

BETTER MUNICIPAL UNION NEEDED

RECENT conventions of the Union of Canadian Municipalities have been failures. Reorganization of the union is proposed, but it is hopeless to expect to bring together enough delegates to make the meetings really representative, because the number of subjects of common interest to municipalities throughout Canada is small. Nevertheless there are questions of this kind, for action on which some kind of a municipal meeting is desirable. In an interview a few days ago with a *Monetary Times* representative, Mayor W. D. L. Hardie of Lethbridge, who was one of the western delegates at the 1919 convention, said:—

"For the past several years there has been a rather poor attendance at the annual convention of the Union of Canadian Municipalities. When the convention is in the east there is a very poor representation from the west, and when it is held in the west there is a very poor attendance from the east. This would indicate that the extreme east and west of Canada are too far apart to get even a fair attendance at a reasonably central point in an Ontario city. At the last convention in Kingston there were only three western city representatives. If it had not been for the Liberal convention in Ottawa just a few days before there would have been fewer from the west, and at least one other city that was represented would not have been, if it had not been for the exceptional circumstance. I refer to myself and my own city.

"This convention should really be the cities' parliament and each city should be represented, but the loss of time to the members from the distant points and the cost of travel, which is getting worse each year, makes attendance at any of the extreme points prohibitive. Western members also find that when the convention is in the east the eastern members feel themselves so busy that they rush through and hike off home before the convention is half through. These members do not stop to think that one night's journey has lost them really no daytime, while western members have to give up from five to six whole days in travel alone, not to mention the time at the convention.

"With this rush there seems to be very little accomplished worth while to offset the very large expense. In fact nothing of benefit to the cities has happened or resulted at any one of the last several conventions. Western cities have practically decided to drop out altogether unless some alteration is made in the constitution. They have been trying at the last three conventions for amendments which were always side-tracked by referring them to the incoming executive. These live so far apart that they never get together long enough to do anything recommended, so that we have practically the same old constitution which is destroying the association and its usefulness. Unless something is done there will be even fewer western cities represented at the next convention than were at the Kingston one.

"There is not likely to be much done because there is a feeling in the east that it will be better to sacrifice members in the west than make them concessions. Last year only one-fifth of the income was derived from the west and especially one leading executive thought it better to get a big membership from the east than to try to get an increase from the west by concessions to the west by amendments to the constitution. As it stands now the institution that should be of the greatest benefit to the city is practically dead, and it is very likely that, if nothing is done soon to harmonize the differences, the western cities will have to protect themselves by organizing a union of western Canadian municipalities. Both the fact that the Union of Canadian Municipalities as it stands now is practically dead and that the western cities are not satisfied with the present constitution can be easily mended by constituting a western and an eastern branch of the Union of Canadian Municipalities and centralizing the executive office at Fort William or Winnipeg. Will the east accept this program? It has refused it so far."

In commenting upon the 1919 convention, a suggestion was put forth that the Dominion meeting should be purely

a business one, attended by representatives of provincial unions rather than of individual municipalities. Two or three delegates could be sent by each province, armed with such mandates as would be considered advisable, and some results might be expected from a meeting of this kind. The provincial conventions could then be devoted to a wider range of subjects, including those of peculiar interest to the respective provinces, and every municipality, however small, by being represented at the provincial convention, could influence the Union of Canadian Municipalities. Any division as between east and west is not desirable, and though eastern and western conventions would no doubt be better attended than the Dominion one, yet the range of subjects which could be dealt with would scarcely be larger.

RECENT LABOR DEVELOPMENTS

THREE recent events in the industrial field in the United States have been watched with interest by Canadians because of their indirect importance to this country. The first was the industrial conference held early in October; this conference was similar in form to that held in Ottawa in August, but the results were widely different. The Canadian conference agreed on a few questions of lesser importance, but side-tracked the crucial issues. The United States conference attempted to decide them, but the eight-hour day proved to be a barrier which finally split the conference, the labor delegates withdrawing entirely.

The second event was the great strike of coal miners, who demanded a thirty-hour week and an increase of sixty per cent. in wages. This strike is now over, after having been declared illegal by the federal government. Substantial advances had already been granted the miners since 1914; and the fact that if the demands were to be granted the price of coal would be very nearly doubled, definitely alienated public sympathy. Coal is a commodity consumed by all classes, and the intimate relation between the wage scale and the cost of living in this case was widely appreciated. The strike of steel workers, which immediately preceded the coal strike, did not arouse nearly so wide interest, because its effects on the average citizen were not so apparent.

The third event is the international labor conference, provided for in the peace treaty, which was called at the instance of the United States government. The Canadian government, Canadian labor and Canadian employers are represented at this conference. Here again the eight-hour day was again the chief issue, but after keen discussion the forty-eight-hour week was agreed upon as a suitable standard, where practicable, the distribution of these hours being left to individual industries or firms. The fact that wages and other conditions of industry took a secondary place would indicate that the importance of hours of labor in determining the volume of production is fully recognized, and that wages must ultimately depend upon the amount produced by each worker.

The attention of the industrial world has therefore been turned towards the United States during the past few weeks. Previous to that it was directed towards the great railway strike in Great Britain, and it is not long since the Winnipeg general strike placed Canada temporarily in the limelight. The effect of this featuring of industrial disputes is that certain fundamental truths have, by a vast process of education, been driven home to citizens in all industrial countries, and the controversy has narrowed down to questions of detail. The revolutionary is out of favor for some time to come. It is only a few months since a radical opinion was the only safe one to express; but the disease provided its own cure, for the radical theories, containing no sound constructive element, fell down in proportion as they approached realization.

Lands to the extent of 701,543 acres, belonging to the late F. A. Heinze, have reverted to the British Columbia government. Fifty-five thousand dollars was due in taxes and the lands were not redeemed at the 1918 tax sale.