

WATER SUPPLY.

Water Commissioner Raymur has made a careful estimate of the expenditure necessary to improve the water supply of Victoria. He puts the cost of improvements at about two hundred and eighty thousand dollars, with possible reductions in case his rather elaborate plans should not be adopted in their entirety. We think the Commissioner's paper must be regarded as nothing more nor less than a special plea for the adoption of the meter system, because the public is not favored with one word as to the probable cost of the installation and maintenance of close upon five thousand meters.

We have not been supplied with the estimated life of a meter in a state of efficiency. In fact that there are many factors which have a direct bearing upon the arguments for and against meters that the Commissioner is very careful not to touch upon.

We are told that the active life of meters may be set down at between ten and fifteen years. The Commissioner admits that a considerable percentage of them get out of repair. It is claimed that the cost of reading and repairing meters amounts to a mere bagatelle. It is said that adds nothing at all to the cost of the water to the consumer. This is hard to credit. In fact, we have very few people who will believe it. Possibly the same thing would be said if there were five thousand readings to make monthly. We prefer to take the position that there is some expense attached to the monthly examination of meters, and we are sure that if there were five thousand to attend a considerable staff of cleaners, repairers and readers would be necessary. Each instrument costs at least ten dollars. Installation adds something to the bill. Would eight thousand dollars a year be too much to estimate as the probable cost of this service? We think not when it is considered that the life of the plant is not on the average more than fifteen years.

The improvement the Commissioner estimates (and deprecates) at a cost of two hundred and eighty thousand dollars would in a sense be permanent. The alleged improvements he recommends would be mere makeshifts. He virtually asks why we should increase the supply of water now—there will be a similar agitation twenty years hence! We hope and believe there will be. We do not suppose for a moment that Victoria is going to stand still. Other growing cities are periodically making improvements in their water works. There are few of them as favorably situated as regards supply as Victoria, and in not one of them in Canada has the suggestion to install meters been made.

Commissioner Raymur is evidently plagued because he has not been permitted without protest to have his way in this matter. In his ill-temper he makes some extravagant and unwarranted statements. Whatever course be decided upon by the City Council, all the services that are regulated by agreement in every community. There are services in which justice cannot be done to supplier and consumer without calling in the aid of meters. This fact is quite as well known as is the nature of the service to which we allude. But that is quite a different matter from the indiscriminate and unjustifiable addition to the cost of water to the ordinary household under such a system as that proposed by the Water Commissioner of Victoria.

Now despite the barriers Mr. Raymur thinks he has set up to any improvements unless his pet scheme be carried out in its entirety, we think the City Council will follow a course in line with public opinion. If it refuses to sanction any further expenditure for meters until a thorough inquiry has been made into the present state and future prospects of Victoria's water supply. Mr. Raymur himself admits that it is but a matter of a short time until the question of an increased capacity in our mains must be met. Why not take the matter up at once and decide upon a system of policy approved by expert in the business? If it shall be established that Mr. Raymur's way is the only way, then there can be nothing for the ratepayers to do but bow their heads in submission. But it will be an extraordinary thing if the householders of Victoria, with water in great abundance on all sides of them, are for all time to have their supply doled out by the gallon. It will be a still more extraordinary thing if the cost of that supply is to be increased to the extent of \$8,000 a year by the maintenance of meters.

BORDEN'S BLUNDERS.

The opposition leader at Ottawa has been making rather a mess of the arduous job of directing the affairs of the great Conservative party. It may be that Mr. Borden is not altogether blameless. There are strong influences in his following which are closely allied with the C. P. R., and for rather unreasonable reasons these influences consider it to be their duty to oppose the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway scheme. Possibly if the leader had been at liberty to choose his own path out of the wilderness he would have taken a different route.

The purpose of the government, obviously, in arranging for the construction of a new transcontinental line, is not to injure the C. P. R., but to benefit Canada. In order that Canada shall

receive the greatest possible benefit it has been stipulated that the new line shall be from one end to the other a Canadian road. The company in its original proposition did not contemplate any such thing. The terminal points of the G. T. R. at the present time are in Portland, Maine, and Chicago, Illinois. The management wanted to confine the arrangement, with an extension to the rich wheat fields of the prairies and possibly to the Pacific coast. Such a connection would have been of benefit to Canada, but it would have carried many advantages to the other side which should be retained here. This fact appealed to the government, and it insisted that both terminal points should be in Canada, one on the Atlantic and the other on the Pacific coast.

