

CIVIC IMPROVEMENT LEAGUE.—Continued.

Social progress has in many cases been obstructed, not alone or chiefly by general indifference but by the lack of clear thinking and definite purpose on the part of social leaders. We must not blame either governments or peoples for their failures to accept all the "solutions" which we have thrust upon them. Part of the blameworthiness has been ours because of our failure to study adequately the problems with which we are concerned. National problems can find no solution in superficial thinking. We must work our heads more and our hearts less. It is because of our recognition of the necessity for wise leadership, deeper study and effective organization that we are here to-day. No movement in Canada, as far as my knowledge goes, has been launched with such reasonable prospects of success. It has never before been my pleasure at a meeting of this character to listen to three such inspiring addresses as we have heard this morning from Sir Clifford Sifton, Sir John Willison, and Mr. Thomas Adams.

The reason we all feel this way, as I am sure we do, is because of the clear thinking and definite purpose, which characterized to an unusual degree those addresses. We have a definite objective, and by the action of the Commission of Conservation in securing the services of Mr. Thomas Adams we have a leadership which simply cannot fail to secure decisive results.

The economic and social problems which will face us at the close of the war call for the serious consideration and well informed study now. Problems of this character will find no solution if we postpone action until they are thrust upon us for immediate action. Failure to recognize this may result in consequences of a far-reaching character. The plan we have before us shows a realization of facts and a study of conditions which gives us great confidence in the successful outcome of the enterprise upon which we are now entering. Experience has convinced us that a national organization is necessary—is indeed indispensable—to the success of the objects we have in view.

I had the honour upon the invitation of Sir Clifford Sifton, of advocating this course before the Commission of Conservation two years ago. The events of these two years have made more apparent and more urgent the desirability of concerted Municipal, Provincial and Dominion action. The problems are great national problems and party or other considerations. It is fortunate for us, as I hope it will be for Canada, that the Commission of Conservation has provided an opportunity to unite local and provincial forces for the achievement of a great and worthy national purpose.

Mr. Beer then moved the resolution for the formation of the league, as stated at the head of this report. It was seconded by Dr. Desaulniers, of Quebec, and supported by Controller Morris, Hamilton, and Mr. Sanford Evans, ex-Mayor of Winnipeg, and was carried unanimously.

Dr. Desaulniers said in part:

To deal properly with such an important subject as civic improvement, with all the duties inherent to such a league, the functions and work that devolve on all devoted members and the wonderful results that can be obtained by continuous efforts, is a task, I say, that I cannot fulfil just at present with skill and in a manner equal to the standard of the distinguished gathering listening to me.

I highly appreciate the fact of having been selected to speak on this resolution, as much as I appreciate having been included in the list of citizens of Quebec to attend the preliminary conference of the founders of this useful League.

In seconding the resolution just read, I want to say that I fully understand, I believe, the real sense of the resolution. And it embraces the study of the best principles in the honest management and administration of civic affairs. The advancement of economical and progressive methods in the improvement and development of our towns and rural municipalities, and also the wakening up of the people so as to secure from all a general and effective interest in all municipal affairs.

Of course, the discussion is limited to-day to a civic point of view only, but allow me to say that the successful achievement of the work undertaken by the League, if well directed, would, as a consequence, bring good results in higher and broader spheres of action. The development of a good civic spirit means also the creation of high national ideals.

There is no doubt that the Federal League, as well as the Local Leagues, will attain the object for which they are created if the members will all co-operate in the necessary initiative, and in an active campaign. Farmers, business and professional men all are, in this country, ambitious—and being desirous to improve their condition, they will at once understand the necessity and the importance of the League when the objects are explained to them, as defined in the circular in "Conservation of Life."

As I said before, our population is open to conviction, and all are desirous to learn, but, I am sorry to say, only a percentage of our people possess the real knowledge and the true principles of civics. There is a lack of education among the masses throughout Canada.

How many times, during my twenty years of public life, have I heard men of all classes making the statements that the only objects in filling public offices of any kind, and the idea—and even ideal—are of a speculative and personal nature? In my humble opinion, the most important duty of the members of the League would be under the title of the study of the best principles in the honest management and administration of public affairs, to start a campaign of education in all the different classes of the community, and so to develop the sense of responsibility and honesty in civic affairs—to create the sentiment in every citizen that public affairs must be managed in the interest of the community, and not from a personal point of view.

Allow me to say that such education should not be spread only to the present generation, but in our universities and colleges, and even in academies, lectures on, and explanations of the duties of citizenship, and the interest they should take in public affairs, should be taught to inculcate sound principles in every future man and woman in the country.

Mr. Sanford Evans appealed for more consideration of the members of the municipal councils, who, he said, were giving so much of their time for the benefit of their respective municipalities. He urged the inculcation of a better conception of citizenship amongst the young people, particularly in the East. "Young men come out West from the East with their minds imbued with the idea that urban life can only mean city life, so that wherever they locate their great ambition is not to beautify the village or town life, but to build and build cities." If the village life was made more social and real the young people would not flood the cities.

The session adjourned to enable the members to partake the hospitality of Sir Clifford Sifton at lunch at the Rideau Club.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

At the afternoon session Hon. Dr. J. J. Guerin, ex-Mayor of Montreal, was in the chair. In his introductory remarks, Dr. Guerin said the whole tendency of the movement was to improve the homes of the citizens and consequently the municipalities. When the people were satisfied and comfortable in their surroundings, they would have good loyal citizens of Canada, and consequently the efforts of the Civic Improvement League would be towards the creation of loyalty and contentment among the citizens of this country.

The name "The Civic Improvement League of Canada," was adopted.

The following resolution was then put:

"That a Dominion Council of the League be formed representative of the nine provinces of Canada, and that steps be taken by such council to secure the formation of branches of the League in each city, town, municipality in the Dominion, or the affiliation with the League of existing local civic improvement leagues, board of trade committees or other bodies interested in civic affairs."

The resolution was adopted.