

THE MONTREAL BUILDERS' EXCHANGE.

Building Employers' Associations, or as they are now generally known under the title of "Builders' Exchanges," are no longer in the experimental stage. The need of such organizations has been amply demonstrated by their rapid spread throughout every building centre on this continent. They meet the commercial need of the busy contractor in forming the nucleus of a co-operative association, all ready to hand; they also offer the opportunity of a closer and more friendly approach to social intercourse between employers in the same or kindred lines of business, instead of eyeing each other askance as their worst enemies.

Yet in spite of these obvious advantages in mutual co-operation, the apathy of Canadian contractors on the whole is to say the least, remarkable, and it can be stated without serious contradiction that the value of association has scarcely begun to be appreciated, far less realiz-



MR. N. T. GAGNON,
Past President Montreal Builders' Exchange.

ed, by the building employers of Montreal. It has been realized by the working classes, and every success they have had in improving wages and general conditions has been precisely in proportion to their loyalty to this principle of faithful co-operation. In every department of labor there is apparent even to the most casual spectator, a systematic and persistent determination to enforce co-operation and to effect solidarity of interests between all the various branches of labor organizations, and thus ultimately to capture and dominate the whole labor situation.

Whatever faults our American cousins may appear to have (and we have a few "glass-houses" here to remind us of a wise discrimination in throwing stones) they certainly have the virtues of enterprise and energy. They have been swift to appreciate the value of the tactics of the labor party in systematic organization, and to get together on matters of common interest; the large and flourishing Builders' Exchanges of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore,

Pittsburg, Buffalo and Cleveland are "living epistles" of what can be accomplished in this direction by determination and loyal co-operation, as contrasted with the "splendid isolation" affected too often by our own contractors.

The Builders' Exchange, of Montreal, had its origin in a meeting held at the Windsor Hotel, on 29th November, 1897, to discuss the desirability of forming such an institution. A representative gathering of leading firms in the building industry decided the question in the affirmative, and so the new-born institution was launched into the troubled waters of this mundane sphere.

A charter of incorporation was sought and obtained from the Quebec Legislature in June, 1899, and it is interesting to know that the original charter members—Messrs. Jas. Simpson, C. T. Williams, Peter Lyall, Amos Cowen, John Maclean, Frank Fournier and Walter P. Scott—are all with us yet as active members of the building fraternity. The first President was Mr. Jas. Simpson, followed in due order by Messrs. C. T. Williams, J. H. Hutchison and N. T. Gagnon. From a modest beginning of some thirty members the Exchange grew to 100 in its second year, and after undergoing the usual changes and chances of a somewhat chequered career, had reached its ebb-tide early in 1905. It was at this juncture that the Past President, Mr. N. T. Gagnon, took the helm, and with the support of other loyal members of the Exchange, determined on the appointment of a permanent Secretary and a general "forward" policy. This policy was amply justified by its successful results, and during the tenure of the secretaryship by its present occupant, Mr. J. H. Lauer, the membership has steadily risen to a higher level than ever before attained, with every indication of yet wider expansion, the only limit at present being its present quarters.

The Montreal Builders' Exchange desires to extend the scope of its usefulness in the future, and is well alive to the value of "Permanent Exhibits" to proprietors, architects and contractors alike. Additional space is the crying need of the Exchange just now to enable it to undertake this and other improvements, and the extreme values of real estate on St. James street will necessitate removal to a more reasonable locale; as soon as this can be accomplished the exhibition feature will not be long in becoming a "fait accompli."

J. H. Lauer,
Secretary.

There has been negotiations between the journeymen's union and Toronto master plumbers, the former asking an increase in wages from 35 cents per hour minimum to 40 cents. A large number of the masters have joined the Employers' Association in the absence of life in the old Master Plumbers' Association.

At a recent meeting of the Montreal Chambre de Commerce, the advisability of imposing a tax on United States contractors doing business in Canada was discussed. It was stated that Canadian contractors had to pay a tax in the United States. The matter was referred to the committee on industries and manufactures.