

REFLECTIONS

By THE EDITOR

Commission Government.

CANADIAN cities are working slowly but surely to some kind of commission government. St. John and Lethbridge have adopted the Des Moines charter, an elective commission without a board of aldermen, coupled with the referendum and recall. Regina, Calgary, Moose Jaw and Edmonton have a compromise system, a yearly elected council and two permanent commissioners. Montreal sticks to the old form of a "Board of Control," but elects it for four years. The Board of Control thus becomes an elective commission. London has just adopted the two-year term for aldermen and a two-year term for controllers. One-half of the aldermen and one-half of the controllers are to be elected each year.

Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton will probably follow London's example in the near future. The yearly election in large cities seriously interferes with efficiency. The yearly elected alderman and controller becomes a mere vote-gatherer. He has not time nor opportunity to initiate and pursue a continuous and effective business policy. Such a system is all right for towns and villages, but it is vicious in large cities.

Are We a Warlike People?

CANADIANS are not a warlike people. They are gentle as lambs. They would not enlist in a navy. At least, so say certain of our leading statesmen.

Yet there is something about the Canadian people which makes me doubt these statements. For example, I am quite positive that seventy-five per cent. of our young men were greatly interested in the contest at Los Angeles between McCarty, the new "White Hope," and Al. Palzer. I believe that most of them read at least one account of the contest, and I have not heard that any of them fainted away when they read the following paragraph:

"Palzer's eyes were almost closed, his mouth, nose, cheek and ears cut, and he presented a bloody and battered appearance. Only his capacity for standing punishment saved him from being knocked out, for McCarty landed on his jaw repeatedly."

A few nights ago I went to see a professional hockey match. I didn't see many people shudder when one player got a nasty cut in the lip or when another got "bumped" so hard that he had to retire for a rest. Even when a player deliberately skated over to a prostrate enemy and laid his scalp open with a blow from his hockey stick, no one fainted. There was a little excitement, of course, but few of the thousands present left the arena.

Again, is there anything more popular in this country than a hard-fought football match or lacrosse game? Do either the young men or the young women who go to these games show any dislike of the supreme physical contests which such games involve?

It may be quite right to say that Canadians are for peace and not for war. I hope it is true. Nevertheless I am quite prepared to believe that if Canada was ever forced into a conflict, her sons would give as good an account of themselves as any other set of sons the world over. They did in 1885, although the Rebellion was a fairly simple proposition. They did during the Boer War, when many young men shed tears of regret that they were unable to get into the ranks.

As for a Canadian navy, I believe if it were made popular and thoroughly national, there would be little difficulty in getting recruits. But to be popular, such a navy must be favoured by all classes of the community. A Canadian navy which is supported by one political party only, is not likely to be a success. That is why the CANADIAN COURIER has advocated a non-partisan settlement of the navy problem.

Some Charges Answered.

TWO correspondents have criticized the CANADIAN COURIER's attitude on certain points in the navy. A Toronto reader says: "You know that all those who vote for or try to sustain the Laurier Opposition are anti-British." In the letter from the other, sent from Winnipeg, there is the same attempt to befog the issue by charging that criticism of the Borden navy means disloyalty. Let me answer this by saying, again, that the

CANADIAN COURIER is not opposed to Mr. Borden's gift of Dreadnoughts, nor opposed to these ships being built in Great Britain. Surely that is a clear statement.

Again, a criticism of Mr. Borden's policy should not be considered a boost for Sir Wilfrid Laurier's policy. Surely it is conceivable that even a good Conservative could criticize some phases of the Borden policy without being termed disloyal. Surely the Borden Government is willing to have free speech retained a little while longer in this part of the British Empire.

Finally, I resent the charge, wherever it may originate, whether in the House of Commons or in any lodge room, that the Liberal party or their leaders are disloyal. This is a low, mean, cowardly charge against some of the best citizens of Canada, which should not be made by any respectable citizen.

And Also Some Questions.

A correspondent in New Westminster asks:

"How many Canadian sailors have been on those toys, the Niobe and Rainbow, and how many are on them now? Will the Editor disclose? The Egeria was brought to Vancouver eighteen months ago as a training ship. Will the Editor inform us how many boys have presented themselves for training and how the movement has been supported?"

