

OUR OTTAWA LETTER

By RIDEAU

I THINK it was Laurier who called Ottawa the Washington of the North. Visiting conventions are regaled with that phrase and much talk of "our beautiful city." As a matter of fact, that beauty which Ottawa possesses is either natural or the gift of successive governments through the Improvement Commission. Lord Frederic Hamilton said in one of his books that Ottawa was the most beautifully located capital in the world, and, considering the fact that Queen Victoria selected it from the map, Her Majesty did very well. Well, Nepean Point and Parliament Hill are perfect in their way, but otherwise Ottawa has lacked much.

And now to the Federal District Commission, the most important thing Parliament has done for Ottawa, except perhaps the buildings on Parliament Hill itself.

The new Federal District Commission will not be able to work tremendous changes on their money grant from the Government this year, but the creation of the Commission is taken as a foretaste of many good things to come. With four comfortable million dollars to spend in the next sixteen years, at the rate of \$250,000 a year, the Commission should be able to introduce new high lights on the Ottawa stage setting. Since 1919 the Improvement Commission has been receiving \$150,000 a year, and much of that was used to maintain the driveways, parks and boulevards already created. To be explicit these works have consisted of Rockcliffe Park, Central Park, Strathcona Park, Nepean Point Park, Macdonald Gardens, National Park, Somerset Street Park, Russell House Park, Bronson Park, Green and Maple Island in the Rideau River, Bate, Cunningham and Riopelle Islands in the Ottawa River; and these driveways: Rideau Canal, Lady Grey Road, Island Park, Clemow Avenue, Monkland Avenue and King Edward Avenue and Park.

Apart from the Commission's programme, the Government, which owns the land along the Ottawa River from Parliament Hill to the Chaudiere Falls, is this year embarking on a twenty-year programme of building there, suitably and beautifully to house its departments. Doubtless the two schemes will be harmonized, the Commission being called upon to do the necessary land improvement. This will rebuild an area which was once smart.

Many are hoping that the Federal District Commission will fully realize the meaning of its name in years to come, and will have full control of the destinies of the Capital, displacing municipal government. Civil servants grumble indignantly at the idea of being disenfranchised, but there are those who agree that the policy might serve the greater good.

The new commission will consist of ten members, nine named by the Government and one by the city, to hold office at pleasure. The Federal District Commission takes over the personnel of the former Improvement Commission of eight men: Thomas Ahearn, chairman; G. E. Fauquier, W. E. Matthews, W. T. Macoun, P. H. Murphy, Dr. R. Chevrier, A. E. Provost, and J. P. Balharrie, mayor of Ottawa. The two remaining commissioners will be appointed by the governor-in-council. The Government has at present the plans drawn



—John Powis, Ottawa

Mrs. Malcolm who is accompanying her husband, the Hon. James Malcolm, minister of trade and commerce, on his present trip to Europe to visit the trade commissioners in England, Scotland, Holland and Belgium.

up by the Commission for the future, but it is not regarded in the public interest to disclose these yet as that would affect property values and make it more difficult for the Commission.

One of the conspicuous pieces of work this year as a strictly government undertaking, but under the immediate administration of the Commission, is the extension of the Driveway which now follows the course of the century-old Rideau Canal, right up to Connaught Place in the very centre of the city. It completes a long ribbon of park and boulevards in bringing the Rideau Canal Drive to the Plaza so familiar to all visitors to the Capital since it is the first impression they have as they come from Union Station. Connaught Place itself is to

be extended by the demolition of a group of old buildings behind the present city post office, thus creating a great common at the foot of Parliament Hill with the Gatineau Hills for background.

It is easy to be an optimist in Ottawa where life automatically settles itself into two seasons, sessional and intra-sessional. The social pyramid comes with the parliamentary session, and The Hill is the centre of interest with countless visitors in corridors and galleries. Then one day troops in scarlet and gold appear on Parliament Hill; His Excellency or his deputy pro-rogues Parliament—and suddenly in a single day Ottawa slips back into herself. Summer arrives and civil servants may leave their desks at four o'clock; the Gatineau trains are crammed with cottage dwellers who commute night and morning; Parliament Hill becomes a city park; and on reasonably short notice one may have a room at the Chateau Laurier.

Parliament ran true to form this year and wound up its work in a frenzied week of growlings by day and wranglings by night, but in the end, everybody seemed happy. The civil service got its increase, the defence department has money for militia camps and flying; Canadian National Railways got their branch lines, and the Masseys got a Washington palace for a legation. The prime minister got his \$8,000 secretary, and Ottawa got its federal district commission. In fact nearly everybody got what he wanted, except the Sifton brothers, and even they did not seem too hopelessly depressed about not getting the Georgian Bay Canal with its attendant power. Greater than all these, Parliament got finished by Easter.

It was really a bright session, socially mostly because it was short, and parties came along at a brisk pace. The end was properly celebrated at the Country Club on prorogation evening when Mr. Gordon Edwards, Ottawa, entertained the Liberal members, Press Gallery members and their wives at a supper dance.

Three members of the Cabinet are abroad this summer. Hon. Ernest Lapointe, minister of justice, is in Australia as the representative of this Dominion at the May opening of the new capital of Canberra.

Hon. James Malcolm, minister of trade and Commerce, is in Europe on a six weeks' trip which will include official visits to Canada's trade commissioners in England, Scotland, Holland and Belgium. He is accompanied by Mrs. Malcolm, Mr. Ralph Campney and Mrs. Campney. Mr. Campney was formerly a member of the prime minister's staff.

Hon. Robert Forke, minister of immigration, and Mrs. Forke, are in the Old

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