

Union of Canadian Municipalities

The annual convention of the Union was held at Fort William on the 13th, 14th and 15th of August. The delegates were welcomed by ex-Mayor DYKE, of Fort William, representing the mayors of both Fort William and Port Arthur, who referred to the foundation of the Union, its aims and objects, and said: "We welcome you because the spirit and genius of your splendid organization is identified with the greatest progress of modern life. While as Canadians we venerate our great centres and institutions of government such as the honorable senate, the distinguished Federal parliament, and the worthy Provincial assemblies; yet, however honorable their positions, however important their legislation, we are free to say that none of these august bodies come so close to the actual needs of our people as do the councils of our cities, towns and rural municipalities. The pressing every day needs of the people in their homes, on the streets, in the parks; the every day needs of the people in the water they drink, the light they use, their methods of communication by telephone, and transportation by street railway, are matters of your immediate care and personal responsibility."

A number of visitors replied and President Mayor COATSWORTH, of Toronto, followed with the annual presidential address, in which he referred to the pleasure it gave the delegates to meet in such prosperous cities as Fort William and Port Arthur, as follows: "Our thanks are due in a very large measure to our friends in Fort William and Port Arthur, not only for their kindness in inviting this union to meet here in 1907, but also for the splendid reception they have accorded to our delegates from all parts of the Dominion. When we return to our different municipalities to report the result of this convention, I am not sure whether the uppermost thought in our minds will be admiration for the pluck and business ability of our hosts on this occasion, or gratitude for their very generous hospitality."

He also referred to the proposed federation of the Provincial Municipal Associations and to the events of the year, the most important of which was the inquiry started by the Dominion Government as to tolls and rates charged by telephone and express companies. The address concluded with a reference to municipal ownership and the necessity for governmental control of corporations.

The second day's session included an address by ex-Mayor DYKE on "Municipal ownership, its difficulties and advantages;" reports from the different Provincial Unions and papers by Mayor SCOTT, of Ottawa, and Mayor ROBB, of Valleyfield, on "Municipal Electric Supply."

On Thursday it was decided to hold the next convention at Medicine Hat.

The following officers were appointed:

President—R. T. MACILREITH, mayor of Halifax.

1st Vice-President—Ald. LAPOINTE, Montreal.

2nd Vice-President—Controller WARD, Toronto.

3rd Vice-President—Reeve COCHRAN, of Blanchard.

Secretary-Treasurer—Ex-Mayor LIGHTHALL, Westmount.

Provincial Vice-Presidents for Ontario—Mayor J. C. JUDD, of London; Mayor D'ARCY SCOTT, of Ottawa; Ald. MCGHIE, of Toronto; ex-Mayor DYKE, Fort William; Mayor McWILLIAMS, Peterborough.

Among the resolutions passed was one asking that the union seek legislation from the Dominion House giving

the Provincial Houses power to regulate these rates, and the following in reference to municipal ownership:

No. 1—That in the opinion of this convention, as public utilities are so constituted, it is impossible for them to be operated by competition they should be controlled and regulated by the government, or

No. 2—They should be operated by the public, and that they should not in any event be left to do as they please.

Further resolved, That municipal ownership should not be entrusted to revenue producing industries which do not involve the public health, public safety, public transportation or the permanent occupation of public streets and grounds, and similar principles, but that municipal ownership should not be undertaken solely for profit.

Resolved, That in the opinion of this convention all future grants to private companies for the construction and operation of public utilities should be determinable at fixed periods and that meanwhile at certain stated times during such period cities should have the right to purchase the property for operation, lease or sale, paying its fair value.

Further resolved, That in the future provision be made for a competent public authority with power to require from all public utilities a uniform system of records and accounts, giving all financial data and all information concerning the quality of service and the cost thereof, such data to be published and distributed as official reports.

No. 3—Resolved, That in the opinion of this convention no stocks or bonds for public utilities should be issued without the approval of some competent public authority, thus setting the capital by official investigation.

Further resolved, That a standard rate of dividend should be fixed, which may be increased only when the price of the commodity sold or the rate of transportation has been reduced.

No. 4—That in the opinion of this convention where the management of public utilities is left with private companies the city should retain in all cases an interest in the growth and profits of the future, either by a share of the profits or a reduction of the charges, the latter being preferable, as it ensures to the benefit of those who use the utilities, while a share of the profits benefits the taxpayers.

No. 5—That in the opinion of this convention where the operation of the public utilities is by the municipality there should be a complete separation of the finances of the undertaking from those of the rest of the city, and that the bonds issued for such utilities should be a first charge upon the property and revenue of such undertaking.

A motion was carried, which was introduced by Ald. MANNING, of Winnipeg, seeking legislation to compel telegraph and telephone companies to place wires underground.

Among the papers presented on the last day was one by J. F. KINNAIRD, of Edmonton, on "Municipal Financing," in which he advocated joint action in disposing of bonds and debentures, with the establishment of central offices at Montreal and agents in London and Paris who would keep watch on the money market and keep the municipalities advised of conditions. The investors would also be interested in the scheme and it was thought that foreign capital could be secured in large quantities at low rate of interest.