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CURRENT TOPICS.

Mayor Kennedy's inaugural address on Monday was an able and comprehensive review of the situation, and shows the results of much close study of the past history and present condition of civic affairs. The keynote of the whole proceedings of the initial meeting was struck on the word "economy." We see no reason to doubt that most of the members of the Council, from the Mayor downward, are honestly purposed to decrease the expenditures wherever practicable. So far as the Mayor's address is concerned, we are glad to see that this purpose is not likely to be thwarted with a blind disregard of distinctions and consequences. He sees clearly that reduction is not necessarily synonymous with economy. His apprehension of the absolute necessity of providing at the earliest

moment for a certain and adequate supply of pure water, by tunnel or otherwise; his judicious remarks in reference to the great question of a trunk sewer; and his wise demand for the immediate erection of school-houses of the best modern construction for the accommodation of the 1,700 children who are huddled into crowded and unsanitary rented rooms, give evidence that he recognizes the fact that there is economy in a wise liberality as well as in a wise retrenchment. We are glad to observe, too, that while anxious to afford all legitimate encouragement to manufacturing enterprise, he regards it as unnecessary and unwise to offer bonuses or otherwise incur large expenditure for that purpose. It is to be hoped that the Committee of Council which has been appointed to look after this business will prove equally wise and frown on every proposal to enter upon a policy of bribing industries to remove from one part of the country to another—a policy which is as short-sighted as it is unpatriotic and selfish.

The new Council of the City has entered upon its work with the characteristic vigour of youth. It is difficult to know just what to say in regard to the startling resolution with which the Council signalized its first meeting. We refer, of course, to the ruthless resolution to cut down the salaries of all civic employees now in receipt of more than \$600 per annum, in accordance with a scale graduated from five up to twenty per cent. There is, it must be admitted, a certain force in the contention that at a time of great business depression, those who are in the receipt of regular and comfortable salaries derived from the taxes of their fellow-citizens should not object to share the burden in some way. But, on the other hand, the City is not bankrupt, and it is at least questionable whether it is in any respect in a position which can justify heroic treatment in violation of what may be regarded as virtual contracts with its employees. Like any other employer of labour, the City has a right to give any one in its service the option of accepting a reduction of salary, or leaving its employ, but it is in honour bound to give a reasonable notice of its intention. We do not see how it is possible to justify on moral grounds a resolution which not only proposes to make such reductions without notice, but even to make them retrospective, taking effect a fortnight before the resolution is passed. Many of these employees have been

for years in the service of the City. Some may have entered into actual or virtual engagements, on the strength of their accustomed salaries, as one would think himself safe in doing, and may be seriously embarrassed by the change. On the whole, we cannot see that the Councillors are to be congratulated on the mode of their first stroke of economy. We do not believe that they can, without serious disregard of right, carry out the policy proposed. It was hinted, for instance, that the School Trustees are prepared to carry out the principle in regard to the salaries of teachers. But these salaries are fixed and graded, if we mistake not, by by-law, and so are in the nature of contracts which cannot be thus hastily set aside. No doubt there may be some useless and some over-paid officials, in the City, whose salaries afford a fair field for the economists. But the better way would surely have been to appoint a reliable committee to examine into the whole matter, and take action only after due notice. We prophesy that the retrenchment will still have to be effected in some such way, if effected at all.

So far as appears the two chief issues on which the approaching political contest in Ontario is to be fought are decentralization and the fee system. In contending that all local officials should be elected or otherwise appointed by those whom they serve and who are compelled to pay for their services, the Patrons of Industry are enunciating a principle which if it be not theoretically unassailable has certainly very much to be said in its favor. The strong democratic instincts of our people revolt from being compelled to provide for the support of public servants in whose appointment they have no voice and over whose official conduct they have no control. Practically it may be said with a good deal of truth that better men are as a rule chosen and better service rendered when the appointing power is in the hands of those who are independent of the petty rivalries and sectional jealousies which are often so strong in small communities. The inefficiency of officials locally chosen is frequently glaring, as is sometimes seen, for instance, when some crime of unusual turpitude has been committed. How often is it the case that the arm of justice is paralyzed by the irresolution and timidity of local officers, until its vigour is restored by calling in the aid of those who have developed the necessary qualities in a larger sphere. So, too, those