

MUNICIPAL UNIONS.

includes all other cases where united action is advisable and most effective. An illustration of this is the work of the Union in opposition to the application of The Bell Telephone Company to the Board of Railway Commissioners for increased rates and a measured service in the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec. The proceedings were commenced last August and are still pending. Through the initiative and medium of the Union of Canadian Municipalities a conference of representatives from the municipalities concerned was early held, and sixty-eight of them agreed to unitedly oppose such application through the Union, and a special committee for that purpose was appointed, of which Mr. Decary, head of the Administrative Commission of Montreal was appointed and has since acted as chairman. The committee organized a staff of legal, technical and financial experts to fight the battle of the telephone users, and while the cost has been great and the labor intricate and heavy, it is confidently expected that the result will be of immense value to the municipalities, and will again show the absolute necessity for such a Union.

Union of Nova Scotia.

The destructive criticism sometimes levelled against our Unions is that they are not sufficiently active or aggressive, which has always been unaccompanied, as far as I know, with any practical or sane suggestions for overcoming the alleged shortage. In my own opinion such criticism is based largely upon a misapprehension of the possibilities for service open to us. We are not Bolshevistic in our ambitions or tendencies, and we cannot work miracles. Our Unions are voluntary associations practically without any legal status, although we work under constitutions of our own. We are not parliaments and cannot legislate. But we have a distinct sphere of influence, limited it is true, but with unlimited possibilities in the public good that may result therefrom. We have no politics. On the contrary we wish to be on the friendliest terms with the government of the day, irrespective of what party is in control, as far as it is consistent with our business of protecting, promoting and demanding a proper recognition of municipal rights. In the early days of the Nova Scotia Union it was thought by some perfervid politicians that an organization with the avowed intention of watching and criticizing the legislature even in municipal matters could not be kept free of political bias and interest. But I am glad to say that day has gone by, and it is part of our policy, and always has been not to jeopardize our existence and hamper our usefulness by any such smallness. It is with us a business proposition that can be well understood by a gathering of business men. Time has shown that one of the most useful purposes served by our conventions is that they afford a unique and highly appreciated opportunity for our municipal men to meet, discuss and promote their business interests, including legislation, absolutely on their merits.

The Provincial Unions may be considered as sub-divisions of the Canadian Union, and have duties and responsibilities of the highest importance, from the fact that matters of municipal concern come very largely within the purview of the Provincial Governments. In the Nova Scotia Union we have sixty-one members, thirty-nine cities and towns, and twenty-two rural municipalities, very nearly all the municipalities in Nova Scotia, and our officers and executive are equally representative of town and country. We have the reputation of being the strongest and best managed of all the Provincial Unions, and we flatter ourselves that to-day we have the confidence of the public and are well established as one of the most useful public institutions in Nova Scotia. Our records will show that we have justified our existence. In the way of legislation, for instance, as well as being of service to individual municipalities, we obtained for our towns

control of their own streets, thereby remedying some outstanding grievances. We secured legislation protecting municipalities against promoters of companies seeking public franchises, and have in other respects obtained legislation of much value to all the municipalities.

We value publicity, and find it, as you do gentlemen in every business, very necessary, and for that reason I shall venture to say a word with reference to the work immediately before the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities. Shortly stated we are of the opinion that in the Legislature and Government of our Province municipal affairs have not been given that position that their importance demand. The rights given under the original Municipal and Towns' Incorporation Acts have been invaded from time to time. There is unrest caused by a growing tendency for some years to encroach on the rights of municipal home rule, particularly as to provincial appointments to municipal office, with respect to which our municipalities have to provide the salaries, and in the matter of appropriating municipal taxation for provincial purposes.

I have referred to the Ministry of Health of Great Britain. We have not yet reached that state of perfection so that we cannot benefit from the example of the mother land. Early in the present century the western provinces established Departments of Municipal Affairs as a part of their governmental systems. In later years Ontario and Quebec did the same. The Maritime Provinces are the most backward in that respect. We are well aware of the excellent service these departments in the other provinces are giving to their municipalities. Such departments have been endorsed and strongly recommended by the Union of Canadian Municipalities, The Conservation Commission of Canada, The Civic Improvement League of Canada, The Good Roads Congress of Canada, and by other associations, as well as by a well informed and ever-growing public sentiment. Ever since 1910 the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities has been endeavoring to impress upon our provincial authorities the necessity for such a department in Nova Scotia. When the Highways Department was established legislation was obtained authorizing the creation of two additional departments, and we then expected that a Municipal Department would be one of them, but so far our hopes have not been realized. Those of you who are familiar with the work of the legislature are aware of how much of the time of the House and its committees is taken up with the consideration of the multitude of bills from our cities, towns and rural municipalities, and the consequent increase of the cost of the session. We claim that a large proportion of these bills could be better dealt with by a Department of Municipal Affairs, and that the saving in the cost of the session would more than pay the upkeep of the department, with the additional advantage of the fact that such business would not have to wait for the meeting of the legislature, and what are often serious delays thereby avoided. Further, you as business men, can understand the possibilities of valuable service to our municipalities there would be in such a department with an efficient staff of experts in the matter, for instance, of municipal finances, including methods of municipal bookkeeping and accounting, and in connection with the various problems that are always before those charged with the executive management and control of our municipal governments; not to mention the crying need of a better organized regulation and inspection of the various provincial public offices in the different parts of the province, connected directly or indirectly with our municipalities.

It has been said of the Union of Canadian Municipalities, and it is true of the Nova Scotia also—that it is a body of far greater public influence than can be gathered from the history of merely the actual measures it has initiated or

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