

## NO SECURITY OF TENURE IN CANADIAN MUNICIPAL POSITIONS?

THERE is no place in the world to emigrate to like Canada—except England. That is the conclusion that has been reached by S. Barlow Bennett, an English engineer now resident in Colorado, U.S.A., who has evidently had unhappy experiences in Canada. Mr. Bennett has written a letter to the Municipal Engineering and Sanitary Record, of London, Eng., complaining about conditions in Canada, particularly in regard to the municipal engineering field and the lack of security of tenure in such positions in this country. Mr. Bennett's letter was dated July 23rd, 1918, and was published in the English paper on August 22nd. He says:—

"I have noticed the controversy re 'The Institution of Municipal and County Engineers,' and was really glad to see the statement in the letter of Mr. Reginald Brown that both Medical Officers of Health and Sanitary Inspectors have security of tenure. That certainly is excellent progress, and the Institution of Municipal and County Engineers should not stop until they have obtained the same concession. It is only too true that to the poorly paid men, insecurity of office is a very serious matter.

"I was interested, too, in your editorial in the same issue concerning the efforts of municipal officials for security of tenure in Australia, and to learn that 'after thanking the Minister the deputation withdrew.'

"In the towns and cities of Canada, whether large or small, it is important that it should be known that it is an annual occurrence to 'fire' some of the municipal officers. There would be no 'sport' in the elections if the politicians were to be deprived of this, their accustomed privilege.

"Jealousy, petty spite, and a determination 'to get' at somebody, dominate the whole of the elections.

"A man who can hold a responsible position for two years is something of a rarity. Let me warn any municipal official in England from emigrating, if he thinks of obtaining or being able to hold a similar position in the Dominion of Canada. As to security of position, it is a complete farce. I know of a municipality—no names, hush!—where the Council 'fired,' *i.e.*, asked to resign, the municipal Clerk, the Fire Chief, the Medical Officer of Health, the Chief of Police and the Waterworks Superintendent, all at one sitting.

"Again, I know of another case where, after the elections, every man employed by the municipality got notice to quit, even the Magistrate. Fortunately, however, for him, he was under the jurisdiction of the provincial, and not the municipal, council.

"Then these wise 'guys' went into committee, and, as each one had some one he wanted to 'fire,' they had to compromise with one another. 'You vote to fire my man and then I'll vote to get your man in,' or out, as the case might be. This not only goes on with municipalities, but even with the Provincial Councils. They 'fire' everyone, from the Chief Engineer to the Chinese janitor. In another province, when the election campaign began, some of the members of the party in power went the round of the offices touting for subscriptions to the party funds. Of course, if the official wanted to keep his position, why, he subscribed accordingly, of course.

"Let me conclude by saying that there is no place in the world to emigrate to like Canada—except England."

In commenting editorially upon the above letter, under the heading "Nepotism in Canadian Municipalities," the Municipal Engineering and Sanitary Record says:—

"Municipal officers in England, after perusal of the letter on 'Canadian Municipalities: How They Fire Their Officers After Municipal Elections,' by Mr. S. Barlow Bennett, of Colorado, U.S.A., which appears elsewhere in this issue, will feel disposed, we believe to congratulate themselves that the vicious system of municipal administration which obtains in Canada is little known in this country. Mr. Barlow Bennett, who is the author of that excellent text-book, 'Technical Plumbing,' went out to Canada several years ago, and was a successful engineer to several Canadian municipalities. He is consequently well qualified to describe from personal experience the trials which engineers, and indeed all municipal officials, have to undergo. A pernicious practice obtains in the Dominion, he assures us—and it is only confirmatory of information previously in our possession—of annually 'firing,' *i.e.*, discharging municipal officers on personal and political grounds.

"The elections, we are told, would be devoid of 'sport' if the successful candidates were deprived of this acknowledged privilege. In the case of one municipality this was carried to such an extent, we learn, that the Council 'fired' its Clerk, Fire Chief, Medical Officer of Health, Chief of Police and Waterworks Superintendent all at one sitting. Not only do municipalities perpetrate these gross irregularities, he assures us, but the Provincial Councils are also similarly infected, and they sometimes 'fire' every officer, from the Chief Engineer to the Chinese Janitor.

"Municipal officers in this country have their share of trials and of vendettas, but such reckless and madcap treatment of officers as is perpetrated in Canada is practically unknown with us. We suppose that some palliation for the singular practices of these municipalities is due to their juvenescence and we predict that wisdom will develop with age. Those who suffer, however, most heavily from the insensate practice in thus discharging public servants are the ratepayers, and very heavily must they suffer too. For the officials, convinced as they inevitably must be on appointment to office that their tenure can only be short, have the temptation set before them to take opportunities for promoting their own interests in preference to those of the ratepayers. It is an incitement to dishonesty, and to disregard the concerns of the citizens. There is no inducement for the officials to ensure, as is done in England, that their subordinates and workmen discharge their duties efficiently, nor for engineers to promote essential and necessary schemes which impose a serious demand upon their skill, both in design and construction.

"Money is cheaper in the Dominion than it is in the Old Country, but deliberate waste of it which is encouraged by the practices described is reprehensible. Capable and thoughtful men of affairs and business men abound in Canada, and their influence should, we suggest, be exercised to promote sane and healthier methods in local government. None of them, as they well know, could maintain success if their staffs were treated in the quixotic fashion which is characteristic of that of the municipalities. Possibly this aspect of the case has not occurred to them, nor have they realized that their municipal taxes are unduly increased through it. The most efficient remedy for the abuse which has grown up would be for the Dominion Government to pass a statute providing for security of tenure to State and Municipal Officials. In the meantime, however, Municipal Officials in the Homeland will be wise enough to accept the warning offered by our correspondent not to emigrate to Canada in the expectation that they will be able to hold similar positions in the Dominion."