It is a pleasure to be asked to answer these questions. Frankly, I do not know, and frankly I am not interested. If it will please my friend, I am prepared to admit the service is unpopular and unattractive.

Let me tell a little story of my own. I was "brought up" in a small town in Western Ontario. In that town there was a company of militia, with a captain, two lieutenants, one or two sergeants and three or four privates. I was taught by my parents and by the general sentiment of all the other Methodists in the town that if I joined that company of militia I would become a drunkard and die in prison. Being a good boy and somewhat inclined to be religious, I did not join that company. Some years afterwards, at the University of Toronto, I changed my mind about the militia and I joined old "K" Company of the Queen's Own Rifles. After that I served nineteen years in the militia. In short, service in the militia was unpopular in my native town and it was popular in the city of Toronto.

When the Canadian navy is supported by both political parties and when the country generally



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approves of naval service, there will be no dearth of recruits. Until there is a non-partisan settlement of the navy question there can be no popularity for the *Niobe*, the *Rainbow* and the *Egeria*. Hence the CANADIAN COURIER has argued continuously for a non-partisan settlement of this question. For the same reason, a petition in favour of a non-partisan naval policy was signed by three hundred fairly prominent citizens and sent to Premier Borden and Sir Wilfrid Laurier, last autumn.

Civil Service Reform.

EVERY person is delighted that Sir George Murray, the English expert brought over by the Dominion Government, has recommended that the outside civil service should be brought under the Civil Service Commission. The politicians have been delaying this reform, but it is sure to come.

Mr. James Lawlor, secretary of the Canadian Forestry Association, says that there can be no effective fire-ranging until the 2,000 fire-rangers are chosen by a commission instead of by politicians. The rangers of to-day are inefficient. In the United States this reform has greatly benefited the forestry service during the past six or seven years.

Every other service in Canada would be benefited in the same way. Our customs houses, post offices, canals, lighthouses and so on would be better served. And over and above all this abominable party patronage system which saps our political life would be largely eliminated.

The British Preference.

SOME rumours from Ottawa indicate that the Liberals may introduce a measure looking to an increase in the British preference. If the Liberal party has made up its mind on this question, well and good. If it has not, it should not bring forward such a measure for political purposes. It would be peanut politics. The Liberals may be smarting under the imputation that they are not as loyal as the Tories, but such a movement would avail them nothing. Time and the good sense of the people may be trusted to decide all questions of loyalty and disloyalty.

Taxation in Ontario.

SIR JAMES WHITNEY has decided that Ontario is not, at present, to adopt any of the new-fangled taxation ideas of Henry George or Lloyd George. Sir James has an adversion to Georges. He fought so long against Hon. (now Sir) George Ross that the name does not appeal to him. The only exception he will make is that of King George V., but that is the exception which proves the rule.

In spite of Sir James' decision, the principle of taxing improvements at a lower rate than land is steadily gaining ground. The Toronto branch of the Manufacturers' Association has since reaffirmed its belief in that idea. It wants increased taxation on unimproved land and real property generally. The tax-payers of Toronto voted on the question on January 1st and by an overwhelming majority decided in favour of it.

There is this to be said for Sir James: He believes that the present Assessment Act, if properly interpreted, would enable municipalities to accomplish what they most desire. He has promised to send out instructions to assessment commissioners which, he thinks, will bring about part of the reform desired.

There is no doubt, also, that something should be done to curb the municipal extravagance of the larger cities of the province. As has been pointed out, several times recently on this page, the cities have been able to raise the necessary revenue only by abnormal increases in their assessments. The consequence is that central property in Ottawa and Toronto has become so valuable that owners are able to get rentals which pay them not more than two per cent. on their investment. This state of affairs cannot continue. The assessment in Toronto and Ottawa has reached the limit, and both cities are face to face with a higher tax rate. When that comes the trouble will begin and a lot of people who now count themselves rich are likely to find that their reputed wealth has shrunk considerably. There are some real estate owners now driving automobiles who will likely find that automobiling is not as great a pleasure as they thought it was and they will go back to their old habit of riding on the street cars.

Improvement in methods of taxation is a question of economy. It is one form of economy. But people should not forget there are others. When tax reform comes it will be only one small element making for economy. The other elements must not be overlooked.