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MUNICIPAL MUDDLE IN MONTREAL.

The city of Montreal has never—or not in many years—been efficiently governed. Under the management of a council, which was not guided in all things by high principles, there was much deterioration and distrust. Eventually a crisis occurred, and a judicial enquiry was demanded. There was foundation for the scandal that had shamed the people, and before a storm of indignation the men who were responsible were driven from office, and most of them have been in exile until this day.

Following this there was an amendment in the city's charter, and to the extent of permitting, as the chief organ of government, a board of control, which made reforms, and gave to the people the first evidences in a long period of excellent rule. But the board of control, composed generally of superior men, and the council have been frequently in conflict. The board is the better of the two, formulating progressive policies and aiming generally at the advancement of the public interests. The council is its handicap and it is not surprising that a movement is afoot

which presumes eventually to dispense with the council. The same feeling prevails in Toronto. There is much provocation for this divorce of council from control, but the time for it has not yet arrived.

The proceeding that challenges attention in Montreal is the appeal of the council to the legislature for charter amendments. These the Citizens' Committee opposes. This committee is a survival of the Cannon enquiry, which was projected by the people, and which led to such a cleansing of the public life of Montreal. The Montreal council is annoyed because the legislature listens, and impressively, to the representations of the committee. The aldermen are moved to proceed to Quebec and shake the ancient capital with their thunder. They may succeed with their demonstration, and they may not.

Civic government by commission may not be the ideal form, in the estimation of some people, but it seems to be much better than certain cities are getting from government by council, and it is not astonishing that there is a demand for it.

A CALL FOR A CHANGE.

The council cannot change the form of government the city must have, for the present. The law of Ontario does not permit any town or city to embark in a commission for the direction of its municipal affairs, and so that phase of the question need not be discussed.

The law does permit a council, however, to remit the management of its utilities to a commission, and this commission might have been in charge of the power and light plants since they were taken over by the city had the council desired it. The Whig favoured this course. But certain members of the council thought they were equal to the strain and responsibility of directing a rapidly increasing business, and if they were as honest and outspoken as Aldermen Bailey and Rigney they would confess that the city would have been the better without the experiment.

It looks as if the change, so far at least as the power plant is concerned, would have to be made at once. It is in a sense being forced upon the council. It contemplates a development of the power policy, and attention is called to the fact that the Hydro-Electric Commission is influenced by certain well-established rules

in connection with its accounts. When it assumes a contract with a municipality a rate is fixed, and it is such as guarantees the payment of principal and interest and meets the demands for maintenance and depreciation funds. Nor will there be any trifling by the council with its reserves. They will be kept intact for the purpose for which they were authorized, and sacredly guarded from attack on every side.

It is this skillful and safe financing that the city wants in connection with its plants. The Whig has always contended that their revenues should not be influenced or affected by any ordinary municipal emergency. The plants should be managed upon their merits. There should be a provision for their wants and necessities, and not a dollar should be deflected from their treasury for general expenses, because for the time it cannot be spared. There have been surpluses, on paper. They should be in the bank, and to the various accounts in proper proportions. The intervention of the Hydro-Electric Commission, or any other power, is welcomed and and to the end that the business features of the utilities may be rescued from the haphazard methods by which they have been financed up to the present.

ENGLAND CANNOT MANN SHIPS.

The Whig has been sent another missive by L. Graham H. Horton-Smith, the joint author of many pamphlets on the naval question. He deals in this account with the promise of many millions by the Indian princes, the splendid contribution to be used in the construction of greater super-Dreadnoughts. Mr. Horton-Smith, who must be recognized as an authority, since Lord Bessford endorses his latest publications, is very anxious that all the contributions of vessels by the overseas dominions, and the Indian princes, shall be in addition to the estimates of the mother country, and incidentally one gets a revelation which is quite timely in view of the crisis at Ottawa.

The liberal argument—which is growing in power every day—is that it is not a kindness to hand out a loan for which Canada will become responsible, for battleships which are to be maintained and manned by Great Britain. The money may be promised or provided, but what is Britain going to do with it? India's aid, (which is a doubt according to latest advice), cannot be of any advantage, because the national and private shipyards are replete with orders, and it may be impossible to place others. Assuming, says Mr. Horton-Smith, that this difficulty can be overcome, the proposals of help can only materialize "if some 10,000 or 12,000 men are enrolled now."

