

The Dark Side of Municipal Ownership.

In respect to the question of municipal ownership, there are some drawbacks and it has been proven that the system has not always turned out satisfactory. Those who advocate it generally point to Great Britain's experience as an argument in its favor, but judging from a recent report of the Royal Statistical Society, the socialistic experiments have not been as successful as desired. The local indebtedness has increased the last twenty five years from about \$460,000,000 to \$1,300,000,000. In return for the tremendous increase in their debts the English towns have gas works, street car lines and other "public utilities" under their control. But the political economists and the business interests of England are asking, "Does the investment pay?" In answer to this we have the report of the society referred to above, which says that the income is sufficient to meet working expenses, interest on borrowed capital and to return about one-half of one per cent. profit on the accumulated debt.

But this is not the whole story. In English towns where municipal ownership has taken root, private enterprise is crippled, there is no competition, no incentive to individual effort, and the gas works, street-car lines, etc., are from ten to twenty-five years behind the times. The trams of many of the leading English towns to-day are operated by horse power. Glasgow, the first of British cities to fall in with the municipal ownership idea, has not a single street railway line that will compare favorably with those of towns of the fourth class in the United States.

In England, Canada and the United States the railroads go after business, but on the continent, when the governments own the railroads the officials hold "the basket for the ripe apple to drop in when ready." They do not care whether business is brisk or dull. They do not have to exhibit a spirit of enterprise.

As far as can be learned the English towns would be glad to unload upon private capitalists their debts and their municipal franchises.—*Kingston News*.

Conduct of Council Meetings.

The *Cardwell Sentinel* in a recent issue makes the following timely and appropriate remarks on this subject:

We often think it would be better if municipal councils would conduct their meetings in a more formal manner than is usually done. Nearly all of these bodies have a set of rules and regulations for the proper carrying on of their meetings, yet, so far as we can learn, hardly one of them carry them out.

We think this is a mistake. There are several reasons why some form of procedure should obtain. One rule, at least, should be obeyed and that is the one requiring a member, when speaking to a motion, to stand up and address the chair. This is usually disobeyed, and instead, a

free-and-easy, desultory conversation is indulged in, by which much valuable time is frittered away, and all ideas of decorum ignored.

If a member were compelled to stand up and direct his discourse to the chair, he would not speak unless he had something to say; but few irrelevant remarks would be heard and business would be transacted in much less time. Order is heaven's first law, and in no place is it more needed than in the council chamber.

A member having a motion to bring before the meeting should write it out, stand up and read it, making such remarks upon it as he desired, and sit down. Such members as wished to speak to it should do so in the same form and the vote taken. This question disposed of, the others should follow in rotation and be disposed of in the same manner. If this routine were strictly carried out a great deal of business would be put through in a wonderfully short space of time.

It is not the real business done that takes up the time at council meetings, but the great amount of useless conversation indulged in.

Carrying on council meetings according to regular form would not only facilitate the business in hand but it would school the members for taking part in other meetings where form would have to be observed, and where persons not having a little training must feel like fish out of water.

We know some corporations who have a set of rules along this line that would make Sir John Bourinot tremble for supremacy, but they are not carried out just in their entirety.

Council Sues Contractor.

A case was tried in Pembroke recently, before Judge Thos. Deacon, which is of interest to all, and especially to township councils. Two years ago the township council of Petewawa decided to open a new road on a concession line, and they gave the job to Mr. Wm. Meilke, who performed the work well. Part of the new road ran through a cedar swamp, and Mr. Meilke, in cutting out the roadway, saved some of these cedars, which he had his men draw to his farm for fence posts. He informed the council at the time, but the price of the cedars was not agreed upon, some thinking that they should be valued at a certain rate per foot, others that the rate should be less. Last fall Mr. Meilke paid the council ten dollars, claiming that that amount should cover the price of the cedars. But the council placed the price at fifteen dollars. This Mr. Meilke would not consent to give, hence the action. Councillors Biesenthal and Priebe appeared against Mr. Meilke on behalf of the township. The judge dismissed the case, the costs to be paid by the municipality.

Publish the Assessments.

The best guarantee of fair assessment of real estate is the publication of the assessment roll. Not only is it a check upon unfair discrimination in the valuation of real estate, but it is also the best remedy for general dissatisfaction and suspicion. Those property owners who appeal against their assessments are only a small proportion of those who are dissatisfied. Most people who are dissatisfied will not take the trouble to appeal. They do not know that they have been unfairly treated, although they may suspect that their neighbors have been let off more lightly than they. If the assessments were made public so that every property owner could readily find out the valuation of every lot in the city, it would be a good thing both for the assessment department and for ratepayers generally.—*Hamilton Herald*.

Three years have elapsed since the assessment roll of this municipality was published in pamphlet form. The departure was a popular one, as it gave the taxpayer an opportunity to make comparisons between his own and those of his neighbors. In matters of this kind publicity is always desirable and beneficial, as any citizen will admit. Should another year be allowed to pass without a similar pamphlet finding its way into the hands of the property owners?—*Galt Reporter*.

Assessors Should be Exact.

The assessors of the province are now going their rounds securing and recording the valuation of all property within their respective municipalities. Their statutory instructions, with a few exceptions, are to assess at actual cash value, but yet we find that county councils find it necessary to equalize such assessments, which means that some assessments are proportionately much higher than others, and to fix county rate equitably, equalization is necessary. The affidavit required to be taken in verification of the assessment roll when delivered over to the council is very definite, especially the first section, which reads as follows: "I have, according to the best of my information and belief, set down in the above assessment roll, all the real property liable to taxation situate in the municipality, and I have justly and truly assessed each of the parcels of real property so set down at its actual cash value as it would be appraised in payment of a just debt from a solvent debtor and as prescribed by law." The law evidently contemplates the work to be done as nearly exact as possible.—*Stouffville Tribune*.

Trying Work.

Thin Haired Man—What! A shilling for cutting my hair? That's outrageous!

Barber—But, my dear sir, the hairs on your head are so far apart that I had to cut each one by itself.