

Editorial

APPOINTMENT OF ALIEN ENGINEERS.

Announcement was made last week of the appointment of Morris Knowles, of Pittsburgh, as consulting engineer to the Essex Public Utilities Commission,—a commission formed to devise a joint water and sewerage scheme for Windsor, Walkerville, Ojibway, Ford City, Sandwich and Sandwich West. This is a most flagrant example of the way in which competent Canadian engineers are ignored and aliens appointed to lucrative positions that could well be kept at home.

There seems to be no excuse for such an appointment. There are any number of consulting engineers in Canada who are thoroughly qualified to plan sewer systems, sewage treatments or waterworks. The sum of \$5,000 is allotted by the Act creating the above-mentioned commission, for the purpose of studying and reporting upon the sanitary problems of the district affected. Presumably Mr. Knowles gets the \$5,000. He is most likely a good engineer and will undoubtedly fully earn that fee—we understand that he is director of the sanitary engineering department of the University of Pittsburgh—but, in the present state of affairs especially, when Canadian engineers have been hit so hard by war conditions and yet have done so much toward the successful prosecution of the war, should not this \$5,000 be kept at home in common justice to our own citizens?

How different such a case as this is from the appointment of Prof. Swain as consulting engineer to the Railway Board of Inquiry! What a pity that the council of the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers did not select such a clear-cut case as this as the one upon which to base its protest against the employment of alien engineers.

It may be argued that Swain's appointment was by the Dominion Government and that such appointments as the Knowles case are by municipalities. To this we would reply that there have been other cases of appointments by the Dominion Government that were far less justified and that would have been better material for such a protest. Moreover, the Society's grievance does not lie altogether with the Dominion Government. Are not ten alien engineers appointed by municipalities in Canada to every one appointed by the Dominion Government?

It will be recalled that the editorial in *The Canadian Engineer* of September 28th upon this same subject did not endorse the appointment of Swain personally. Swain, himself, may or may not be the best man who could have been obtained. The points that we made were simply these:—

(1) That occasionally outside viewpoints or specialized services are desirable, and therefore some alien appointments are justified.

(2) That the position of consulting engineer to Canada's Railway Board of Inquiry is one of the occasional instances where the selection of an outside man may be the wisest appointment.

(3) That in regard to the principle of alien appointments in general *The Canadian Engineer* agrees most heartily with the spirit of the council's protest, but it disagrees with the selection of the Swain appointment as "Exhibit A" in the evidence, and it disagrees with many of the arguments quoted in the council's circular

regarding the Swain appointment and the propriety of appointing "any experienced engineer."

One paragraph in our editorial of September 28th seems to have been misunderstood by at least one reader. We refer to the sentence, "Yet, in this case, the appointment of Prof. Swain seems more commendable than the appointment to the chair of the Railway Board of Inquiry of a man who controls important railroad interests in Canada, and who has affiliations and competitions that cannot but unconsciously color his viewpoint."

We were not "commending the appointment of Swain in preference to some mythical person unnamed." What was meant was that the commission's appointment of Swain was certainly more commendable than the government's appointment of A. H. Smith as chairman of the commission. Mr. Smith controls important railroad interests in Canada. He has affiliations and competitions that are most likely to unconsciously color his viewpoint.

Why the chairman of the board should be an American railway president who is amongst the most formidable competitors for the transportation of Canadian products to the American seaboard, passes our Canadian comprehension. The New York Central controls the Michigan Central. Sir Robert Borden should earnestly study a railroad map of North America and note what important links in the New York Central System are the Michigan Central lines in Canada, and how a nationalization or liquidation of any or all Canadian railways might affect New York Central interests.

The appointment of an American engineer to the Railway Board of Inquiry is justifiable. But the appointment of that American engineer to work under the direction of an American chairman—particularly Mr. Smith—is another matter. Mr. Smith should resign from the board, or at least from its chairmanship. Sir Henry Drayton or Sir George Paish should be the chairman of Canada's Railway Board of Inquiry, or the people will not have abiding faith in whatever report the board may make.

PUBLIC UTILITIES AND PUBLIC OPINION.

Much has been written and many addresses have been delivered concerning what should and what should not be the relationship between public service corporations and public opinion. Public utilities in Canada, by which is meant such corporations as cater to a community, or a group of communities, have been subject, more or less, to the usual antagonism and misunderstanding that is the common lot of such enterprises.

Slowly, but none the less surely, however, a better understanding of the attitude which these two sides should assume, one toward the other, is gaining ground. In more recent years those in charge of public utility corporations, at least the most aggressive of them, are realizing as they never did before that their very existence depends upon the support of public opinion, and that no permanent success can be attained without a real effort to "cuddle up to John Smith." After all, does it not all hinge upon the company's simply taking into its confidence the public, without whom its franchise is worth-