Listen to this: "It takes, as Lord Charles Bessford has often said, five years to train a seaman and make

him effective. We have been underranned for years, for the simple reason that seamen represent a huge item of expenditure in the British navy estimates—a fact never adequately appreciated, and least so by those who merely look at the grand total of annual expenditure—and any and every excuse has been always adopted from the time the liberals came into office to keep down the numbers of the personnel. We are short now for our own ships. We are not enrolling enough men even for these. The princes of India will hardly be satisfied—much less gratified—if their ships, when built, have no men to man them. Men are the prime immediate requisite, for without the men the proposed ships would, for all practical purposes, be useless. A goodly show on paper, but of no avail for the empire in the day of its trial. We need more ships. If the liberal party refuse to do their duty in this regard, we gladly welcome new ships from any source. But first and foremost, let us get the additional men we already need and train them for the ships already built and building. Large numbers are required for this purpose."

There is the situation, clearly and concisely stated. The ships for which the Borden naval or emergent policy would make provision may be built in the mother country—even that is doubtful—but in any event they cannot, in the next five years, be manned by British tars. This reveals a fatal weakness in the Borden policy. The Laurier programme is the better, and must sooner or later be adopted.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

The government must, somewhat on the naval question, and the sooner the better.

Westmount wants a municipal manager, a man who will direct all the affairs of the city under the council. Is this not a serious reflection upon the city's officials?

More is spent on the cure of the insane in New York state than upon

education. The alms in the asylums number 8,000. The state is paying for its careless immigration inspection.

The majority candidates are getting ready for the race which begins next week. It will be an exciting contest. Who will win?

The members of the commons will, during the Christmas holidays, campaign on the naval question. When

the house reassembles the Borden policy may have passed beyond identification.

The fourth estate was highly honored in the appointment of Whitelaw Reid to the Court of St. James. He was one of America's most eminent editors and diplomats. The man must have filled his place with rare distinction to win the eulogy of the king.

Saskatchewan does not want any of Borden's doles to good roads. The legislature wants the apportionment of federal grants, on a per capita basis, or not at all. Well, the province may not get anything. The premier must learn not to look a gift horse in the mouth.

After fifty-six ballots had to be cast for a treasurer in Wellington County Council, resulting each time in a tie, Miss Reynolds, daughter of the late treasurer, was appointed—until the end of 1913. By that time the vote may be unanimous. She is in the office to stay.

It is proposed at Washington that the senate shall have a silver plate put upon each desk with a record of the names of those who have occupied it. This is one way of perpetuating the memory of some men. The pity is that the senators did not follow the example of the average school boy and carve their names upon their desks with jack-knives.

SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

Running Us Down.
Hamilton Times.
Now listen to the tory jingoes swearing that Canada couldn't build a navy and couldn't man it. Nice try.

Profit on Boats.
Toronto Globe.
They never have a bargain day in Dreadnoughts. The profit on Canada's quarter dozen will be, according to the London Daily Times, \$3,500,000.

Her Aim Was Bad.
Montreal Gazette.
Mrs. Mary Leigh, who struck John Redmond with a hatchet she threw at Premier Asquith, in court, declared she only cast the weapon symbolically. As it wounded Mr. Redmond it is likely he will labor under the delusion that it was thrown diabolically.

Hard on Whitney.
Hamilton Spectator.
Premier Whitney has had a government car sent all the way to New York to convey him home. Wouldn't a seat in a Pullman be more in consonance with the democratic simplicity of this great province? He is inviting a howl, on the cost of expense, from the "rural districts."

Not in Manhood.
Halifax Chronicle.
Mr. Borden says that Canadians are not equal to the task of organizing a navy, and besides it is easier to hire Englishmen to fight for us than to undertake the protection of our own shores. Hence the proposal to send over cash, first borrowed from England. What do Canadians think of this slur upon their manhood?

USES TEETH AS WEAPON.
Woman Bites Charity Worker, as Well as Policeman.
Selingsgrove, Pa., Dec. 15.—To hold possession of her four-year-old grandson, Mrs. Ella Pursell made a ferocious attack on Mrs. Mary McDonald, Associated Charities worker, who was about to take charge of the child.

Falling to wrench the child from Mrs. McDonald's grip, Mrs. Pursell sank her teeth into the cheek of her victim, causing a painful wound. Officer Keatletter, of Sunbury, in his struggle with the woman, had one of his fingers almost bitten off. Mrs. Pursell is now in the county jail and Mrs. McDonald, although a nervous wreck, has possession of the child, who will be given a good home.

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