

Municipal Work in Towns.

A municipal corporation is merely a society, organized for the purpose of carrying on certain institutions and constructing certain works in a more serviceable and economical manner than would be possible for the individual member. In this Province it had its origin when the pioneer settler united with his neighbor to hew out a road through the forest. As the community increased in numbers and in other respects became more complex, it was given more complete organization, and out of this, by common consent, taxation grew.

Taxation is a measure of economy, not of extravagance. It is the means of uniting the energies of a community in obtaining certain common necessities. The average citizen regards their payment as a direct loss, never pausing to consider what is to be gained and saved thereby. Without public schools it would cost much more to educate his children; without public sewers, he would have to construct private drains of less efficiency; without public waterworks, he must at least dig a well and keep it clean; without a public system of lighting, the streets would be in darkness; without public roads, each citizen could scarcely construct private ways for himself, and great inconvenience and added expense would follow. Nevertheless, taxes have always been unpopular, and always will be unpopular unless human nature changes in a remarkable degree, converting the taxpayer into a reasonable being.

A low rate of taxation is far from rendering a town a desirable place of residence. A high rate may, it is true, indicate waste and incompetent management on the part of those to whom its affairs have been entrusted. On the other hand, high taxes are very likely to indicate a progressive spirit on the part of the citizens; it may denote far-sighted economy on the part of the council and officers of the corporation. Low taxes are by no means to be encouraged if the schools of the town are unsanitary, insufficient or poorly equipped; if the town is malarial and lacking in drainage; if the water-supply is poor and typhoid fever prevalent; if the streets are shapeless and ill-kept, the sidewalks rough and dangerous, the streets badly lighted and fire protection insufficient. Low taxation is commendable only when it is the result of good business management of the town's affairs; not when taxation is kept down by neglect to properly equip the town in accordance with modern ideas of refinement and civilization.

It is better that the citizen should economize in his private expense than that he should be deprived of the conveniences to be obtained by such public works as are to be had by slightly increased taxation. An abundance of pure water, a good system of sewers, well-kept streets, will reward economy in other directions, and obtained as they are in a

large way, on the club principle, they are cheaper in proportion than are the other little personal conveniences which might otherwise be had. Indeed an actual saving should result in view of the fact that public works do away with the necessity for private expenditure in reaching the same end—for wells, cisterns, and pumps are replaced by waterworks, while the rates of fire insurance are lessened by the consequent fire protection; with sewers, private drainage is decreased; with well lighted streets, robbery and other crimes are lessened; these, together with well designed streets make a town or village in every way more attractive and habitable, they raise the value of property, are an evidence of refinement, at the same time increasing it, encouraging thrift and good taste on the part of the individual citizen.

The need of good management in all these public works has been referred to. In their construction, very few councillors have the requisite experience and technical knowledge to carry out the details of any work, however simple, without expert assistance. If the town is small and the work is even the simplest and smallest of its kind, there is probably all the more need that the money available should be carefully husbanded and expended in the wisest and most skillful manner. The services of an engineer are generally procurable for a sum commensurate with the work to be performed, and money spent in obtaining reliable assistance of this kind is a most profitable investment.

The actual executive work in connection with streets, sewers and waterworks, should be deputed to a properly qualified man on whom responsibility should rest. A council is entitled to the assistance of such a man to whom they may depute this work; but a council has no right to assume to itself the responsibility attendant upon the duties of the town engineer—an officer as much needed as is a town clerk or treasurer. The "rule of thumb" has been too long employed in the conduct of municipal affairs. The villages, towns and cities of Ontario have so recently sprung into existence from out of the forest wilderness, that old ideas and old methods born of pioneer necessity are still clinging to them past their time. The skill of the engineer is urgently needed in our villages and towns to bring about a better and more economical management of municipal works.

Effect of the Plebiscite.

Son—Father, what does a "local option" town mean?

Father—A "local option" town, my son, is one in which one-half the people have no option whatever; they have to do as the other half say.

"What is a figure of speech, Uncle George?" "It is a 90 pound young man asking a 200-pound girl to fly with him."

Agricultural Instruction in the Schools.

The need of agricultural instructions in the public schools has for some time been felt by the people of the agricultural Province of Ontario. By none has the deficiency been more deeply felt than by the Department of Education. The trend of modern education has been too much of that nature which leads the younger generation from the farm into professional and business pursuits. The Guelph Agricultural College provided the necessary higher education in agricultural subjects, but there was a need at the outset for a training such as would open up to the youth of the country the immense and interesting field for study and enterprise which farming operations afford.

The difficulty in establishing such a course of training arose from the absence of a satisfactory text-book which would be alike comprehensive, up-to-date, and such as would be understood by and interest the child-mind. It is now announced that a suitable text-book has been procured, the author being Mr. C. C. James, Deputy Minister of Agriculture.

The reputation which Mr. James has gained as an authority upon agricultural subjects, his clear and pleasing style as a writer, are well known to the people of Ontario, more especially the farming community, and are a sufficient guarantee of the excellence of the new text-book. "Easy reading," it has been said "is hard writing," and the labor of preparing a work suitable for the public school has doubtless been very great. While primarily intended for use in the schools, simplicity in method of treating the subject will render the book all the more valuable to every farmer. In Canada the adage, "never too old to learn," has worn well, and we feel assured that while the book will be welcomed to the public schools by the people of the Province, those who have left their school days far behind them will find it a source of pleasure and profit.

County Council Representation Wanted.

At a recent session of the Sarnia Township Council the following resolution was adopted:

That, whereas the townships of Sarnia and Euphemia, the town of Forest and all the villages in the county of Lambton, except Point Edward, are without any representation at the County Council, which is a great injury and unfair to the unrepresented corporations and contrary to the meaning and intention of the Municipal Act.

Moved by J. H. B. Moore, seconded by John Brownlee, that this council demand that the Legislature of Ontario amend or repeal the present County Council Act and instead frame an act that will give fair representation in this county.