

A UNIVERSITY AND HOSPITAL ZONE.

Representatives of McGill University are reported to have conferred with Ald. Weldon on Wednesday regarding the proposed erection of a half-million-dollar convention hall over the McTavish street reservoir. Alderman Weldon is, we understand, the father of this project. In the discussion on Wednesday there appears to have been expressed some doubt as to the suitability of the site, the criticism coming, presumably, from the University authorities present. If these authorities had used this conference for the purpose of voicing a vigorous and determined protest against the project they would have been serving the interests of the University much more wisely and effectively.

To construct a public auditorium over a reservoir from which so many people of Montreal draw their drinking water is objectionable upon sentimental grounds, but there are other and more practical considerations of sufficient importance to condemn it. The site is in the heart of the university and hospital district and its proximity must inevitably hamper the work of both institutions, this being particularly true of the Royal Victoria Hospital, whose patients require quiet surroundings as a condition essential to their satisfactory recovery. A public auditorium of the kind suggested cannot be other than a source of noise, which, however harmonious, must interfere with the quiet of the hospital and the classroom, and there is no guarantee that the noise emanating from such a place would be harmonious in every instance; in an age of jazz music this is too much to expect. Moreover, the increased traffic which the presence of such an auditorium would create, the honking of horns and the grinding of brakes, and so on, would in itself constitute an objection sufficiently strong to ensure the summary rejection of the project by all those who have the true interest of the University and the Hospital at heart. Ald. Weldon, perhaps, is indifferent to these considerations, but the University authorities ought not to be, and some much more forcible protest should have been uttered by them than what appears to have been a rather mild and uncertain criticism.

The public are not inclined to be tolerant of the expressions of vandalism which, in the minds of some aldermen, are mistaken for civic improvements. A sufficiently striking example of this crudity of thought has been afforded in the admission of tram cars to the mountain, and in the erection of some sort of pavilion, or eating house, on the mountaintop. Mount Royal was intended to be preserved as a natural and unspoiled recreation ground for the inhabitants of the city and its visitors, and as such it was maintained until recent years. Little by little, however, encroachments are being made which, under the guise of improvements, are robbing the mountain park of its most attractive feature. If Ald. Weldon and his associates in the City Council approve of this kind of thing, the public do not, and the sooner these mischievous activities are discontinued the better it will be for all concerned. The proposed auditorium over the reservoir is one more example of aldermanic indifference to considerations of public and private comfort which the people's representatives should, in all circumstances, observe and respect. The convention hall proposal ought to be abandoned, whether the University authorities discharge their responsibilities in this regard or not. More than that, the city should create a university and hospital zone embracing all the territory up from Sherbrooke street and between University and McTavish streets. In respect of other hospitals in the city the same principle should be invoked as far as local conditions permit, but so far as the Royal Victoria is concerned, situated as it is close to the University and operated in association with it, there are no difficulties to be overcome. As to an auditorium or convention hall there are plenty of other sites available, equally central, much more accessible, and in every way more appropriate for the purpose.