

Helpful Address By Thomas Adams

Suggests That Nova Scotia Take Lead In
Placing Municipal Administration
on Sound Basis

(Halifax Echo.)
The address by Thomas Adams, the well known town planning expert, before the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities yesterday afternoon on "More Uniform and Expert Administration of Municipal Affairs" was a most interesting one and was listened to with rapt attention by the delegates, who heartily applauded it.

Canada needs reorganization and reconstruction of her social and municipal structure, said Mr. Adams. Next to the question of the war it is the thing most urgent in our national life. Municipal authorities administer larger municipal waste and mal-administration can lead to greatest burdens on the tax payers. There was need of an object lesson in the building up of a good system of local government in one of the provinces—why not in Nova Scotia, with its good

record in many other fields and its prosperous condition today. What is the use of organizing after the war with obsolete and unworkable machinery. The most and only really effective instruments in carrying out an after-the-war policy are the municipal authorities. How are they prepared for it and how linked up with the provincial government to secure results?

A Dangerous Cry

The right foundation would seem to be to organize from the provincial government down to the local government, rather than the reverse. "Home rule for municipalities" is a dangerous cry and usually follows cases of isolated grievances. Laws and administrations built up on isolated grievances are good for lawyers but not for citizens. Get down to principals and, looking to successful well-tryed examples elsewhere, see how in practice we can evolve the best



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method. In some provinces there are too many departments dealing with municipal affairs, overlapping, unco-ordinated, unexpert and therefore inefficient and wasteful.

In 1913 the N. S. union discussed municipal home rule, when an excellent paper on that subject was read by Mr. Arthur Roberts. References were then made to such matters as:

(a) Municipalities being permitted to make their own by-laws without confinement by parliament; (b) Expanding municipal funds in protecting Crown lands; (c) Permitting rural municipalities to control their own affairs; (d) Denial by the provincial government of the rights of the citizens to control their own affairs; (e) A denial of the fundamental rights of citizenship and the direct representatives of a city are best capable of determining local needs and to decide how their money shall be spent; (f) Having to go cap-in-hand to the legislature to be allowed to do things which can be done by private corporations without asking "by your leave" to anybody.

Department Suggested
As a means of securing a larger measure of municipal home rule and not restricting it, Mr. Roberts then suggested the idea of creating a department of municipal affairs in Nova Scotia and asked what were the underlying principles in British institutions? In dealing with this matter there should be regard to these principles if for no other reason than that British local government is one of the finest imperial institutions and offers the best example among nations for efficiency and economy of administration.

Mr. Adams' own view in regard to the above matters (a) to (f), was that what is wanted is not so much to cut the provincial government in regard to these matters as to determine the principles on which the province and the municipality can combine to obtain the best results in the interest of the community. They must also have regard to the following needs, how to secure:

(1) Greater economies in carrying on municipal business and greater efficiency in public undertakings, including what we call public utilities.

(2) Lower rates on borrowings and proper uniform systems of keeping accounts, budgeting and auditing.

(3) Lessening the burden caused by debt, and securing better building construction.

(4) Proper control of sanitation, housing and town planning.

(5) Control of labor difficulties at times of depression.

(6) Avoidance of recurring mistakes in administration, due to isolated local action.

(7) Reduction in costs of local improvements.

(8) Unification of valuation of land for assessment.

(9) Uniform system of by-laws in regard to sanitation and building construction, due regard being paid to the character of the municipality.

In order to secure these there must to some extent be connection between the province and the municipality, and, therefore, what is wanted is not to blindly argue for more home rule or less home rule, but for a proper adjustment of the powers or functions of the two governing authorities.

The statutory duty of controlling the affairs of local government in Canada is and must remain the joint work of the provincial governments and of the local authorities in cities, towns, and rural municipalities. There was variation in each province as regards laws in force and forms of administration, but in general principle, there appeared to be little difference in eight out of the nine provinces in regard to local government.

The exception is P. E. Island, which has practically no municipal system outside of Charlottetown, and one or two small towns. None of the provinces have tried out, or even inaugurated a system which can be regarded as completely satisfactory, although some, including Alberta and Saskatchewan, are in advance of the others in regard to provincial municipal machinery. In B. C. there is a municipal inspector in the attorney-general's department, who exercises some supervision over municipal expenditures and borrowings. In Alberta there is a department devoted to municipal affairs, presided over by a minister, and with an able deputy in charge. It has very little power, however, outside of the rural municipality, except in regard to town planning.

In Saskatchewan they have a department of municipal affairs which has done excellent service and in addition a local government board. The latter was created in addition to the department of municipal affairs, to exercise control over municipal expenditures and borrowings, because it was thought undesirable that that function should be performed by a department of the government with a political head. The board has for this reason been made independent of the government and is presumed to be an expert body.

In Ontario there is the Municipal Commissioner, acting under the provincial secretary, the railway and municipal board, and the provincial board of health, the minister of public works, the minister of highways and the minister of lands, forests and mines, all with some

control over municipal matters, and there are similar bodies in Quebec. In New Brunswick they have municipal affairs dealt with by the attorney general, the commissioner of public works and highways, the board of health and the municipal committee of the legislature. In Nova Scotia there is no provincial body dealing exclusively with local affairs, but several interested in administering the different statutes.

In Great Britain the machinery of local government has been satisfactory since 1888, but it has not been attempted in Canada to adopt the improvements then made to the British system. There is a local government board, in England, Scotland and Ireland. Their duty is to supervise or assist local authorities or they have expert staffs for that purpose.