Mr. Borden in his original objections to the project did not see any necessity for what he termed useless duplication of lines. He favored connection of the new line with the old one at North Bay, Ontario. That was the very thing the government objected to and that the G. T. R. desired. If carried out, the new road would have fed the American connections of the new company and there would have been absolutely no risks to the shareholders. It would have been a fine thing for the United States, it would have been a good arrangement for the company, and it would have been of benefit to the wheat-growers of the prairies, but it would have left all sections of the East just as they are today. Surely there must be a time coming for the development of the great unsettled portions of Northern Ontario and Quebec, as well as of Manitoba, the Territories and British Columbia. It will be an extraordinary thing if all the transcontinental railways of the future are to be confined to one narrow strip to the Atlantic coast through the United States.

Obviously Mr. Borden sees now that he made a mistake. He is going to move that the Grand Trunk Pacific shall be compelled under penalty to do its carrying business through Canada—very thing the government has had in view besides opening up new territory—the very thing the company must do in order to earn the interest on the cost of the eastern section of the line and pay dividends to its shareholders. The charges on the cost of construction must be met before dividends can be paid.

That is one mistake the opposition has made and now evidently sees was a mistake. It is blundering in another direction and in a manner which will surely have the most serious effect upon the future of the country. It is perfectly well known in the East that many settlers are pouring into the Northwest and that many of them are taking up land in regions they expect will be served by the new line. If the work be not proceeded with as speedily as possible great hardships may be caused upon millions of our citizens. And besides the progress of the country will be retarded. It is very important at this time that no unfavorable accounts will be sent out by settlers. Speaking on this point the leader of the Liberal party in British Columbia, Mr. J. A. Macdonald, of Roseland, who has just returned from the East, said to a representative of the Times:

"The country, both East and West, is particularly desirous that the Grand Trunk Pacific railway should be built without unnecessary delay. The fact that it is anxious to experience the benefits that are certain to follow the construction of another transcontinental railway. Mr. Macdonald also says that there is no definite time set for the Dominion general elections, but that whether they are held soon or late the return of the Laurier government with a large majority is beyond all doubt and question."

FRIESTATED.

Encouraged, probably, by the success which attended Premier McBride's declaration in favor of party lines and the prestige that has been gained by the Conservative party in British Columbia and the Dominion as a result thereof, Tories of Toronto decided that in a municipal by-election they would hold their own. They determined to find out whether the ratepayers would tolerate the introduction of party lines into municipal affairs. They said to themselves: "Here is a city which disturbs as much money annually as the Ontario provincial government. The settlement of the place is overwhelmingly Conservative. Why should the city dwellers in the midst thereof share in the offices or any of the good things which pertain to the distribution of patronage? Go to; as we are not permitted to partake of any of the spoils which emanate from Ottawa and as the prospects of our sharing in the sweets of office are very gloomy indeed, as Ross is holding on to Ontario with a pertinacity past all understanding, we must go in and possess this city for our own good." And so they declared in favor of party lines in municipal affairs. Their candidate, who had been uneaten for corrupt practices but a short time before, was defeated by about seven thousand of a majority. He was not overcome by a Grit. Elections were opened to the city being turned into a preserve for the distribution of spoils to hungry Tories out of office put a candidate representing the opposition to party lines, with the result stated.

The political system which has been in force in Toronto for many years and has

always been industriously worked in the interests of the Tory party in Dominion and provincial elections, has been completely broken by the investigation which has been proceeding for some months. The work of perspiration was carried out upon scientific lines. Even Chinese laundrymen who had never been in a polling station in their lives voted, according to the records. No doubt this artistic electorship work was directed by the gang which professes to be eager to redeem the whole of Ontario from the demoralizing influence of Premier Ross. Possibly when the electors of Toronto are permitted to express their real opinions at the polls it will be found that they are not so overwhelmingly Tory in sentiment.

SOME ALTERNATIVES.

The Times is pleased to observe that on the motion of Ald. Fell the City Council is going to take steps to secure its rights in what is left of the Goldstream water supply. We believe a high authority has expressed the opinion that in Elk Lake there is enough water to serve a city of greater population than Victoria is likely to possess for many years to come. We hope such is the case, and that it may be found possible to meet all demands of the future satisfactorily from the present source. But it is just as well to be prepared for all eventualities, and we doubt not that the Legislature will unhesitatingly comply with any request the city may make. Many men of practical knowledge unhesitatingly affirm that we should have gone to Goldstream in the first place. But it is useless to look so far back. Neither can we afford to let sentimental considerations stand in the way of an economical administration of the city affairs.

