

# Compensation to Workmen

## Alien Contractors

### Technical Education

During the past month matters of considerable moment to Montreal contractors have come under the review of the Montreal Builders Exchange, upon which action has been taken by the Board of Directors, and as some of these matters possess more than local interest, it may not be amiss to give them more extended prominence through the medium of the CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER.

A subject of transcendent importance to all employers of labor, whether in the building or manufacturing, is the proposed act which will be reintroduced by the Attorney General, in the forthcoming session of the Quebec Legislature, respecting compensation for damages resulting from accidents to workmen. This bill proposes to change the principal of compensation from the English Common Law, which presupposes every one, "innocent until proved guilty," to that of the French Law, which will assume the employer guilty until he can prove himself innocent, it will regard each employer's trade as containing an inherent risk instead of as hitherto requiring the injured workman to prove "contributory negligence" on part of the employer.

This effect of this proposed volte-face cannot be too highly estimated by every employer; and all who have to deal with labor in any shape, should carefully examine this proposed legislation without delay and and take steps for their protection before it is too late. Copies of the act in French and English can be had on application to the office of the publishers of "Le Soleil," Quebec.

The second matter of interest that called for comment was the status of "alien" contractors in Montreal, from the view-point of equal taxation as local concerns. Some interesting correspondence took place on this subject with the City Council of Montreal, copies of which were also forwarded to the Provincial-Treasurer, in Quebec, and the Council of Architects in this city. Following is an extract regarding the matter from a civic standpoint.

30th October, 1906.

His Worship H. A. Ekers, Mayor of Montreal:

Worshipful and Dear Sir,—At the request of my Directors I beg to submit the following important matter connected with the large building interests represented by this Exchange to your early consideration.

We have been confronted for some years past with the spectacle of seeing foreign contractors coming into this city and taking contracts out of the hands of our local contractors and architects. Some five or six years ago, when the London & Lancashire Building and the McGill Medical Building were being erected (E. W. Bishop Co.) and the Bank of Montreal reconstructed (Norcross Brothers, both American concerns), the stand was taken, as you will see by the enclosed news cuttings at that date, that "patriotism" should be appealed to and such outside firms excluded. To-day we take a broader view, and ask the city authorities only that such non-resident

concerns should merely be put upon the same basis as permanent local firms.

The point we take issue on is this: Our local contractors are subjected to full local taxation, both for property and business taxes. These outside firms, on the other hand, are exempt from such taxes; they have, as a rule, no yards or premises; their business, which runs from tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars, is transacted either in the private boarding-house or hotel of a resident agent, who thus contributes to the city exchequer neither real estate or business tax, as the latter is collectable on the assessed rental of the premises, which in their case are non-existent. Above all, these outside contractors are exempt from the ten years' guarantee demanded in the case of local concerns, because as soon as the particular job is completed they flee to "pastures new," and any guarantee on their part vanishes into air. These important exemptions constitute a decided discrimination against the local concern, and by means of these very lessened charges often lose a contract to the latter. In addition, both the above firms failed over the prices they took the contracts at, and thus let in their local sub-contractors to settle with the proprietors the best way they could.

There are large contracts going on to-day on the same lines (of which I give you enclosed one example, and can give you a number of others in confidence). My Board asks you, as President of the City Council, to make our suggestions in the proper quarters (City Treasurer and Finance Committee) to equalize the present inequalities by imposing a special tax of say one-half of one per cent. (not on rental of office or premises, neither of which are adequate in such cases, but) on the actual price of the work contracted, which would be a fair assessment. No work can be commenced without a building permit, which should give the actual and not a fictitious value; or better still, the real price could be obtained by a sworn statement from the architect in charge of the work.

We have to-day the largest structures going up by foreign "Construction Companies," possessing nothing of more value in this city than a larger or smaller office room, useless for assessment purposes. The city needs revenue, and we consider that right here is a perfectly legitimate item for additional revenue.

Trusting that your honorable Council will take this matter into prompt consideration, I remain,

Yours respectfully,

J. H. LAUER,

Secretary-Treasurer.

The subject was also brought to the attention of the Province of Quebec Association of Architects, who in reply stated that the Council of the Association was of the opinion that the members of the Association are specially protected by charter, and regretted that the Association could not intervene in the matter.

The question of Trades Schools has become a "live" subject in local, civic and Provincial circles of late, and much prominence given to it in the press. In this matter we are far behind Toronto, not to mention the large cities of the State. As it is a question of supreme importance to employers in the Building Trades in view of the complete decadence of the former apprenticeship system, the Executive of the Builders Exchange recently addressed the following