

## Editorials

### LAKE OF THE WOODS LEVEL.

From the summaries which have been given out simultaneously at Ottawa and Washington of the final report of the International Joint Commission, the problem of the proper level for the Lake of the Woods appears to have been settled in a manner most satisfactory to Canadian engineering interests. The commissioners have recognized that the dominant interests in that region are those relating to hydro-electric power.

The level set by the commission—from 1,056 to 1,062.5, sea-level datum,—is a higher level than that desired by the farmers bordering the lake, and means that the lake primarily will be used as a storage reservoir for the Winnipeg River and other water powers. The highest known level previous to 1916, as shown by the rocks around the lake, was 1,062, sea-level datum. This is higher than any level reached since 1892, the year when the levels were first taken and reported. In the spring of 1916, the lake reached 1,064 for a short period, but that flood was unusual and not likely to recur very often.

The maximum established by the commission is therefore within 0.1 ft. of the highest known level with the exception of last year's flood, and is higher than any level reached since 1892. This means that the importance of the development of power has been fully recognized. The farmers whose lands will be flooded will be compensated by cash payments.

One of the questions incidental to establishing a proper level for the Lake of the Woods, and one which for a time threatened to overshadow the main problem itself, was in regard to the control of the Norman Dam. This was a matter which involved principle and public policy and which necessarily had to be considered by the commissioners of the respective countries upon national as well as international grounds.

The question was whether there should be Canadian or international control of the Norman Dam,—a structure on the Winnipeg River which, while wholly in Canada and some sixty miles to the north of the international border, has a bearing upon international problems because it is the chief means of controlling the level of the Lake of the Woods.

This question has been most satisfactorily settled by naming 1,061.25, sea-level datum, as the ordinary maximum stage. So long as this height is not exceeded, control remains with the Ontario government, co-operating with the Dominion government. But should the water rise above the ordinary maximum or fall below 1,056, it is deemed that international interests would be affected and control then would be temporarily exercised by the International Joint Commission.

### POLITICS AND BUSINESS.

The secrets of the political rules and regulations are confined to the select few. They have helped to prevent a coalition government. Yet strong opinion, thinking independently of parties, favors a national business government. Should Sir Robert Borden reconstruct his cabinet, choosing men of business ability for that reason and not for party reasons, the country will support him. Only professional politicians, who have been trained to look

at everything from the partisan viewpoint, will protest against the breaking of ancient precedents at Ottawa. A determined effort to utilize all the available energy, money, brains and material, irrespective of party leaning, will have the country's approval.

Our people desire the nation's affairs and its part in the war conducted as large, enterprising corporations carry on their work. The Canadian Pacific Railway, the T. Eaton Company and other such institutions appoint their directors and executives with a view to getting the best results and to giving good service in the shortest time and with the least possible expenditure. These days of crises demand that governments should adopt the best business methods in the work of their administrations.

### CANADA'S FUEL COMMISSIONER.

Members of the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers will be much gratified that one of their number has been selected by the government for the responsible position of fuel commissioner for Canada. Charles Alexander Magrath, D.T.S., M.Can.Soc.C.E., was born at North Augusta, Ont., in 1860. From 1878 to 1882 he was assistant on base lines, principal meridians and astronomical surveys for the Dominion Government. From 1882 to 1885 he was in charge of the government astronomical surveys. In 1885 Mr. Magrath left the employ of the government and became engineer for the Northwestern Coal & Navigation Co., and later on manager of the company's irrigation developments. After 21 years' connection with that firm, he was elected a member of the Dominion Parliament, and in 1911 became one of the three Canadian commissioners on the International Joint Commission. In 1915 he was elected chairman of the International Joint Commission, which important post he still occupies. Last week he was named by Premier Borden as fuel commissioner for Canada, with full authority to regulate sales and distribution of fuel throughout the country.

It is perhaps unusual to relate a biography editorially, but the circumstances deserve unusual treatment, because it is most unusual for any Canadian government, either liberal or conservative, to recognize an engineer for an important government appointment of this character, involving a high degree of executive skill and diplomacy. Mr. Magrath has shown a most satisfactory record and this should be an incentive to the government to try some more civil engineers for similar positions. His broad-mindedness and far-sightedness are general characteristics of all engineers perhaps to a greater extent than applies to any other body of professional men. His resourcefulness and energetic method of getting things done thoroughly without undue delay is also typical of all the successful engineers. Premier Borden could find more C. A. Magraths among the members of the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers if he cared but to look for them.

The attitude of professional politicians toward engineers is well exemplified by the fact that one well-known member of parliament thought it necessary to apologize to his fellow statesmen in 1911 for the selection of an engineer as a member of the International Joint Commission, saying that Mr. Magrath was appointed "because of his keen, judicial mind."