrown aside. The Board of Control is less qualified than it was a year ago to deal with the question unaided by experts; a former Controller was a man who had had a large experience in tramways construction and operation, a qualification that is not possessed by any member of the present Board. Nevertheless, the Board are proceeding to consider the details of a new contract, and members who seem to speak for a majority announce that they will not trouble themselves to ask the advice of experts, neither will they trouble the citizens with the opportunity of passing upon the arrangement that may be made. The experienced tramways men who represent the Company are the only experts to be consulted. The scheme that may be agreed upon by these gentlemen, so well qualified to look after their own interest, and representatives of the City who are entirely wanting

in tramways knowledge, is to be railroaded through as quickly as possible.

If public opinion in Montreal civic affairs were as keen as it should be there would be indignant protests from the citizens against the course that the business is thus taking. Unfortunately it is not. It may awaken later, when it finds Montreal bound for many years to come to a tramways contract which may give inefficient accommodation at needlessly high rates, while the Company will reap rich dividends on well watered stock.

The Montreal tramway system, under a scheme carefully prepared by competent and trustworthy experts, should not only give the people an efficient service at moderate rates of fare, but should at the same time yield a revenue that would pay the capitalists a handsome return on the real investment and give the City, as a large partner in the business, a proper share of the profits. The present course of events at the City Hall gives little ground for hope that such a scheme will be matured.

The Montreal Board of Trade has now sent a letter to the Controllers suggesting lines upon which a fair arrangement might be made with the Tramways Company, and particularly asking that the assistance of tramways experts be obtained by the representatives of the City. The Council of the Board should give close attention to the negotiations. There may yet be time to prevent the making of an improvident contract.

A representative of the Company has asked the Controllers to remember that whatever is exacted from the Company must come out of the pockets of the people. The reminder is timely, and it should suggest the unwisdom of the kind of arrangement proposed by the Company, who offer certain specified sums to the City for the franchise. If the enterprise is not a profitable one the City should not ask a dollar from it for the City treasury. But if it is profitable, then clearly the City should have its full share of the profit, and not be confined to the sums specified by the Company. It seems clear enough that the Company anticipate, as well they may, a large profit from the enterprise and are planning to give the City as little of it as possible. This may be all right from the Company's standpoint. They will naturally look out for number one. But it will be a very strange thing if the representatives of the City permit any such lop-sided bargain to be made. Under the traffic conditions existing in Montreal there should be no real difficulty in the making of an agreement that would give the people an efficient service, and the Company a handsome return on the fair value of their property, and leave the City and the Company, as partners, to share fairly in any surplus profits that may arise.