

# Commissioners or General Managers?

By H. E. M. KENSIT

**I**N a recent number of the *CANADIAN COURIER*\* there is an interesting article on "The New Town Manager," in which the suggestion is made that a school or college should be formed for the training of town administrators. It is pointed out that such officials should know the best that has been done at home and abroad and that the numerous towns springing up in the west should afford a demand for such graduates.

Such a course would undoubtedly be most valuable to young men intending to enter municipal work and to older men who had the opportunity to take it, but there is another side to the question that should be considered.

The appointment of a city commissioner affects the comfort and welfare of large bodies of people, the expenditure of large sums of public money, the present and future rate of taxation and the burdens of future generations. Surely the first essential would appear to be to secure mature experience and judgment, and there can reasonably be some doubt whether the appointment of young graduates fresh from college to administrative positions would be likely to give satisfactory results. It would indeed appear more advisable that they should commence the practice of their newly-acquired theory under the direction of an experienced commissioner.

The vital questions at the present time, when the movement for the commission form of civic administration is so rapidly spreading, would rather appear to be, what are the best and most suitable classes of men now available and what are the most necessary and desirable qualifications.

General managers and commissioners are evolved by "natural selection," not made or trained to order; furthermore, it is not merely a question of "town planning," but of general administration, of the operation of public utilities, of the raising of loans to the best advantage and similar duties.

No college training or special course gives experience, strength of mind, breadth of view, knowledge of men and affairs, tact, prudence, foresight, judgment—such qualities can only develop to a high level in any man from his having lived and worked a sufficient number of years, and without doubt, for any individual, the greater the number of years the greater the acquisition of most of the above qualities. Time may or may not improve a man's technical qualifications, but it must increase his knowledge of men and affairs.

The affairs of any municipality are complicated and involved. Not only so, but as is only too well known, in most cases there are powerful interests exerting pressure on the authorities to move in directions that will be of benefit to private interests but not necessarily to the benefit of the municipality or the community. This is an ever-present difficulty to be daily wrestled with by the general manager or commissioner, and he must be a man of strength, experience and tact to deal with it.

A college graduate specially trained by a course on civic problems, town planning, municipal finance and administration, etc., might possess exceptional knowledge of what has been done and is desirable, but where would be the experience and tact, the trained judgment to weigh and decide on large expenditures, the caution gained by past mistakes and the many other special qualities necessary to carry out his work with satisfaction to his employers and to himself. Furthermore, the most successful student might be absolutely lacking in the administrative ability essential to success in such work.

It would appear that general managers cannot be turned out of colleges ready-made however valuable a special college course might be. The general manager of any important concern is usually a man who has obtained his position from the possession of special qualifications that he possesses in greater degree than the average man. The only way to find out if a man has these qualities is to test him for years in the mill of competition—to judge him by his performance and record—and then to give him his opportunity.

It is probable that it will ultimately be found advisable in the larger cities to appoint at least two commissioners—one known as the Works Commissioner, to deal with streets, sewers and public utilities, and the other a Finance Commissioner, to deal with the issue of bonds and matters of assessment, taxes, licenses, and other such questions.

These two branches of city work are so totally different in their nature and require such different experience and qualifications that they do not naturally amalgamate and they would, together, in

most cases, involve more work than any one man could attend to to the best advantage.

The Finance Commissioner should have special practical knowledge of the conditions and methods affecting the issue of bonds, debentures and loans. An error of judgment in choosing the time, method or place of issue for floating bonds to the best advantage, to the equivalent of say 1 per cent. or even ½ per cent. of the value or of the interest payable, might more than outweigh much carefully-planned economy in the expenditure of the funds when secured. He should also be familiar with the law and methods of assessments, taxation, licenses, etc., but he would not need to have any knowledge of engineering matters, purchasing or contracts for works.

For positions as Works Commissioner there is available a class of men of whom a certain number would appear to offer a large proportion of the necessary qualifications in high degree—that is, engineers of varied experience who have occupied executive positions.

It can be shown by analysis of the accounts of municipalities that from 70 to 85 per cent. of the total expenditures of a city, both on capital and revenue accounts, are due to expenditures on what are essentially engineering works.

It will be readily admitted that one of the prin-

cipal duties of a Works Commissioner should be to examine the plans and specifications of all departments and approve or modify the proposed expenditure before the work is put in hand. No man without technical knowledge, no matter how good his commercial qualifications may be, can effectively grasp and criticize engineering plans, except a competent engineer. Such a man, in touch with all the engineering departments of a city, such as streets and sewers, water, electric power and street railways, but absorbed in no single one, should have many opportunities to modify, adapt and combine plans in a way to save his city many large sums of money and to see that expenditures are made with proper collaboration and foresight.

