

and Montreal has property which, if taxed more, will yield the necessary revenue. Montreal therefore is not bankrupt, but the city's financial position is one of serious embarrassment. It is hardly surprising that many influential citizens, despairing of betterment through the usual municipal channels, are appealing to Sir Lomer Gouin, Premier of Quebec, to legislate the existing municipal government out of existence and install a Board of Commissioners appointed by the Provincial Government, to whom shall be given absolute authority for a term of five years. Desperate diseases sometimes require desperate remedies. In this case what is asked for is the establishing of a system of autoeracy. Our sons are fighting in France and Flanders "to make the world safe for democracy." Nobody seems to be able to make democracy safe for Montreal.

New York is once more in the throes of an exciting city election. The big city has a habit of getting into municipal trouble, especially when its affairs fall into the hands of Tammany Hall, the Democratic organization which, notwithstanding its many scandals, always exercises a powerful influence in politics. The present Mayor, Mr. John P. Mitchell, has rendered good service and a large number of the leading citizens of all parties desire his re-election. Under the curious "primary" system that prevails Mr. Mitchell became a candidate for the Republican nomination, but to the surprise of most people was beaten by Mr. William M. Bennett. Mr. Mitchell is now to be nominated as an independent candidate, strongly supported by such leading Republicans as W. H. Taft, Charles E. Hughes and Theodore Roosevelt. Tammany has nominated Judge Hylan, who is supported by the Hearst newspapers. Mr. Mitchell has antagonized the foreign element, including the Irish extremists, an interesting feature of the campaign inasmuch as Mitchell himself is a grandson of John Mitchell, who was exiled from Ireland many years ago. The Republican nominee, it is believed, has small chances. The fight promises to be between Messrs. Hylan and Mitchell, the latter of whom, in a phrase likely to be remembered, declares his intention to "fight Hearst, Hylan and the Hohenzollerns." The contest attracts an interest that is nation-wide. Independent public opinion seems to run strongly towards Mitchell.

In Philadelphia municipal affairs have taken on their worst form. In a civic election a riot occurred in which a detective was shot, and the startling charge is made that the crime was committed by gunmen brought in from New York with the knowledge and consent of the mayor of the city.

A Minister of Public Health

THE Toronto Globe very cordially endorses the proposal made by several medical societies that to the present governmental organization at Ottawa there be added a Minister of Public Health. That too little attention is paid in our country to questions affecting the health of the people, that there is a vast amount of preventable disease, that there is need of reform, especially in the direction of giving the babies of the land a better chance of life, and that in several other respects there is need for better conditions than are found in many quarters—all this and much more may be admitted. Every well directed movement for improvement in these

important matters will command general public interest and sympathy. The representations made by the medical societies are, of course, entitled to much respect and consideration. But one may well doubt whether these societies have made a wise recommendation as to the means by which the desired end can be served. It is far from clear that their good intentions would be effectively carried out by the appointment of a Dominion Minister of Public Health. The Globe thus states the argument for the appointment of such an official:

"A Dominion Minister with adequate authority to match his scientific knowledge has been asked for by the Academy of Medicine, by the Ontario Medical Council, and by the Dominion Medical Council. The Dominion Government has been memorialized on the matter. To the sane mind of a layman such an appointment, that would secure for the public a competent and responsible leader in matters pertaining to public health, commends itself. The exponents of this idea before the Canadian Public Health Association at Ottawa the other day were justified in their demands by the facts which every observant layman knows right well. Individual medical health officers may be wholly competent, but the scope of their authority is often so narrow that the larger problems involved in the health of the nation never can be given adequate treatment."

It will be observed that our Toronto contemporary bases the argument on the assumption that the creation of such a department will give the country a Dominion Minister, possessing a "scientific knowledge" of matters concerning the public health. But is not this quite an unwarranted assumption? What reason is there for believing that, for our governmental system, the ministerial head of a Department of Public Health would be an expert in hygienic science? We have other departments, the titles of which imply that the heads of them have a special knowledge of their subjects, but we know from long experience that this implication is delusive. We have a Department of Agriculture, but only rarely has it been presided over by a man who possesses "scientific knowledge" of the subject. We have a Minister of Railways, but never in the whole history of the country, as far as we remember, was the post held by an expert railway man—engineer or manager. We have a Minister of Militia, but rarely is the post held by a soldier. If a Minister of Public Health be established the place will usually be filled by some respectable citizen who knows no more about the science of health than the ordinary man on the street. If there happen to be among the members-elect a medical man of "scientific knowledge" the probability is that considerations of a political, provincial, racial or religious character—considerations which cannot be ignored in the making of Cabinets—will bar him out from the office.

We fear that the creation of the position would not give the country in the minister's office the "scientific knowledge" desired, but would be the excuse for adding largely to the expense of government without producing any real advantage to the public.

There is a question as to how far the Dominion authorities have the constitutional right to deal with matters of public health. Quarantine and marine hospitals are specifically made subject to Dominion laws. Apart from these matters, hospitals, asylums and oth-

er charitable institutions are subject to Provincial laws. A Dominion Minister of Public Health would find that, in many cases, the things that he desired to do came under the Provincial law and he could only act effectively through the Provincial Government. There is enough in this constitutional situation to raise doubt as to the wisdom of taking the action proposed by the medical societies. But if some larger measure of co-operation between Dominion and Provincial powers be deemed desirable for the promotion of the public health, it does not follow that a Dominion Department is required. There are medical men already in the Civil Service who, if requested, could advise as to what is desirable and practicable. If they are too busy, let a special officer be appointed and attached to one of the existing departments. The establishment of a Dominion Minister of Public Health would mean the creation of a new Department, with Minister, Deputy, Secretary and numerous officials, and in various ways, a large additional expense, all to no practically useful purpose. There are Departments enough at Ottawa now, the Lord knows, without adding to them in the way proposed.

A Growing Western Force

THE West is the fruitful mother of progressive and radical ideas. Perhaps the most striking illustration of this to-day is the rise of the farmers' movement which has led to the organizing of what is now known as the Non-Partisan League. It is in the Western United States that the organization has come most permanently into notice, but it has extended its operations into the Canadian West. In the last Provincial elections in Saskatchewan the League put forth several candidates, none of whom were elected. The Saskatchewan Government had done much in the direction of meeting the farmers' views. Several men prominently identified with the farming industry were in the Provincial Cabinet. There was, therefore, less room than there might have been in some other quarters for the work of the leaders of the new movement. That, no doubt, accounted for the small success of the League in the electoral contest. Experience, however, has shown that in the Western country such movements though temporarily defeated, persist and gain strength. The League will doubtless be heard of again in Western Canadian politics. Meanwhile just across the border in the American State of North Dakota, the League has put forth its greatest strength, with surprising success. The politics of the State, both local and federal, are dominated by the new organization. The League's candidate was elected to the office of Governor of the State. A League man has been sent from North Dakota to the United States Senate, where, by the way, he has won some notoriety by his pronounced pro-German sympathies, and the State is represented also in the lower House of Congress by a League member. The party has lately held a National Convention at St. Paul to devise means of extending its operations. The State of Texas is expected to be taken in hand as North Dakota was. The Non-Partisan League is a political force to be reckoned with in the Western States, and Canada is not likely to be neglected by its missionary efforts.