



The Municipal World

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K. W. MCKAY, EDITOR.

A. W. CAMPBELL, C. E. J. M. GLENN, K.C., LL. B.
Associate Editors.

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OFFICES—334 Talbot Street, St. Thomas. Phone 189.

ADDRESS all communications to THE MUNICIPAL WORLD, LIMITED,
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ST. THOMAS, ONTARIO, MARCH 1, 1904.

The county councillors formed a most influential deputation. They had a just cause for united action. Their views were presented in an able manner.

It has been suggested as a remedy for any dissatisfaction that may exist, that the offices of reeve and county councillor should not be incompatible, and that township councils should be elected for two years, the elections for township and county councils to be held in alternate years.

The special committee of the Legislature in charge of the Assessment Bill is making good progress. The principal difficulty is with the classification for business tax purposes. This should not be graded to place any one in the highest class because he formerly paid a large tax on personalty—the same objections will apply to both. The industrial development of the Province favors the exemption of machinery engaged in manufacturing and the placing of such business in the lowest class. In Montreal, where the business tax is uniform, inequalities are removed by a system of special taxes, which are imposed to a limited extent in Ontario towns and cities in the form of licenses. Professional men, whose business tax will be in lieu of all income derived from business and will be based on the value of office premises, should be placed in the highest class. Present day opinions favor a tax that cannot be evaded, and one that is levied with uniformity upon tangible property.

PROVINCIAL BOARD NEEDED.

Attorney-General Gibson appreciates the necessity for some central supervision of municipal bodies. In the Legislature recently he stated :

“ I am strongly of the opinion that Ontario should have something akin to the Local Government Board in England or the State Commission in Massachusetts—a board composed of, say, three gentlemen of experience. There were questions cropping up frequently throughout the year that might with great advantage to the people be submitted to such a board. It might supervise and

investigate the provisions of all interested corporations, private and public, and the issue of stock and bonds, and examine into all agreements between municipal councils and corporations operating public utilities, so as to prevent their being unduly to the advantage of the companies concerned. It would be well worthy of the consideration of the House whether some such system should not be adopted in view of the great public advantages that might be gained.”

In an article on “Municipal Reform,” published in January, we directed attention to the necessity for a Local Government Board, the establishment of which would be a most progressive step towards better municipal government.

MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATIVES.

The essentials to the excellence of a representative system are :

1. That the representatives shall be chosen from among the best men.
2. That they shall be responsible to the people for their speeches and votes.
3. That they shall have courage enough to resist a momentary impulse of their constituents, which they think mischievous, *i. e.*, shall be representatives rather than mere delegates.
4. That they individually, and the council they form, shall have a reflex action on the people, *i. e.*, that while they derive authority from the people they shall also give the people the benefit of the experience they acquire in the council, as well as the superior knowledge they may be presumed to possess.

RELIGIOUS TAXES.

In a certain constituency in Ontario, not long ago, a new church was being built by a certain religious body. The member of Parliament was, of course, asked to contribute to the subscription list, although he was not a member of that religious body, nor did he reside within twenty miles of the parish limits. He gave \$25. Later it was intimated to him that \$50 was the amount required.

This is the sort of delicate blackmail which prevails all over Canada. Members of Parliament, mayors, Reeves, aldermen, councillors and those appointed by popular vote are blackmailed on every hand. Of course, it is delicately done. There is no compulsion. Yet the man who has the hardihood to refuse soon feels the scorn of those who expected his donation. The practice is reprehensible, and its hideousness is not lessened by the fact that religious bodies are the worst offenders. The main result is that honest members of Parliament and other publicists are crowded out by men who accept presents, “rake-offs” and “percentages” and then square their consciences by distributing the moneys so received to charitable and religious organizations.

The Toronto *News* does morality a service in pointing out that no less a personage than Lord Macaulay refused to make any presents to his constituents in the form of race-balls or subscriptions. He confined his giving to the same occasions as would have justified it if he were not the member for Edinburgh. Canada could bear an infusion of Lord Macaulay's principle. The politicians are blamed for perpetuating corruption, but the churches and the people are by no means guiltless. The keenness with which they hasten to rifle the pockets of the man who offers himself for election to any office is the most indelicate kind of highway robbery.—*Canadian Magazine.*