

In regard to the population of Montreal it must be considered that this city is the centre of a number of municipalities which cluster around it a large portion of the inhabitants of which enjoy the privileges incident to proximity to a large city without contributing anything towards the maintenance of the services they share with the citizens who pay taxes.

A situation has thus been created which has put this city in a very unfair position, one that demands earnest attention with a view to the consolidation of this and the suburban municipalities into one city with a population that would justify the title, "Greater Montreal."

AN AMERICAN ENGINEER'S VIEWS ON MUNICIPAL QUESTIONS.

VERY INTERESTING AND INSTRUCTIVE INTERVIEW WITH MR. REGINALD THOMSON, C.E., CITY ENGINEER, SEATTLE, U.S.; HIS VIEWS ON WATER SUPPLY AND WATER RATES; WATER RATES IN MONTREAL EXCEPTIONALLY LOW; STREET IMPROVEMENTS, AND THE GARBAGE QUESTION.

We had the pleasure this week of participating in an interview with Mr. Reginald Thomson, city engineer of Seattle, had with our City Treasurer, Mr. W. Robb, in which many interesting subjects of Municipal Government were discussed.

Mr. Thomson has been making an extended tour of investigation both on this side of the water and in Europe, for the purpose of acquainting himself with the best methods in vogue with a view to their adoption in the rapidly growing City of Seattle, of whose public works he has the charge.

One of the objects which he was making a special subject of study was "The Destruction and Utilization of Garbage," and he had many interesting facts in connection therewith, but as the most perfect was the only one which it was necessary to consider, Mr. Thomson said he found one in use in more than one city in England, the plant of which was constructed on such correct principles of chemical combustion, that all garbage submitted to it was easily and completely destroyed. But this was only one phase of the question—"Destruction" was necessary, but "Utilization" of the matter, during destruction was equally important, and the plant alluded to developed a fuel which, in one instance, produced a power sufficient to run the electric cars in the city, while the cost was not greater than that of many less scientifically designed ones. A still more interesting subject to us in Montreal (for climatic conditions might prevent such complete incineration) was his description of the water system which had been established in Seattle.

Two hundred square miles of mountain land had been secured containing several lakes of ice cold water which was brought to the city by gravitation,

and at one part of its course, where was a natural fall of over 600 feet, they utilized the power to develop a supply of electricity not only sufficient for all civic purposes, but to furnish an unlimited quantity for commercial and domestic purposes.

Mr. Robb:—Then I suppose you are able to supply water to your citizens at a very low rate?

Mr. Thomson:—Yes, many houses in the city do not pay more than 60 cents per month, but that is about the minimum.

Mr. Robb:—That is \$7.20 per annum.

Mr. Thomson:—Yes.

Mr. Robb:—What would you think if I were to tell you that in Montreal, where we have to pump every gallon of it from the St. Lawrence, over 20,000 families, which includes most of the labouring classes, do not pay an average of \$5 per annum, and one-third of that number not \$4.

Mr. Thomson:—All I can say is that it cannot pay to do it.

Mr. Robb:—Well you and I might doubt it, but a section of our press here which must know better than either of us, is continually telling those 20,000 families that they are being grossly overcharged, and that the wicked aldermen, who are sinners above all others, are making an enormous profit out of them, and squandering it on other objects. The result is that those poor people, who are getting water at less than cost, have been rendered discontented, and resort to every device to avoid payment, while the higher class residences, which make good the loss, and afford a profit beside, never object to a discrimination which makes them pay from 10 to 20 times as much as the poorer classes for the same supply.

Mr. Thomson:—But how can you discriminate in this way? Is not all your supply by meter?

Mr. Robb:—No, our rates are levied on the rental value of the premises, so that the \$1,000 house pays 10 times as much as the \$100 dwelling, which assimilates it to the real estate tax, and both are regarded as part and parcel of our general revenue.

Mr. Thomson:—I suppose the water supply is a lien on the property as it is with us.

Mr. Robb:—No, but it ought to be, both for the sake of the poorer classes, who could then pay it in their monthly rentals, and for the sake of the civic revenue.

Discussing the subject of "Street Improvement & Sewerage" Mr. Thomson said they had laid down the rule from the beginning, that in the laying out, or extending of streets, scientific levels were adopted, all pipes laid, and permanent paving and sidewalks finished at the time, and the whole cost levied on abutting properties.

Mr. Thomson showed great interest in our municipal system, and went away fortified by numerous statistics, promising to send Mr. Robb a copy of his own report so soon as it should be published.