The English House of Commons or House of Lords takes no action in municipal affairs without the advice of the board. It controls borrowings, drafts, model by-laws, insists on a certain standard of audit, supervises town planning, and housing deals with highways, public health, unemployment, pensions, etc., in fact all municipal work is considered in this one department. There is no undue interference with local autonomy or the largest cities have practically not home rule. Mr. Adams here made a comparison with German and American municipal institutions, with the English system which he claimed.

The machinery which would appear to be desirable to have would be to create a local government board of department of municipal affairs in each province. The ideal would be to have such a department in this province with a minister at its head taking over certain duties of the commissioner of public works and mines and of the attorney general, and absorbing the provincial board of health, adding the other duties needed to set up proper machinery. This new board or department would advise the legislature on all municipal questions and give advice to all municipalities. For the present it would probably only be practicable to start a new department without handing over the duties already assigned to existing departments, but the time for a beginning is urgent.

Mr. Adams dealt with such possible objections as: interference with local autonomy, difficulty of administering different kinds of area from a centre, Bureau-Mixing of politics with municipal business, etc.

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Sir George referred to the navy, the sure shield of the empire, which had complete control after the victory of Jutland. Financially Great Britain was the strongest of the nations, and that would have a great bearing on the result of the war.

Sir George had been at the front twice, once each winter. Last winter the conditions were much improved. Before the war they would have said that human beings could not have stood the rigors of the first winter. However, the Army Service Corps was a perfect organization. One never heard a groan. They did not think that the first Canadian division

could be equalled, but when the fourth division was reviewed on Dominion Day they saw that it was equal to the first.

In conclusion Sir George referred to the closer unity of the empire. The war had worked great wonders in this direction. And in the time to come it would be seen that the Kaiser had unconsciously helped to consolidate and perpetuate it. (Cheers.)

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forts of the British people in this war and referred to the fine effect the war had on the Empire.

"There is a rumor going around," said Sir George, "and I have every reason to believe it is true, that the Germans especially dislike having our chaps in front of them." Another tribute to the Canadians was paid by a high British officer who said that the first Canadian division was equal to the original expeditionary force which went to France. That army, while small, was the best in the world. Canada had come to manhood, said the speaker, and he believed that Canada's history as a nation would date from the first battle of Ypres. The Canadians on that occasion had accomplished the impossible. Theoretically they were wiped out, but some still remain today. The people mourned their loss, but could not help feeling proud of them.

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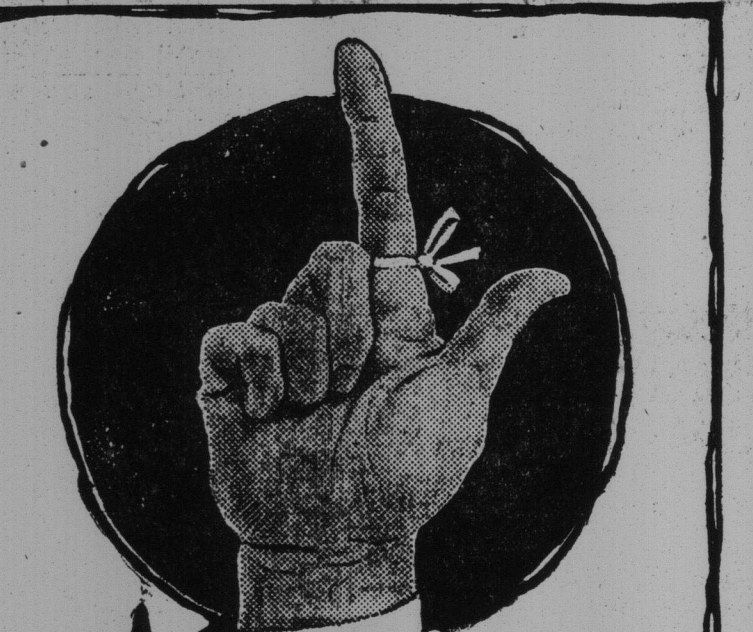


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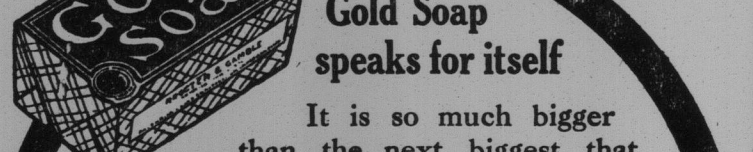


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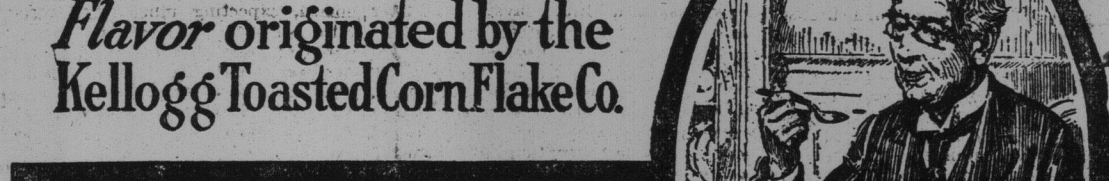
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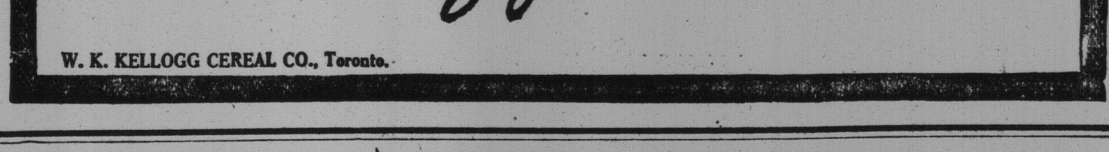
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