

Special Meeting of Union of Canadian Municipalities at Niagara Falls

A special meeting of the Union of Canadian Municipalities was held at Niagara Falls, July 20 and 21, when resolutions were passed after discussion, dealing with the "unemployed" question, and the problems arising from it. The chair was taken by Mayor Church of Toronto, the President, and those present represented practically all the principal Eastern municipalities—the West being represented by Mayor MacDonald, who had come down with a special resolution of the Union of Manitoba Municipalities, strongly urging the immigration department to supervise and help settlers coming to Canada with the intention of going on the land.

Mr. Frank Beer represented the Ontario Commission on Unemployed, and Col. Raymond the Niagara Falls Parks Commission.

The President, in opening the proceedings, said:—

Owing to the war and the financial situation resulting therefrom, it was deemed advisable to postpone the annual Convention of the Union of Canadian Municipalities, which was to have been held this month at Victoria, B.C. It was thought advisable, however, to call this meeting of the Executive of the Union for the purpose of dealing with urgent matters such as legislation, the unemployed, recruiting, the war, and the financial situation.

An appeal has been made to us by the Government of Canada to assist in recruiting, and also to supplement the war measures of the Government. I am sure you will agree with me that there is a duty devolving upon the municipalities as well as upon the Government in relation to the prosecution of the war, and that we ought to assist the military authorities in every way possible.

The use of public buildings should be readily given, grants should be made to the militia, to assist recruiting, band concerts should be given in parks and public squares, insurance should be placed upon the lives of those who go over-seas, and there should be general co-operation with the local military authorities. The dependents of those at the front should be well and amply looked after.

These are troublesome times for the people of Canada, and especially for the municipal councils, the members of which are in daily touch with the people.

I hope there will be concerted efforts by the municipalities of Canada all along the line to work in harmony with the Government until the war is brought to a successful conclusion.

The various provincial governments should also vote money to the militia, and assist otherwise in relation to recruiting and other matters.

Canada has done nobly and splendidly, and as long as we have a dollar to spend or a man to spare, we should not cease our activity when the Hun is at the gate.

Legislation.

With regard to legislation, I think the Union should ask that the new Federal Railway Act be placed upon the statute book at Ottawa next session. The Highways Bill should be re-introduced next session and passed, because when put into operation it will materially relieve unemployment.

While considering matters of legislation, I should like to point out that the time has come for us to place on record an expression of our opinion with regard to the action of certain representatives of the people in both houses of parliament who in the past has been unceasing in their activities against legislation which was being sought by the municipalities. As you know, our practical experience has been that there are in our parliaments certain members who, although elected to represent the people, invariably take the side of private corporations as against the public when there is any legislation under consideration affecting

the municipalities. We had that experience often both at Toronto and Ottawa in the past.

On the head of the Government devolves the duty of checking and putting the ban on the disgraceful lobbies put up against the municipalities and the hostile action of certain members. The time has come when the municipal authorities should prepare a list of these members and take some concerted action for the protection of our own interests. **In union there is strength.**

We should not fail to watch the course of those representatives who in season and out of season have been antagonistic and hostile to the interests of the municipalities generally, and have fought openly and secretly against legislation presented in the interest of the municipalities. The action of these members should be brought to the attention of the various governments, so that ways and means may be devised of checking it, in order that the legislation we propose may receive the better and fairer treatment it deserves.

It is a deplorable fact that in an over-governed country like Canada a municipality should have to fight for its life sometimes in the protection of its own interests before a legislature in essential matters for the public welfare. It is of passing consideration to notice the time and pains taken to consider subsidies and like matters and the scant consideration given at times to our legislation.

Unemployment.

With regard to the question of unemployment, the municipalities will do their part if the Dominion and Provincial Governments will assist and do their part. Little or no actual help has been forthcoming yet from the Governments. There should be some system of registration by which those out of employment could be registered at the border and also at the port of entry.

We should also have the co-operation of the various departments of the Governments, including the Post Office, Immigration, and Labor Bureaus. We should impress upon the Government of Canada that, while they have a very heavy burden to carry because of the war, they should also do something to solve the problems pertaining to the industrial war at home. United action by all would do much to relieve the situation.

Financial Situation.

During the war, the financial situation is a troublesome one for the municipalities to deal with. Retrenchment and economy should be the watchword all along the line. While it should be our desire to keep "Business as Usual," we should consider the heavy expenditures of previous years and the very liberal way we have been spending money. As far as possible, works that mean employment should be gone on with, but outside of this class only necessary works should be undertaken.

A stock-taking should be made, and a balance sheet struck, and we should endeavor to keep ahead of the situation instead of behind it. In some places the war and the financial situation have interfered with the revenue, and a wise and prudent economy is necessary with retrenchment. It looks at the present time as if the war will be a long drawn out affair, and we should carefully husband our finances and put them on a saner basis. While the outlook is most hopeful for the Allies, until the war is over, and for some time afterwards, the financial situation will be such as to give the municipalities some cause for careful treatment. We should keep ahead, instead of behind the financial situation, so that whatever turn the war may take we shall be prepared for it by having looked ahead.

We hope to hold our annual convention at Victoria, B.C., next year.

Papers of great interest will be read during your session.

We have received an invitation from Col. Logie to visit the camp at Niagara-on-the-Lake, and an invitation from the Queen Victoria Niagara Falls Park Commission to go through the park and enjoy the facilities provided for seeing the Falls and other points of interest in the locality.