Furthermore, engineers who have held executive positions have usually had most valuable training and experience in analysing problems, in orderly and systematic methods of work, in drawing and supervising contracts, in purchasing supplies in the best markets on a strictly competitive basis, in adjusting conflicting interests, in weighing the ever-necessary compromises between what is most desirable and what is financially possible, and in managing men and matters generally. There is practically no experience coming within the range of an engineer of general practice that would not be of direct benefit to him in his work for the city.

It would therefore appear that a City Commissioner formed of a suitable engineer as Works Commissioner and a man of mature financial experience as Finance Commissioner should form a combination giving very high efficiency and economy.

## Canada To-Morrow

*Use of the Multiplication Table for National Purposes*

By NORMAN PATTERSON

**T**HE strong man plans for to-morrow and the strong nation does the same. Canada is on the threshold of a great development and it must lay its plans accordingly. The man who looks at the day's work and does it conscientiously may think that he is doing his whole duty. If so he is probably deceiving himself. "Don't put off until to-morrow what you can do to-day" is a good motto for children, but it is not of much value to men who are doing big things and who expect to do larger. Similarly it is not of much value to a nation. Canada has about eight millions of people at the present time and she expects to have fifty millions of people in a few years. We shall never be able to take care of this great growth unless we look carefully into the future and plan many years ahead.

The big commercial concerns have men in their head offices who are not thinking about what is occurring to-day, but who are devoting all their time, energy and ability to forecast what will happen next year and the year after. Many of them are planning ten years ahead. For example, the big railway corporations are getting charters from the Dominion Government for railways which will not be needed for a decade or more. They are also building railway stations, hotels, sidings, tunnels, and bridges which will take care of five and ten times the traffic that these roads now have. As with the railways, so with the steamship companies, the banks, the manufacturers, the builders of electric power lines and power plants, and all others who are engaged in undertakings of any magnitude. They are looking ahead five, ten, fifteen and twenty years and trying to provide for future demands.

The Dominion Government, the provincial governments, and the governing power in every large city in this country should be adopting the same plan as the large corporations. They should be building not for to-day, but for to-morrow. When we first began to build canals in this country we made the locks eight feet deep on the sill. In a few years we found it necessary to increase these locks from eight to fourteen feet in depth. To-day we find ourselves in sight of a tremendous expenditure to deepen them still further to twenty-four feet. We have already built two canals across the Niagara Peninsula to connect Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. We are now starting to build a third Welland Canal at an estimated cost of fifty millions of dollars. When each of these canals was built the people thought it was large enough for all time to come. The new canal is expected to be sufficient for all the demands of the twentieth century, but it is just possible that by the time it is finished we will discover that it is inadequate.

We have been told by many prophets that in 1950

Canada will have a population of fifty million people. Do we believe that? Do we realize what it means? Do we understand the duty which it imposes upon those who are living here now?

Let us figure it out. If Canada had a population of fifty millions then Montreal would probably have a population of two millions; Toronto a population of one and a half millions; Winnipeg and Vancouver one million each, and so on. Do you think that Montreal is planning for that population or that any other of the cities mentioned is making preparations to take care of the people which are sure to come in the next thirty-five years?

When Canada has fifty million population the Canadian Government will be spending about a billion (or a thousand million) dollars each year, instead of 175 millions as at present. Every member of parliament will have about five times as many jobs and positions to hand out to his followers as he has now and five times as many claimants for them. The railways will be carrying about ten times as many people every day as they are carrying now. They will require ten times the number of locomotives, passenger cars, and freight cars. They will have ten times the number of employees. If the Canadian Pacific Railway keeps on growing at the rate it has been growing it will then be paying wages to about five hundred thousand people a day.

**I**N 1912 Canada produced a little over 200 million bushels of wheat; when she has fifty millions of people she should be producing 1,000 million bushels per annum, or a third more than is now produced annually by either Russia or the United States, the two great wheat-producing countries of the world.

In 1902 we had 18,000 miles of steam railway; in 1912 we had 26,000. In that ten years we added 8,000 miles of railway. If we keep on building railways at that rate we shall have 58,000 miles in 1950, or enough railways to make an iron belt around the waist of old Mother Earth; another around the poles and still have enough left to go twice across Canada.

To-day Canada has only two persons to a square mile, while the United States has 21 and England and Wales 558. By 1950, if we get the fifty million people, we will have fourteen people to the square mile, or two-thirds as many per square mile as there are now in the United States.

To-day Canada has 33 million acres of land under cultivation; in 1950 we should have 150 millions under cultivation if the people do not all flock into the towns and cities. The total value of the wheat crops in Canada last year was estimated at

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