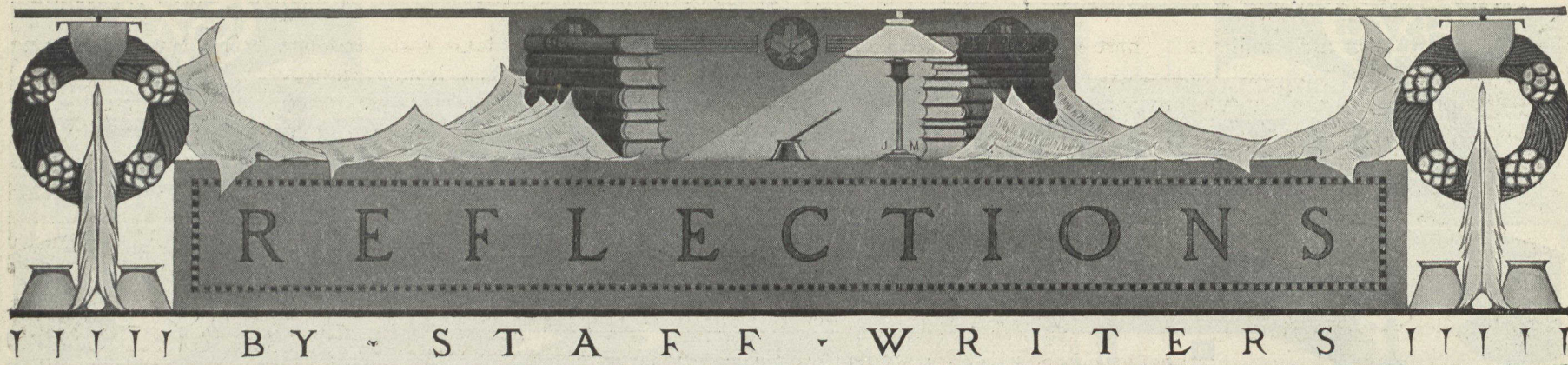




EVENTS of the past two weeks indicate that the principle of public ownership is gaining ground rapidly. Ten years ago it was scarcely ever mentioned; to-day it is in the air everywhere. Municipalities and provincial governments seem to be most affected by the tide of popular enthusiasm; the Dominion Government

PROGRESS OF PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

has not yet shown any great sympathy with the movement, and it is generally known that Sir Wilfrid Laurier prefers regulation to ownership.

Until a few years ago, municipal ownership was confined mainly to waterworks. In 1903, sixty-three Ontario municipalities controlled their own water supply. In the same year, there were thirty-nine municipalities which did their own electric lighting and three their own gas lighting. This indicates that lighting was coming rapidly to the same position of importance in the public mind as water-supply. Since 1903, the municipalisation of these services has been considerably extended in Ontario and in the other provinces as well.

The same course of events has occurred in public ownership by provinces. The Province of Ontario inaugurated the new era when it decided to build a railway through Northern Ontario as a government undertaking. Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba followed with a proposal to have provincial control of trunk telephone lines. Last week the Manitoba Government bought out the Bell Telephone lines in that province for \$3,300,000 or thereabouts. This indicates that Alberta and Saskatchewan may make a similar purchase if the governments of those provinces so desire. Ontario has for several years been investigating the electrical energy situation; while not prepared to go in for provincial ownership, the government has agreed to help the municipalities to secure municipal co-operation for transmission lines and municipal plants for distribution of electrical energy within municipal areas. This is not exactly public ownership, but the results are much the same. The only difference is that the loss in experimenting or bad investing will fall on the municipal instead of on the provincial revenues. From this point of view, it is a rather shrewd plan.

The enthusiasm for municipal and provincial ownership is rapidly increasing. The vote last week in Toronto on the by-law to establish a municipal plant to compete with the present private monopoly was so overwhelming as to remove any doubt as to the temper of the people in regard to this question. The case was fully argued from both sides. The forces of each were well organised. The vote was large. There is no evading the verdict. On Monday a number of Ontario municipalities voted on similar by-laws and every one was carried. Public ownership has won all along the line.

