

# Union of Canadian Municipalities' Convention

Urges Provinces to Establish Departments of Municipal Affairs—Union may be Re-organized—Attendance not Large—Relation to the Cost of Living Problem

MUNICIPAL delegates to the number of less than one hundred met in Kingston, Ont., on August 12th to 14th at the annual meeting of the Union of Canadian Municipalities. Only a few delegates were present from the west, for which the unfavorable crop conditions are in part responsible. Included among those present, however, were J. N. Bayne, representing the Saskatchewan Department of Municipal Affairs; John Perrie, Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs in Alberta, and Oscar Morin, Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs for Quebec. These are the only provinces which thus far have established such departments.

After an official welcome from Mayor Newman, of Kingston, the president, Mayor Bouchard, of St. Hyacinthe, Que., delivered his address, referring especially to the change in the outlook since the last convention. The financial statement, and the report of the parliamentary agent, were also presented. The latter dealt principally with the Consolidated Railway Act, which has just been passed by parliament after having been postponed for several sessions. The amendment inserted by the senate, however, meets with strong objection on the part of the municipalities, who regard it as a recognition of "vested rights," as instanced in the case of the Toronto and Niagara Power Co.

The report of the honorary secretary-treasurer, W. D. Lighthall, K.C., who has just resigned, gave a resumé of the work of the Union. He said in part:—

"In 1900, the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company had just merged all the first electric companies of greater Montreal and had obtained from the legislature of Quebec, against the strenuous protests of the citizens, including that of Westmount, of which I was then mayor, a new charter empowering it to enter upon, place its poles and wires along, and tear up, any street or highway in that large district—the most populous in Canada—without the consent of any municipal authority. Local circumstances threw me into the hottest of the fight and, after the charter had been obtained, I and others, saw the triumph of money and political trickery over honesty and popular right a precedent without limit in its evil presage for Canadian life and character. If money and wrong were inevitably to succeed, it was clear that all our commercial and public life would sink into a fostering bog of corruption. It was equally clear that if the public could not preserve these rights, there was a sure end to our liberties, for all their rights could be similarly taken from them and sold for money. The cynical example to our young men that honesty was not the successful policy was one of the most dangerous aspects. Moreover, the triumph of corrupt money was not even good for property in general. It was inaugurating an unlimited reign of plunder, taxes, high costs, and 'gatemoney.' And it would with logical certainty lead to what is now called Bolshevism, unless the forces of right and order could meanwhile find a remedy.

## Origin of the Union

"The Union of Canadian Municipalities was the remedy which then occurred to me. My friend Howland took up my call and, as mayor of Toronto, convened the Convention of 1901 in that central city, he becoming the first president, and I the first honorary secretary.

"In Toronto, and other Ontario places, the charter of the Bell Telephone Company was occasioning similar contests concerning streets and highways; although it must be said for that company that it had obtained its charter quite honestly in days before the future scope of electric enterprises could be known. In due time a reasonable view of vested rights corrected its excessive powers.

"The second thing I was to say is that the Union is a great power in the state. And this, notwithstanding certain

limitations. After fighting for the insertion of municipal protective clauses in various single characters—such as attempts to obtain for nothing all the water powers in the west, powers over all the streets in Canada, and we framed, and obtained the adoption of the well-known standard municipal clauses. For years they have been automatically inserted at Ottawa in all electric company bills and others similar. We also took a chief part in the act establishing the Dominion Railway Board. In battling for our principles we ran up against the most powerful and persistent combinations in the country and downed them by sheer force of right. Incidentally we demonstrated the creditable and hopeful fact that the bulk of our policemen are honest and faithful to their trust, and not boodlers as is so often superficially contended.

"In the protection of the rights of the people the question of rates charged by railways, street railways, telephone, telegraph, power and light companies were necessarily prominent. These all partake of the nature of monopolies, either absolute or virtual. That fact shapes certain principles for which we fought, and these I ultimately put into the following form as fundamental and permanent stands to be taken:—

- "1. The Canadian people shall not be ruled by any irresponsible monopoly.
- "2. They shall not submit to methods of fraud or corruption.
- "3. There shall be no perpetual franchises.
- "4. Our heritage of natural resources affecting municipalities must not be sold, but leased, if not publicly operated.
- "5. One generation cannot legislate away the rights of another.
- "6. Municipalities must control their streets.
- "7. Each Canadian shall have a fair deal from all who are granted corporate or other public privileges.
- "8. Some court or council must always exist free and equipped to enforce the fair deal.
- "9. The life of the poorest citizen must be made worth living, through his share of the best civic conditions and services.

## Will Attempt to Control Prices

"The third thing I want to say is that we are now at the beginning of a vastly important struggle which is connected with the foregoing principles. Control of all the essential necessities of life—bread, meat, oil, shoes, rubbers, textiles, have recently passed into the hands of mergers which are virtual monopolies. By the nature of monopoly the monopolist fixes his price. The era of the laws of supply and demand has thus passed away. The people will not obtain the fair deal unless these irresponsible monopolies are absolutely controlled. In bringing about such control—in which process I believe a series of special tribunals like the Railway Commission are necessary—it is the duty of municipal men to take a leading part.

"The fourth thing I wish to say is that fighting has not been our sole aim, but rather we have principally sought to confer together for improvements in all that concerns the happiness of our communities. When we visit the cities and towns of both east and west, the results of the Union's past work in pressing for parks here, incinerators there, and vast systems such as the government telephones of the three prairie provinces, testify to the imprint we have been able to make by thus standing together. We are indebted for much light on these things to the municipal men, and Unions of the United States, as well as to those of Great Britain, with whom we have kept up a constant contact.

"The fifth thing I wish to say is that municipal office is a great privilege, a great opportunity for service, a dignified