

The Replanning of Montreal

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ally followed, and the most direct route, and easiest grades and the cheapest right of way and construction are the governing factors, always with a keen eye to getting the inside track of a rival road. And so it is not to be wondered at if these railways, the greatest originators of traffic should themselves be least considerate of those kinds of traffic other than their own, or as mindful of public welfare or feeling as we may think they might be. But that is no reason why the public should neglect to hold up its end in the best way that it can.

It may be said that it takes railways to make a city, and there is nothing like railways to break one. Most of the great towns of the North West which before the advent of the railways were nothing but prairie, and since then have been called into being and sprung up into busy flourishing centres, and are now groaning in travail with the iron grip of their vitals, enmeshed as they are in network of rival railways. And this is equally true if less obvious in the greater cities of the East. The trouble is that the questions between the railways and the towns, and in particular the level crossing problem, is not usually settled on the ground of paramount interest or importance, but on the point of precedence, the simple matter of having got there first, and the railways usually have it, and their motto is "J'y suis, j'y reste." The City of Montreal has a big enough problem on hand in the questions of railways already existing, yet notwithstanding all the bitter experience of the past and of the present, it is doubtful if it is fully alive to what may be in store for it in the future, since there are many miles of such

lines projected and even approved by the Board of Railway Commissioners involving scores of level crossings with their perilous and paralyzing effects.

The railway question on the Island of Montreal is one that should not be left entirely to the railways even as regards the initiative, but should be a matter of the most careful study either by the city officials or by independent railroad experts conversant with town planning principles and acting on behalf of the city and in the public interests.

Parks and Playgrounds.

There is still one question that calls for remark and that is recreation, and especially parks and playgrounds. It is an outlay of course, there is no visible income, but it is doubtful if any money the city can spend can bring in a richer return. Coming out of the Windsor Hotel one day last summer a gentleman of considerable standing from the West remarked looking over on Dominion Square:—"Montreal has many valuable pieces of land, but I doubt if it has anything of such intrinsic value as that," and the force of this remark is brought home to us when we consider that judging from the value of adjoining property this square must be worth anywhere from \$10 to \$25 a foot. And the question rises in our minds "Would the City be willing to pay anything like that price for it now in order to turn it into a public park, or again, if it had not been for such a park would the bordering property have been anything like so valuable?"

And above all have we failed to understand that there are such things in life as are actually above and beyond all monetary consideration?

Montreal is at present not so badly off for parks and playgrounds so far as actual area is concerned. These are however not so well distributed as they might be, and the fear must be expressed that in-

adequate provision is being made for the future with a denser population. It is also to be regretted that no part of the magnificent river front has been conserved for this purpose, and that too in face of the fact that other large cities have shown us the commendable example of actually turning over areas used for commercial and wharfage purpose into recreation grounds for the people. It may be said we have the Back River to fall back upon, but real estate enterprise is carefully reserving that for private and individual exploitation and preserve.

Access to Mount Royal.

Without Mount Royal which is the crowning glory of the city to which it gives its name we would be poor indeed; and with it under existing conditions we are not much better off, since it is practically inaccessible excepting to a few of the privileged ones who are rich enough to own or hire a conveyance or strong and healthy enough to be able to walk there, and by them their mountain is highly appreciated and very jealously guarded from intrusion. There is however a less fortunate class which consists of the great majority hailing from the densely packed tenement districts and even from the slums. These people have nowhere else that they can go, and since the mountain is the heritage of the entire populace their equal rights and greater necessity should entitle them to whatever special privilege is to be had. From time to time there has been renewed agitation to provide adequate, easy and cheap means of communication with the top of the mountain for all classes without discrimination, and it has always been met with a curtain barrage of protests from the well entrenched batteries of the privileged ones with their huge explosives in the press. In default of more solid

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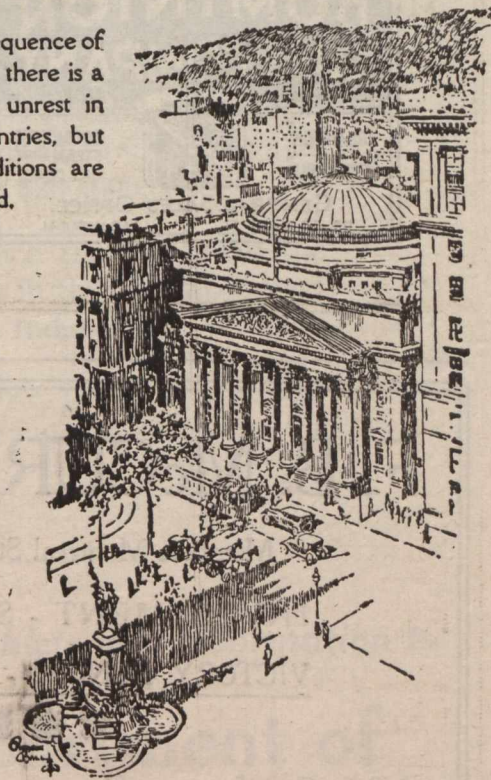


TO THE WORKERS OF CANADA

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