

THE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE and The Police Commission Bill

The members of the Provincial Legislature, the majority of whom have had previous Municipal experience and all of whom are business or professional men, are respectfully requested to give consideration to the Police Commission Bill now before the House.

The Bill aiming at the abolishing of the Police Commission in the City of Fredericton has been introduced into the Legislature. This Bill will come before the Legislative Committee and also before the House within the next few days.

The resolution to abolish the Police Commission was passed through the City Council with only two dissenting voices. The City Council is elected by the people, and it is safe to say that ninety-five per cent. of the electors of Fredericton are opposed to the Police Commission. The Police Commission, which is appointed by the Government and which is responsible to nobody but themselves, have arbitrary powers and can entirely ignore the City Aldermen who represent the people.

Those who are in favor of retaining the Police Commission have so far been unable to produce any arguments whatever in favor of their contention. Some of the people seek to make the public believe that the placing of the control of the Police Commission under the Administration of Justice committee of the City Council is a retrograde step. If it be a retrograde movement to have a change in our administration of justice so that the people will know what is going on in that department, the sooner we retrograde the better. At the present time we have a Commission appointed by the Government, holding closed door meetings to which not even the Aldermen, elected by the people, are admitted. This Commission can contract whatever bills they like, buy their police uniforms and equipment and even autos from any of their friends without tender in this city, and all the members of the City Council have to do is to O.K. the bills and pay them. This is too much power to give any body of men not elected by the people and having control of the third largest spending department in the public service.

The way the Police Commission goes on at the present time, there is not one Alderman at the City Council in a position to give an answer to the question of how the Police Commission carries on, what powers it has, or just how much con-

trol is in the hands of that mysterious body. It is only a short time ago when the Mayor of this City who is an ex-officio member of the Police Commission was asked the duty of the Police Commission. It was suggested that those wanting information "ask the police magistrate." Imagine for one moment having the affairs of such an important department in the hands of the police magistrate, who is not even appointed by the city, but that the city has to pay.

As has already been pointed out, the Police Commission was established away back in the days when the enforcement of the Scott Act or Canada Temperance Act, which then existed, rested with the city authorities. This condition no longer exists. In recent years the Police Commission seems to have carried on and performed duties which might very well be under the direction of the Administration of Justice Committee of the City Council, which body is responsible to the people. The Commission, which is appointed by the Provincial Government, is not responsible to the elected members of the Council.

As has been pointed out before Fredericton with its small population and its seven policemen does not need a Police Commission.

There is, we venture to say, not a practicing barrister in the city outside of those who are directly interested in the Police Commission, who is in favor of that body being continued. Ninety-five per cent. of the citizens of Fredericton are opposed to the Police Commission, and the City Council are almost unanimously opposed to it. The New Brunswick Legislature is respectfully requested to think twice before opposing the wishes of our citizens in this regard.

The opinion is expressed that the administration of the Police Commission should continue until something better is offered, and that something better is not the City Council. This is a mighty poor compliment to the City Council whose present members can compare favorably in tact and judgment with any member or members of present Commission, and any reference to their inability to handle seven policemen is a mighty poor compliment.

Why it is that the present members of the Police Commission and those who would like to get into the Council or perhaps on a future Police

Commission want the job is a mystery to those who do not know the inside workings of the Commission. There is not supposed to be any money in the job. There is certainly nothing very toney about it, so why hanker after it? Echo answers "Why!" Why a town of a few thousand people and seven policemen should have a Police Commission of three to look after the seven policemen is not apparent.

Why a Police Commission that is appointed by the Government and is responsible to nobody but themselves is preferable to an Administration of Justice Committee elected by the people and responsible to the people is not apparent.

Why the Police Commission can sit behind closed doors and give out contracts without tender to their friends and ask the City Aldermen to O.K. the bills, the said Aldermen having nothing to say, is not apparent. Neither is it democratic.

The presence of a police magistrate, whoever he may happen to be, on the Police Commission is not in the public interest. Any police magistrate who may be for the time being a member of the Police Commission, is liable as a member of the Commission to have to lay charges against offenders from time to time, and to order the arrest of such offenders. Then as a City Judge of the Police Court the same magistrate is placed in a position where he has to try the same offender whom he, as a member of the Commission, has made the charge.

Today the Fredericton Police Commission is composed of the Mayor ex officio, the Police Magistrate, not appointed by the City, and one other gentleman who is also not appointed by the City, but by the Government. These are all respectable citizens although most other citizens do not agree with their way of doing business on the Commission.

The citizens look to the members of the Legislature and to the Municipalities Committee of the Legislature to give this bill favorable consideration.

The Bill aims to abolish the present arbitrary, undemocratic Police Commission and to substitute a Committee which will do business open and above board and which will be through the ballot box responsible to the citizens to elect them.