

The Canadian Engineer

Established 1893

A Weekly Paper for Canadian Civil Engineers and Contractors

Terms of Subscription, postpaid to any address:			
One Year	Six Months	Three Months	Single Copies
\$3.00	\$1.75	\$1.00	10c.

Published every Thursday by

The Monetary Times Printing Co. of Canada, Limited

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THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS

PATRONAGE really appears to be doomed in the Public Works Department under the direction of Hon. Frank B. Carvell, now Minister of Public Works. Contractors throughout the country will read with considerable satisfaction the official correspondence recently tabled in Parliament and subsequently published in the "Toronto Globe." On motion by an opposition member, the administration tabled correspondence between the Minister of Public Works and the Conservative-Unionist member for Ottawa, A. E. Fripp. Two months before the general election, Mr. Fripp wrote the new Minister of Public Works, asking that a certain firm in the former's constituency be placed upon the patronage list. The minister promptly replied as follows:—

"Your friends will have opportunity of tendering on any work coming within their line, but, so far as this department is concerned, there will be no patronage list in the future. As far as possible, everything will be done by the public tender and contract, and every member of the community will have an equal opportunity of working for the government. Efficiency and economy will be the guiding principles in carrying on the business of the department."

Soon after the general election Mr. Fripp again wrote the minister and suggested the names of certain individuals to act as employment agents on certain public works. The minister replied immediately upon receipt of the letter, stating that he was unable to agree with the suggestions made and saying that he could not and would not have his time taken up with small matters of patronage. He advised Mr. Fripp to take the same stand. The Ottawa member replied that his purpose was merely to get rid of the fifty or sixty people who crowd his office daily, and said that the people of Ottawa have lived on

patronage for fifty years, and that it would require some tact to eradicate the practice.

Mr. Carvell wrote to Mr. Fripp a week later, saying that he had given instructions regarding employment of the class of people referred to by Mr. Fripp, and stating that it would not be necessary for them to produce a letter from either Mr. Fripp or Dr. Chabot (junior member for Ottawa) or to use any other influence for the purpose of obtaining employment in the Public Works Department.

It is evident, however, that Mr. Fripp was still unconvinced that patronage had been banned, because on February 12th, 1918, he wrote Mr. Carvell asking that certain Ottawa concerns be given an opportunity of tendering for the construction of the new 700-room office building which the department proposed to build in Ottawa. In reply, Mr. Carvell wrote:—

"Every contractor, not only in Ottawa but in Canada, will be given the opportunity to tender. The contract will go to the lowest tenderer, providing the firm has the financial ability to carry out the work."

The "Toronto Globe" says that Mr. Carvell is to be congratulated upon his honest and businesslike stand, and *The Canadian Engineer* would second these congratulations. The Department of Public Works is the big spending branch of the administration, and if Mr. Carvell sticks to his announced policy of carrying out all public works honestly, impartially and efficiently, his administration of that department is likely to constitute a bright and shining spot in the Borden Government. This is particularly true if, at the same time, he really adheres to the policy which he outlined recently in a speech before the Ottawa Branch of the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers, when he said:—

"I propose doing nothing in my department except on the advice of the responsible engineers employed to give me that advice. . . . I have learned that the man who attempts to construct anything without taking the advice of technical men, is on a par with the lawyer who conducts his own case,—and I suppose you know the rest of it, he has a fool for his client. Being both a lawyer and a minister of public works, and knowing something of the consequences of not taking the best course in these matters, I have decided that so far as I am concerned, I will rely on the advice of my technical officers on all technical questions."

A CLOSED PROFESSION

IN a "Letter to the Editor" published on page 361 of this issue, C. E. W. Dodwell, of the Public Works Department, very interestingly outlines the struggles of the engineers in that department to obtain higher remuneration and some of the special privileges accorded to clerks and others but not to engineers. As a partial remedy for existing conditions, Mr. Dodwell suggests "closing" the profession. He says:—

"It is proper that membership in some one of the several classes in the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers should be required as a just and proper indispensable condition precedent to appointment in our service. . . . Membership in the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers is the only guarantee, test, diploma or certificate that a man is a qualified engineer."

If only members of the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers were to be allowed to practice engineering in Canada, the entire procedure of admission to the society would have to be changed. Graduation from a recognized engineering course or the passing of a national board's examinations, should then entitle any man to corporate membership in the society, without any voting or ballot-