It is unhesitatingly affirmed that all the water we require can be delivered to the city mains by the Esquimalt Water Works Company at considerably less cost than under the present system, and that a much higher pressure is guaranteed. Our Water Commissioner evidently does not favor connection with the Esquimalt system, as he has not supplied the public with a statement which is by any means complete as a basis of comparison of the relative cost to consumers of operation of the present system and securing a supply direct from the private company. We have had no communication with the Esquimalt Company, but it is understood much better terms can be arranged than those set forth in Mr. Raymur's plan for meters. However, there is no doubt that the advantages of a change would have to be very great in order to induce the ratepayers to sanction such a course.

The more the matter is considered, the more the anomalies in the meter system as at present administered are revealed, the more imperative it appears to be that the City Council shall institute a thorough inquiry. There are several possible alternatives—and the meter system, to our mind, is the least attractive of them.

UNWISE TACTICS.

It is reported that the chief adviser and manager of the Conservative party, Mr. Graham, of the Montreal Star, an industrial organ which won for the party five out of sixty-two seats in the province of Quebec, has instructed his party in the House of Commons to obstruct the passage of the Grand Trunk Pacific Bill "to the last ditch." An election must not be held this year because in the present state of public opinion it is impossible for the Conservative party to win. If the test can be postponed for another year, there is no saying what may happen. A severe depression has overtaken Great Britain, signs of the coming of hard times are multiplying in the United States, there are substantial grounds for the belief that a wave of low business pressure may spread over Canada. It is true this is but a forlorn hope. Thousands of immigrants are arriving in the country weekly from the south and from across the sea. They are a superior class, most of them possessing sufficient of the world's goods to give them a start on their journey in this new world. If the inferior conditions and the harvest should be up to the average of the past few years, then all the hopes of office might as well be abandoned—unless of course the ruler of the universe should signify his displeasure at the stiffness of the people of Canada by visiting the country with earthquakes or other great public calamities.

We fancy the opposition to the Grand Trunk Pacific scheme will not increase the popularity of the party in any part of Canada. It may be that the East is not particularly eager to see the work proceeded with. We know opinion in British Columbia is so pronounced that Premier McBride and Hon. R. F. Green have adopted the part of wisdom and placed a plaster upon their mouths. If they do not favor the construction of the line, at least they are diplomatic enough to say nothing against it. The task of maintaining their own positions against an overpowering public opinion is sufficiently difficult without adding to their unpopularity by raising objection to a measure which is practically unopposed.

In the Northwest there are substantial grounds for the belief that water routes must be depended upon to carry the wheat of the prairies to market is met by the rejoinder that there are at the present time fifteen million bushels of the wheat of settlers in elevators and that the cost of storage to the farmer has been six cents a bushel. In about a month after the harvest is over fresh water navigation closes, with a large part of the products of the prairies sealed in for the winter. In any case a very large proportion of the crops must be carried to the seaboard by rail. The acreage under cultivation is being added to every year. The new line is therefore a pressing necessity. It is easy to imagine the feelings of the settlers at the opposition of Mr. Borden and his party.

HUMAN TRIUMPHS AND FAILURES.

The London World of April 29th prints an interesting description of two recent occurrences in the British House of Commons. The events were briefly referred to by the Associated Press. But there is a section of the public that is interested in more than a mere perfunctory chronicle of facts. For their benefit we quote from the World:

"The ex-Colonial Secretary was back from his holiday in time to hear Mr. Austen Chamberlain introduce his first Budget. For once the sun eclipsed the father, and nobody was happier in the House than the Colonial Secretary. He was given a cheer like Mr. Gladstone's time. Whatever others may think he knew his own position. His Treasury bench, pale, nervous, agitated, agitated—would do well. He was in the first general of good spirits. His speech was brilliant and was much in his eye."

It was interesting to note how Mr. Austen Chamberlain rose to his responsibilities, providing the grit that was in him, avoiding financial juggling in order to make out things were better than they are, boldly grasped the nettle, put on taxation because it was necessary, but did it with a lucidity of speech and a diffidence of manner which captivated the House. It was more interesting to note the confidence of the speaker, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain sat on a bench below the gangway, a flicker of a smile playing about the corner of his lips, while he kept his eye on his son. It was a smile of quiet confidence at first, but soon it grew into a broad smile of paternal pride. Stagnant under his father's gaze, Mr. Chamberlain often shows the rough side of his nature to the House. It was a ray of sunshine to note the confidence of the speaker, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain sat on a bench below the gangway, a flicker of a smile playing about the corner of his lips, while he kept his eye on his son. 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