

Prominent Topics.

Board of Control. Alderman Mederic Martin's motion in the Montreal City Council to abolish the Board of Control was defeated by a vote of 22 to 4, only three of his colleagues supporting him. The Council might now get, down to business, deal promptly with the handful of obstructionists who are constantly hindering public business and co-operate loyally with the Controllers for the public good.

Hudson's Bay Railway. The Government has let the contract for the construction of the only remaining section of the Hudson's Bay Railway.

Railway and work on the contract will be commenced immediately. The last section, extending from Split Lake to the Bay, is 105 miles long to Port Nelson and 245 miles long to Fort Churchill. The line will be built to Port Nelson unless, upon further investigation by departmental engineers, it is considered impracticable for any reason to establish a terminus at that point. There is yet some information to be supplied by the engineers before the selection of Port Nelson becomes final.

The chief recommendation of the Port Nelson route is that it is eighty miles shorter and by so much less costly for grain transportation. Whether the Hudson's Straits route will ever be a serious factor in the shipment of grain to Europe is an open question. Meanwhile there is no doubt about the importance of the opening up of the country around Hudson's Bay. Four railways are actually under construction to the Bay and the building of a fifth, that is to say, the extension of the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario, almost immediately, may be regarded as a certainty. The fisheries of Hudson's Bay and its tributary rivers, the minerals, the lumber and the agricultural lands that will be made available by the new railways are sources of enormous wealth, and even if the Straits route is not a success the railways need not be a failure.

Steel and Copper. If the demand for steel and copper is any criterion of the state of business on this continent, and we think it must be so, the tide of prosperity is running high. According to the Wall Street Journal the demand for steel continues in excess of the ability of the various steel companies to supply it, and the tendency of prices is upward. A prominent steel manufacturer estimates that the United States Steel Corporation, in the first quarter of next year, will show net earnings in excess of \$40,000,000, or at the rate of \$160,000,000 a year. It requires about \$103,000,000 to satisfy depreciation, sinking funds, interests and dividends, so that earnings at that rate would mean a surplus of over \$55,000,000 a year. The boom in the market for copper may be imagined from the fact that one of the large elec-

trical companies this year will consume 100,000,000 pounds of copper, or 50 p.c. in excess of normal consumption. A representative of another large copper consuming concern says the consumption of his company this year will be double what it was in 1911.

In Canada building operations are seriously hampered by the fact that the demand for structural steel is not equal to the supply, and many of the railways are embarrassed by the slowness in the delivery of steel. In some of the European countries the want of high grade iron ores for steel manufacture is seriously felt and the time is evidently approaching when it will pay to use some of the lower grade ores which are now despised.

The Public Health. Professor Fisher, of Yale, is recommending a national department of health or a department of labor which shall include in its operations the conservation of human life. The United States needs first of all, he says, to do what Sweden has done for a hundred and fifty years—namely, to establish proper vital statistics. Vital statistics are the bookkeeping of health. At present only a little over half of the population of the United States has statistics on its deaths.

Professor Fisher who was a member of President Roosevelt's Conservation Commission claims that of the 1,500,000 deaths in the United States annually 630,000 are preventable. He says that in the United States public health has been regarded almost exclusively as a matter of protection against germs; but such protection is almost powerless to prevent the chronic diseases of middle and late life. These maladies—Bright's disease, heart disease, nervous breakdowns—are due primarily to unhygienic personal habits.

A Dominion Health Department would be worth a great deal more than it would cost looking at the matter purely from an economic point of view. Unfortunately the public health is assigned by the B. N. A. Act to the provincial legislative and administrative authority, but it ought to be possible nevertheless to arrive at a system of co-operative action between the Dominion and the Provinces. In Sweden, the Professor says, "Medical inspection and instruction in schools, as well as Swedish gymnastics, have aided in the muscular development of the citizens of Sweden. Swedish hard bread has preserved their teeth. The Gothenburg system is gradually weaning them from alcohol. There has even been a strong movement against the use of tobacco."

Here nothing other than infectious or contagious disease seems to be regarded as a matter of official concern.

The death is announced of Major Clifford Thompson, for 34 years editor-in-chief of The Spectator, New York.