

## The Constructive Policy of a Great Province

If conservation has any meaning—and it is a word that is conjured with by our nation builders—it can surely be applied to the administration of the Province of Quebec. Conservation in the great French Province means preservation and construction. Right from the great timber limits to the magnificent roads intersecting the Province are tangible records of the governmental policy as practised during the last twelve years. Essentially of a conservative nature so far as taking up new systems, French Canada, through its government, having been once convinced of the wisdom of any constructive scheme shows no hesitation in its adoption, with the result that to-day the Province of Quebec is not only in the vanguard of social and material progress, but in that very small company of states whose bonds are gilt-edged. Quite recently in the House of Commons one of its most prominent members made the statement, without contradiction, that the bonds of the Province of Quebec stood as high, if not higher, than the Dominion of Canada.

There are reasons for this apparent contradiction—on the one hand, social reform to almost the last degree; on the other hand, financial stability—and the reasons are statesmanship and commonsense. Whatever racial or religious prejudices the French-Canadian may have—and he has them just as his English-speaking compatriot living in other parts of Canada has—he never lets them control his sense of material progress; and he has confidence in his government, and his government has repaid this confidence during the last decade by legislation which for sanity, commonsense and vision is equal to any Anglo-Saxon legislation passed in any part of the world. What is more, this legislation has not been passed to be afterwards placed in the vaults of dead laws, but has been and is being put into force by a vigilant and progressive administration. This is the more remarkable when it is understood that there is practically no opposition. In ninety-nine out of a hundred cases, leaders with such majorities as has Sir Lomer Gouin always had since he came into power in 1905, would have got into a state of “dry rot” at least, but this great French-Canadian has throughout his leadership shown a statesmanship worthy of the best traditions of the British Empire. He has never lost his head, and he is to-day the apostle of commonsense. He has the ability, given to few leaders, to surround himself with the right kind of colleagues and subordinates.

The reason for this appraisal of the Premier of Quebec is not just to give adulation to a politician—as such he has no interest in an article in a Journal that has nothing to do with party politics—but to give our readers an idea of the personality of the man who has been the principal factor in the introduction and the carrying out of the reforms that have placed the Province of Quebec in the vanguard of public progress.

### *Good Roads.*

As an example of this progress, one could give the good road policy of the government, which has made the province the easiest one in Canada to travel over, and has already placed many hundreds of thousands of dollars into the pockets of the inhabitants from visiting tourists alone. In the year 1911 legislation

was passed to spend \$15,000,000 on main road construction to be spread over a period of years. When the war broke out the work went on just the same, and in 1916 the fifteen million were supplemented by another \$5,000,000 for maintenance. Every dollar of the \$20,000,000 when fully used will have been properly spent. Because of this generous aid to good roads Quebec has to-day, besides its splendid permanent highways (aggregating 1,300 miles) running between the principal urban centres, about 35,000 miles of good public roads intersecting every part of the province. The result is that every city, town and hamlet are linked up to one another, the farmers have easy access to the markets and city people can really get in personal touch with the country life of the Province. As an investment the \$20,000,000 voted by the Legislature for the purpose of road construction and maintenance has been more than repaid in the increased prosperity of the people.

### *Department of Municipal Affairs.*

Another example of the enlightened administration of Quebec was the establishment last year of a Department of Municipal Affairs. The legislation governing this department, which is under the charge of the Hon. Walter Mitchell, K.C., (who is also Provincial Treasurer of the Province) and Mr. Oscar Morin, K.C., acting as Deputy Minister, is probably the most advanced in Canada and though the department itself is still in the babyhood stage its strong administration has already had a wholesome effect on local government. And so one might go on taking up every department and showing in each one reform after reform that has taken place towards the one end of good public administration. If there is any weakness at all in the administration of Quebec it is in its educational system. The weakness lies not in the facilities for the higher branches of education, which in many respects, such as the classics, are better than in the other provinces, but in elementary teaching, which is necessarily spasmodic, because it is not compulsory. At the same time, let it be said that in the urban centres many of the elementary schools, both Catholic and Protestant, are right up-to-date in their curriculum and appointments. So far as the teaching of culture is concerned, it would be hard to find better schools than in old Quebec. Practically every convent has its school for the teaching of those accomplishments that are so necessary in the make-up of our ladies, and which are so appreciated by every cultured mind. These convent schools draw their scholars from all over Canada and the United States. But still taking the modern conception of the meaning of education as a criterion, Quebec is behind, but even this drawback will soon belong to the past, because of the agitation that recently took place in different parts of the Province and the legislature for compulsory education. To disabuse the minds of our readers in other parts of Canada who are under the impression that in the French schools of the Province no English is taught it would be well to state here that “the teaching of English is included in the course of study for ALL primary (French) schools. On the other hand, a French course is included in most English schools. According to statistics, the number of places of learn-