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The Montreal Commission

The Premier of Quebec in appointing a commission—nominally through the legislative committee and the Legislature—to make a contract on behalf of the City of Montreal and the Montreal Tramways Company, though acting strictly within his powers and no doubt in good faith, created a precedent at once dangerous and a menace to the basic principle of British government for which we are even now fighting to preserve on the fields of Flanders, namely "Government of the people, by the people, for the people." Sir Lomer Gouin, because of the weakness in numbers of the opposition is virtually dictator of the Province so that his responsibility is all the greater in interfering, rightly or wrongly, with a responsible elected body like the city council of Montreal.

It is true that the Mayor and a number of the council as well as a fairly large delegation of the citizens were in favor of the commission, and that the personnel of the commission would seem to guarantee that a satisfactory agreement with the tramways company will be arrived at, but the fact that no official request from the council was made for such a commission would indicate the usurpation of the unassailable rights of the citizens through their elected representatives.

While, in the words of the Premier, municipalities like companies receive their charters and powers from the legislature, there is a vast difference in principle between creating a local authority and a private company. A local authority is part of the British constitution just as much as the legislature of Quebec, which receives its authority from the British parliament under the British North America Act. And the British parliament has exactly the

same power to take away that authority as the Quebec legislature has to take away all, or any, of the powers of a municipality, but with one exception—that of the United States, when it had its lesson—the Imperial parliament has never attempted to interfere with any authority where its members are elected by the people. The constitution of the Empire is an unwritten system of delegated authority, with adjusted checks, from the Imperial authority to the smallest council, and though Sir Lomer Gouin might have taken the best course in the appointment of the Tramway commission he has taken away the citizens' great birthright of local autonomy, which under the British constitution is not limited to the Provincial or Federal parliaments of Canada.

PREPAREDNESS.

"Preparedness for Peace should almost be our watchword," said Mayor Costello, in his presidential address before the recent Alberta convention, a slogan which this Journal re-echoes to every civic body in Canada. The problem of preparedness has long been in our mind and was discussed at the recent convention of the Union of Canadian Municipalities, with the consequence that we have started a propaganda of investigation of industrial opportunities for the municipalities, as being the most tangible form of preparedness to meet after war conditions. The results of the investigations will be presented to each of the municipal councils in a special number of the Journal, together with special articles dealing with different phases of industrial development from the pens of experts and leaders of municipal thought. Fuller particulars of our Preparedness Programme will be published in the February issue.