

Affairs in British Columbia

By JACK LOUTET.

Tax Sale Redemption.

At a meeting in North Vancouver recently it was arranged to send a delegation to Victoria to press for a two year redemption period after tax sales. It was contended by one of those present that it was more important to protect mortgages than debenture-holders and that the latter could do without their interest until the end of the war. This viewpoint received little support, few mortgages being present. Another desired a five year delinquency period and the power to sue for taxes to be taken away from the municipalities. The war and "the poor man likely to lose his home" were freely mentioned, but no one remembered that no property, even this year, will be sold for taxes which were levied after the commencement of the war. No owner living in his own home has been sold up and no municipality would object to further extension of time being given if such a case came along.

The City of New Westminster this year will probably be 20 mills net.

Vancouver has recently passed a traffic by-law which has been the subject of much criticism. It takes a large area within which an automobile may not stand more than ten minutes. Previously this restriction applied only to carline streets. The new by-law makes business more difficult and while suitable in New York is a little early for Vancouver.

The Sumas Dyking scheme which after careful examination was dropped about seven years ago is again before the government in the form of a request for guarantee of bonds to the extent of \$1,500,000. The area proposed to be reclaimed is about 25,000 acres, and is reported to be very rich soil. The depth of water in the Sumas Lake is about four feet, rising to fifteen in flood time. An extensive pumping plant would be necessary to keep the land from flooding annually. The government has promised to consider the proposal.

At a conference in Victoria on the question of taxation of right-of-way of railroads it was decided by the U. B. C. M. executive to leave out the tramways until the union could go into the matter more fully. The street car systems operated under franchise are so fixed up with the interurban lines working under charter that it was thought advisable to gather more data before making a request to the government.

War Contracts.

Victoria City Council has recently taken up with the Militia Department at Ottawa the question of war contracts and the share which, in their opinion, the West is entitled to.

Lately a letter was received from the Acting Minister of Militia, in which he said that the manufacturers of British Columbia had little cause for complaint. The letter was characterized by one of the aldermen as little less than an insult, and the general opinion seemed to concur with this view.

Goods were shipped from the East through Vancouver to Victoria and then back from Victoria through Vancouver to the various regimental headquarters. For some time new B. C. regiments could not be uniformed owing to congestion in the East, yet no attempt was made to ship cloth to B. C., and allow tailors there to do the work. There is admittedly some improvement now, but in the opinion of many public bodies much remains still to be accomplished.

Prior to the war many municipalities in British Columbia were heavily stocked with material purchased for work which later it was found impossible to finance. With the rise in prices in manufactured goods this resulted in a great saving, and in some cases where improvements had been abandoned it is possible to make a substantial profit. A case in point is noted in Victoria, where the council had 77 tons of lead pipe bought for under \$10,000 which can now be sold at a profit of over 100 per cent.

South Vancouver's Financial Position.

South Vancouver's financial position is stated by the Reeve to be gradually improving. The Council has effected many economies, and its members are working together in a way which promises to rescue the municipality from an unfortunate position.

It is satisfactory to note that this municipality has rejoined the Union of B. C. Municipalities, which they left last year.

An action of general interest to municipalities will be fought out in Vancouver, where the District of North Van-

couver is endeavouring to prevent the District of West Vancouver pledging all its taxes to the Bank of B. N. A. as security for a temporary loan without providing that a sufficient portion of the loan be set aside to pay interest and sinking fund due annually to North Vancouver under the West Vancouver Incorporation Act.

West Vancouver has now taken over the ferries under a by-law recently passed. The auditors report shows a loss of about \$10,000 annually during the past four years. Under the reorganization it is hoped to keep the loss to a much smaller figure.

Burnaby Sells its Bonds.

Burnaby has disposed of its \$1,000,000 issue of serial bonds to Wood, Gundy and Co. This firm is also negotiating with Point Grey in regard to a proposed issue of \$4,500,000 20-year serial bonds to retire the existing 50-year debentures.

North Vancouver City has lately experimented in fire apparatus by purchasing second-hand high powered touring cars now available at low figures and adapting them as hose and chemical wagons, the changes being made by the firemen and mechanics.

To Amend the Municipal Act.

The Bill amending the Municipal Act has now been reported by the committee of the House, and is expected to become law without further change. It gives authority to municipalities to construct public baths, a power long desired and supported strongly for years by the Union. The much debated clause relating to assessments was finally settled as follows:

Until after the expiration of the year following the year in which a peace treaty between Great Britain and Germany shall have been signed, there shall be no appeal in respect of any lands from the Court of Revision if the following provisions have been complied with, namely:—

(a)—If the aggregate assessment of the lands in the municipality is less by ten per cent. than the assessment as fixed by the Court of Revision of the next year preceding; and

(b)—If the assessment of the land in question is less by ten per cent. than its assessment as fixed by the Court of Revision in the next year preceding; and

(c)—If the assessment of the land in question is fair and equitable in comparison with other lands in the municipality. Such comparison to be made by reference only to the assessment roll of the municipality for the year 1914:

Provided, however, that nothing herein contained shall preclude any appeal as to the area assessed or as to the classification of the lands.

Power is also given to a municipality to sell at a price equal to the amount of taxes and interest to date of sale any lands unsold at tax sale, provided that action be taken within six months of the tax sale date. The redemption period to remain the same as before in such cases.

In most municipalities tax arrears continue to come in a satisfactory manner, and it is anticipated that collections generally will be better than last year.

CITY LOTS AND WEEDS.

At the last annual meeting of the Commission of Conservation especial stress was laid upon the increasing prevalence of weeds. Earnest pleas were made for action to overcome this detriment to agriculture.

While farming interests are exerting themselves to eliminate this serious handicap, they have just cause to complain of the prevalence of weeds on city lots and subdivided land upon the outskirts of cities and towns. This land, once forming some of the best farms, offers ideal conditions for the growth of weeds, and they flourish in great luxuriance. The owners in many cases are non-residents, and, consequently, do not appreciate the condition of the property.

Municipal officers and roadmasters should be given the authority, and be compelled, to have weeds cut upon vacant property, the cost of doing the work to become a legal charge against the land. The majority of owners would be willing to pay the cost of weed cutting, and would appreciate the service. It is hoped that action will be taken, so that vacant urban property may no longer be regarded as a dangerous weed menace.