

## CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS GATHER IN TORONTO

**Important Conference Discussed Organization, Uniformity Among the Provincial Societies and the Training of a Public Accountant.**

The gathering of chartered accountants at the King Edward Hotel, Toronto, this week, was not only an important event to an important profession, but was also a final seal upon the future harmonious relations among accountants throughout the country. In February, after seven years of disagreement between the Provincial and Dominion Associations of Chartered Accountants, differences were amicably settled. This week it was plainly evident that all bad feeling which might once have existed between individuals and associations had completely disappeared. The accountancy profession in Canada is one of much consequence. Our development in banking, financial, business, and commercial spheres makes it imperative that our chartered accountants shall be of the highest order, that the policies of the various provincial associations shall be uniform, and that their relations shall be amicable. The annual meeting of the Dominion Association was evidence that Canada's chartered accountants are living up to high ethical and business standards.

### From Coast to Coast.

Chartered accountants from all parts of the Dominion were gathered in Toronto for three days this week to participate in an important business conference relieved by pleasing social entertainment. The following associations were represented: The Association of Accountants in Montreal, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, the Chartered Accountants' Association of Manitoba, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nova Scotia, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of British Columbia, and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Saskatchewan.

A leading feature of the gathering was the reading of excellent papers and the discussion following. Mr. George Edwards, F.C.A., of the Ontario Institute, spoke on "Organization; its Objects and Their Attainment." Edwards traced the beginning of organized accountancy in Canada back some thirty years, when in July, 1880, the Association of Accountants in Montreal was brought into existence by a charter of the Quebec Legislature.

### Were Purely Provincial.

It was in the same year, and but two months previously, that the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales was granted a charter by the Imperial Parliament, under which a considerable number of local accountancy organizations were brought together as an incorporated society. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario, which had existed as an un-incorporated Society since 1879, obtained incorporation in 1883. The Chartered Accountants' Association of Manitoba followed in 1886, and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nova Scotia received the authority for its existence in 1900. For the first twenty years, therefore, in the history of organized accountancy in Canada, these corporations were purely provincial or local in their character, and it is not known that any effort at co-operation between these four societies was attempted prior to 1900.

In 1901, the Dominion Association of Chartered Accountants was incorporated by the authority of the Canadian Parliament, after a somewhat strenuous contest in which its promoters and all the existing societies took a more or less active part. The immediate result of the formation of the Dominion Association was to set up a new and not necessarily harmonious authority for professional standards of competency, practice, and conduct in the provinces where the existing provincial societies had for many years been carrying on their local work. The history of the next few years, with its instances of conflict of opinion and authority may, in the light of the settlement arrived at recently, be forgotten, and it is not my purpose therefore to do more than allude to conditions which did not for a time promise peace and harmony to the Canadian accountancy situation.

### Western Associations Formed

The motive, which prompted the formation of the Dominion Association, and the carrying on of its work upon independent lines for some nine years was clearly defined, but in the view of the many hardly workable or practicable rules, in view of the conflicting interests of the local societies, the representatives of each society contended for the point of view that they thought to be right, and out of a large store of experience and controversy our organization, as it exists to-day, has signed an enduring treaty of peace with all the local societies—of which it will henceforth be composed—and in whose interests its energies and authority will be exerted.

During the last decade there have come into existence the Institute of Chartered Accountants of British Columbia in 1905, and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Saskatchewan in 1908. These additions to organized accountancy

leave only three provinces unrepresented, namely, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Alberta. In these provinces the profession of an accountant seems hardly yet to have become a local necessity, the commercial demand having been supplied thus far by the chartered accountants of contiguous provinces. It is noteworthy, however, that the question is becoming a very live one in the province of Alberta, and an institute for that province will without doubt be the next addition to our family party.

### Designation of Chartered Accountant

A significant feature of organized accountancy in Canada at the present time is the unanimity with which all the societies named, both federal and provincial, have adopted the designation "chartered accountant," and have directed their attention towards securing public recognition for that particular name. All of the societies but one include the word "chartered" in their corporate name, and the society which is the exception to the general rule has a statutory provision entitling its members to use the words "chartered accountant." The unanimity among the societies in this respect is probably the most valuable asset which the Dominion Association now has, upon which to build its superstructure as the guardian of professional interests in our Dominion. The name is one which already carries with it a definite implication of capacity, and the Canadian public have no other standard to-day by which to measure a public accountant. To the Canadian societies alone the credit must be given for this achievement.

### Objects of Organization

Broadly stated, continued Mr. Edwards, the objects of organization by accountants in Canada, or elsewhere, should be twofold, namely (1) to improve the standards of efficiency and practice and (2) to render to the public efficient service.

The Dominion Association of Chartered Accountants has been allotted a very important part in the process of attaining these objects. These functions are elaborated in the declaratory clauses of the by-laws recently passed, which read as follows:

- (a) To secure the incorporation of provincial societies in provinces of the Dominion where none now exist;
- (b) To assist provincial societies in securing uniform legislation for the better protection and regulation of local professional interests;
- (c) To secure the adoption by provincial societies of uniform standards of examination and membership;
- (d) To arrange for reciprocal privileges between provincial societies for the benefit of their members;
- (e) To consider questions of ethics.
- (f) To secure harmony of action in all matters affecting the common interest, and generally to act in an advisory capacity to the provincial societies.

### Professions are Accessible

Mr. Edwards then discussed the question of the standard of chartered accountant. There seems no good or sufficient reason, he said, why any of our Canadian provinces should have two or more kinds of accountants than that they should have two kinds of lawyers, doctors, dentists, or pharmacists. These professions have been well served by organizations having exclusive powers—monopolies if you will—under legislative control, and the public have come to know that their distinctive titles and designations are not subject to scrutiny for fear there should be a string or a tag upon them somewhere which detracts from their value. Nor has the exclusive character of the authority possessed by the professional organizations named resulted in what is known as close corporations, for the fact is that these professions are accessible to everyone who may by impartial tests prove competency.

### Wide and Liberal Policy

It may be urged, therefore, that organization amongst Canadian accountants in the broadest sense will prove beneficial to the profession and to the public just in proportion as two definite lines of policy are kept in view and persistently advocated.

The first line of action it seems to me should be to settle upon a wide and liberal policy directed to making available to the best men in the Canadian profession membership in our local societies. This policy should be arrived at only after a full consideration of the conditions which gave rise to the formation of the many accountancy societies in Great Britain, the existence of which seems to have been the natural consequence of the unwise and dogmatic restrictions placed upon the membership of the English Chartered Society.