

COMMUNICATIONS

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CLERKS' SALARIES

To the Editor of *The Municipal World*:

SIR,—I have seen frequent references in your columns to the inadequacy of the salaries paid to clerks of municipalities, particularly rural municipalities. As cause for complaint in this regard continues to exist, I deem it in the public interest to again call attention to the matter. Every reasonable man will admit that a competent servant should be paid a reasonable remuneration for the services he performs, and that one who does not understand, or neglects the performance of the duties of his office, is dear at any price. It is a duty that municipal councillors owe their constituents to appoint a competent man to the office of clerk, and pay him what faithful and intelligent service is worth. The clerk should be a comparatively permanent official, on whose ability, intelligence and diligence the ever-changing councillor can rely for information and guidance in the discharge of his duties as a trustee of the people. A proper understanding and appreciation of the numerous duties a clerk is required to perform, and of the time he must necessarily devote to their performance, should compel his employers to seriously consider the question: Is he being sufficiently remunerated? In the great majority of cases the answer would be in the negative. Many men who have grown gray in the service receive to-day practically the same salary as when first appointed. They have faithfully guided the helm of the municipal legislation of the township during the period of its evolution from the forest-and-log-house state to that of the stately mansion and fruitful field; but their salaries have not swept upward with the onward rush of progress. Statutory law, growth of population, spread of civilization have increased their duties in multifarious ways—their salaries alone appear to be at a standstill. This is not as it should be. An efficient official applying for an increase of remuneration is often met with the argument in support of the refusal of his application, "If you will not do the work for what you are receiving, plenty of others will." This argument is fair neither to the official nor to the ratepayers of the municipality whose interests he is called upon to safeguard. The paramount consideration should be: Is he competent and diligent? If he is, he should hold or receive the appointment, as the case may be, and should be paid a salary commensurate with the work he must necessarily from time to time perform.

"EXPERIENCE."

A USEFUL BOARD

A sphere of usefulness much larger than most people suspected, and one that was growing larger with the material progress of Ontario, awaited the Railway and Municipal Board, which, it must be said, is ably administering the domain brought under its governance. At the outset there was some doubt that the coupling of jurisdiction over the railways with authority over the municipalities in respect to other subjects would prove the best arrangement.

Whatever changes expansion in business may finally render necessary, the two classes of duty are being well attended to by the existing board. The time may come when it may be found advisable to divide them, owing to the enlargement of the responsibilities under both heads.

As our internal railway mileage extends, and as the complications of railway problems multiply, a court to deal exclusively with these may separate itself from the present board. Developments on that side are not likely to be more rapid than on the side of municipal progress. As our villages evolve into towns and our towns into cities, the need for some central body like the British Local Government Board will become strong enough to be acted upon. At the present time, the functions of such a body are those to which our Railway and Municipal Board is giving a great part of its attention. By legislation passed last session the scope of the board's labors was widened in such a way as to bring under its control the financial arrangements of municipalities in respect to their public utilities. The board may from time to time enquire as to the operation of public utilities and the rates maintained so as to ascertain if the latter are sufficient to pay the debt charges on account of such public utilities.

A change in the rules of the Assembly refers to the board all private bills to authorize the incurring of further indebtedness by municipalities. There is no branch of the work allotted to the board more important than this one, which has now largely settled in its hands, of checking the extravagance of municipalities. It was well that some part of the responsibilities was devolved from the private bills committee to some more judicial body. In spite of the fact that the committee has usually been presided over by men whose influence was exerted against the burdening of ratepayers, it was impossible to prevent the passage of bills by "log-rolling." Now that such bills cannot be reported by the committee until they have first had the approval of the board, license to exploit the credit of municipalities will be more sparingly granted.

It is gratifying to see the interest taken in this part of its duties by the board. It has just given a general caution against municipal borrowing at the present time of high money rates, pointing out that when the stringency is past funds may be got on better terms than are now possible. It is most desirable that our municipalities should not now make themselves conspicuous as offers of debentures, for the prices now obtainable are not flattering to municipal credit. To have that credit appear to the best advantage it is necessary to keep out of the money market when interest rates are high.—*Mail and Empire*.

Montreal has decided to purchase two automobiles for use in fighting fires. It is believed by the fire committee that they will prove quicker and more effective in the outlying districts than the present system. If these prove successful every station will be equipped with one.

(*Municipal Officers of Ontario*)



MR. WM. H. BLACK

TOWN CLERK OF CACHE BAY,
NIPISSING DISTRICT.

Mr. BLACK was born in the Township of Ramsay, Lanark County, of which township his father, the late JAMES BLACK, was for eleven years the deputy-reeve. Leaving the farm while still in his 'teens, Mr. BLACK entered the employ of Mr. WALTER BEATTY, Pembroke, with whom he learned the rudiments of carpentry. Soon after leaving Pembroke he entered Almonte High School to prepare for the teaching profession, and completed his studies at Kingston Collegiate Institute, Brockville Model School and Ottawa Normal School. He began teaching as principal of the public school at Lyn, Leeds County, where he remained one year. He next became principal of Pakenham public school, then first assistant of Almonte public school, and finally principal of Cache Bay public school. During his stay in Almonte he was for a time municipal auditor, a fact that probably led to his appointment as Clerk at Cache Bay, upon the duties of which office he entered on February 1st, 1907.