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# The Journal of Commerce

VOL. XLIV. No. 17

MONTREAL, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1917

Price, 10 CENTS

## The Journal of Commerce

Devoted to  
CANADIAN INDUSTRY, COMMERCE AND  
FINANCE.

Published every Tuesday Morning by  
The Journal of Commerce Publishing Company,  
Limited.

Head Office: 35-45 St. Alexander Street, Montreal.  
Telephone: Main 2662.

Toronto Office: 263 Adelaide St. West, Toronto.  
Telephone: Adelaide 917.

HON. W. S. FIELDING,  
President and Editor-in-Chief.

Subscription price, \$3.00 a year.  
Advertising rates on application.

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### Special Articles

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By J. W. Macmillan.

War Prices and Demand and Supply.  
By W. W. Swanson, Ph.D.

Delivery of Policy Not Countersigned.  
By M. L. Hayward, B.C.L.

Banking and Business Affairs in the U. S.  
By Elmer H. Youngman.

Conditions in the West.  
By E. Cora Hind.

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## A Union Government

IF a Union Government had been formed in Canada in the early months of the war, as occurred in England, many of the troubles that have since arisen would, in all probability, have been avoided. The Union Government now formed comes late. "Better late than never" will probably express the opinion of the large majority of the Canadian people, and therefore the new administration will have their best wishes for success. It will be well, however, if the circumstances under which the union comes are remembered, so that there may be an appreciation of the difficulties of the situation and a modifying of expectations. A Union Government proposal in the first stages of the war would have called for a suspension of action on pre-war questions, a call that would have been easily responded to. Union Government now calls for the co-operation of men who have had sharp differences, not only in former times, but on questions that have arisen during the war and in relation to the war, differences which have been much in evidence during very recent days. Good, undoubtedly, may still be done by a Union Government, but it will be well if the fact is recognized that the main purposes for which most people desired a Union Government are now beyond reach.

The Prime Minister did not claim that Union Government was necessary for the efficient prosecution of the war. On the contrary, he naturally held that in the hands of himself and his colleagues the war business was being conducted efficiently and satisfactorily. What Union Government was desired for was (1) the stoppage of party strife; (2) the avoidance of elections, by an extension of the Parliamentary term; (3) the uniting of the Canadian people into one party for all purposes during the war. A moment's reflection will show the reader that not one of these purposes can now be effected by the formation of the Union Government. Parliament cannot now be extended—it has been dissolved, has ceased to exist. Elections cannot be avoided; they are to be brought on at once. Party strife cannot be avoided; it will be modified in some quarters, but the machinery of the campaign is already working in many places and it is not likely to be stopped. Whatever may be thought as to the cause of the present situation, it must be admitted that the formation of the Union Government does not indicate a union of the whole Canadian people. The very personnel of the new administration makes it clear that differences which unhappily have arisen are now much accentuated. So it is too clear that the good purposes for which most people desired a Union Government are not attained by the recent appointments at Ottawa. Nevertheless,

the union idea will, in a general way, commend itself to the people and there will be a sincere desire on the part of most Canadians that its members may be able to work together for the handling of the many difficult questions that will come before them.

## Municipal Government

A THOUGHTFUL American public speaker said some years ago that the greatest danger to America's democratic institutions was to be found in municipal government. In the public affairs of the larger arenas there is more publicity and consequent inquiry than in the smaller field. It is an interesting fact that the party system, with its admitted faults, often serves to protect the public interest in a larger degree than other systems. Where there are two recognized parties struggling for the mastery, as usually is the case in National and Provincial or State capitals, the certainty of inquiry into every public matter is a very wholesome check on the doings of the party in power. The fact, too, that under that system not only the official immediately concerned but the whole party is held responsible for the official's action tends to produce watchfulness within the party. Thus, both inside and outside of the organization of the ruling party there are watchmen who serve the public interest. When so much happens to call for criticism of the party system let us not forget to credit it with the good that it accomplishes in this way.

In municipal affairs the party system is less common, and probably on the whole most of us will agree that such a system in the sphere of city government is unnecessary. From many quarters, however, comes the complaint that municipal government is inefficient, and too often worse than inefficiency is alleged. Even here in Montreal one has to admit that municipal government is one of the problems that seem to present the greatest difficulties. Extravagance and mismanagement in the past have built up a heavy debt, the interest on which eats up a very large part of the revenues. Extensive street extensions and improvements have been indulged in, while the surface of the principal streets of the city is in a positively dangerous condition owing to lack of the necessary repairs. A bad financial situation seems to be getting worse. Large bodies of business men have not hesitated to formally declare Montreal to be in a "bankrupt" state, an expression that has been resented by some citizens. It is true enough that so long as there are resources that can be called up to meet obligations there is no real bankruptcy,