In Manitoba, the general praise which has been extended to Premier Roblin for his purchase of the Bell plant and franchise, indicates a similar enthusiasm among the people of that province in regard to public ownership. The Winnipeg "Free Press," the leading opposition organ, makes use of these significant words: "The telephone being a natural monopoly there will also be satisfaction that its ownership is to be vested henceforth in the State." No publicist or political economist could go farther.

In passing, the chief difference between the action of Premier Roblin's Government and the action of the City of Toronto may be noted. Premier Roblin bought Naboth's vineyard. He was prepared to duplicate but only on condition that the Bell were unwilling to sell. When he found the Bell Company in a reasonable state of mind, he paid them a fair price, a generous price in fact. He acted in such a way as to safeguard both the funds of the province and the funds of private investors. In Toronto, there is a tendency to disregard the latter and to enter upon an era of duplication and throat-cutting competition. However, this is but a tendency as yet, and the evil results may still be prevented.

The Ontario Government is face to face with a grave situation.

The people have by their votes indicated their desire to have the government assist them in securing public control of the distribution and sale of Niagara power. There are already two transmission lines, and several private generating and distribution plants in operation in the district which may be served by the new public operations. Much private capital has been invested in these undertakings. It remains to be seen whether Premier Whitney will follow the course which found favour in Kingston and Ottawa when the cities expropriated existing plants, or whether he will disregard entirely present private investments. If he follows Premier Roblin, he will buy out the Electrical Development Company and Cataract Power Company and will encourage the municipalities to purchase existing local plants. This may not be quite so easy as it was in Manitoba, since Sir Henry Pellatt, Mr. Frederic Nicholls and Lieut.-Col. J. M. Gibson are more inclined to go into battle than was General Manager Sise of the Bell Company; yet the obligation rests on Mr. Whitney to prove that he has done his utmost to protect private investments before he lets loose the dogs of cut-throat competition.

IT is inevitable that the Canadian Clubs of the country, now about thirty in number, should ultimately enter some kind of federation. The union may be slight and purely voluntary. It may be more co-operation than federation. Nevertheless there is much to be gained for unity of aim and direction by some form of association. Lord Grey, with his usual perspicacity, is the first to ask these scattered but kindred bodies to co-operate in a national undertaking. He has called a meeting of the Canadian Club presidents to take place in Ottawa next week, and hopes to have the support of these organisations for his movement to nationalise the battlefields of Ste. Foye and Abraham. The cost of the undertaking will be about one million dollars.

Canada was born in 1608. There were earlier settlements but none continuous until the founding of Quebec in that year. This is therefore the nation's three-hundredth anniversary, an occasion worth signalling. As these battlefields are close to the City of Quebec, it is exceptionally fitting that their nationalisation should occur at this time. History and geography combine to make the proposition most opportune. No doubt the Canadian Clubs will realise this and give His Excellency their fullest assistance.

If the Clubs do this, a precedent will be set. Edmonton Canadian Club has already wired its promise of co-operation and contribution. It is just like a Western organisation to be quick and impulsive. Hesitation and deliberation are not yet Western qualities.

ONTARIO and the West have had a slight attack of the blues, because the returns from agriculture were not quite so good in 1907 as in 1906. The farmer's prosperity is the barometer of general business, though the manufacturers and financiers continue to believe

PROSPERITY IN NOVA SCOTIA

they are the most important individuals in the nation. On the other hand, Nova Scotia is prosperous and optimistic because agriculture has shown the greatest returns ever secured in that province. Combined with this is an excellent fishery harvest and a developing manufacturing output. In Western Canada, the price of wheat is of great importance; in Nova Scotia, the value of oats, hay and apples are considered side by side with the value of the fish harvest. During 1907, the average price obtained for codfish was \$5.50 per quintal, which is about the average also of the past four years. Yet the average of the previous period 1900-1903 was only \$4.00. The average price of haddock was even more favourable, being the highest obtained in twenty-one years.

As for manufacturing, with which we may class mining, 1907 was an excellent year. The coal output is valued at about fourteen million dollars, the steel and iron products at the same figure, and the