

# Convention of Union of British Columbia Municipalities

(Continued from last month).

## SOLICITORS REPORT.

22. "(a) That the convention urge upon the Provincial Government to provide work for the unemployed who come to the cities and Municipalities from unorganized districts of British Columbia, such work to be of a remunerative nature to the Province."

Dropped.

23. "That the Convention appoint a committee to interview and discuss with the Provincial Government the question of land settlement in British Columbia, assuring the Government that the Union as a representative body from all over the province, desires to assist the Government in arriving at a practical and early solution of this important question."

The President and Executive Committee interviewed and discussed this matter with the Provincial Government, and gave them the assurances set out, and have the assurance of the Government that if they see that any help can be accepted from the Municipalities they will make use of it freely.

Dropped.

24. "That in the opinion of this Council, cities and Municipalities should have the power to accept from a taxpayer 25 per cent or other percentage on account of taxes in arrear, or general taxes."

This was granted, and it now forms part of Section 38 of the Act.

25. "Whereas high powered automobiles cause more damage to public roads and streets than any other form of traffic;

"Whereas motor traffic does not in any way contribute towards the upkeep of roads and streets situated within Municipalities.

"Be it Resolved, That the Provincial Government be requested not to levy taxes on automobiles used and owned by persons residing in Municipalities, but to give Municipalities authority to license all such automobiles, the fee for said license to be based upon the rated horse-power of said automobiles."

Dropped.

26. "That the term of office of mayor and aldermen and reeve and councillors be fixed at two years instead of one year as at present.

Re-submitted.

In this connection it seems proper to bring to the attention of the Convention the action of one member of the Executive of the Union. It is almost an impossibility to carry any measure through the Legislature as being the wishes of the Convention if a member of the Executive comes before the Attorney General, and again before the Municipal Committee, and advances arguments and reasons as to why the legislation which has been adopted by the Convention should not be brought into effect. The solicitor brings the action of Mayor Haynes, of the City of North Vancouver, in opposing this section whilst still a member of the Executive, to the attention of the Convention, at the same time stating that as it has been expressed on many occasions by the Premier of British Columbia that he thinks this legislation unwise, it is the opinion of your solicitor that Mayor Haynes' action had no influence whatever in this particular matter.

27. "Re Moving Picture Theatres. That as the income as a rule from moving picture theatres in the smaller cities is very small, and as they have hitherto been paying a license in the various Municipalities in which they have been situated, it is considered that the heavy license now placed by the Provincial Government on these theatres is almost equivalent to either putting them out of business or compelling the Municipality to withdraw their license fee. And as the Municipality has to bear the expense of controlling and policing these theatres, it is not considered equitable that the latter alternative should have to be adopted, but rather that the Government license should be greatly reduced."

Re-submitted and nominal fee charged.

28. "Resolved, That in the opinion of this Convention alterations in the laws both of Canada and the Province should be introduced providing for some satisfactory way of maintaining the wives and children of:

(a) Persons who desert their families.

(b) Persons who being able to work, do not work or make adequate provision for their children.

(c) Persons, who from the drink habit, dissipate the money gained by them and thus waste the substance that should be used to support their families.

Re-submitted.

29. The twenty-ninth resolution of the Convention was a long resolution looking towards the adoption of a system of delinquent tax certificates instead of the present system. Prior to its presentation to the Government, the President obtained reports from every Municipality, and the overwhelming consensus of opinion was that this scheme should not be adopted. Consequently, at the request of the President this matter was left in abeyance and was not presented.

Dropped.

30. "That property be not sold for taxes until two years' taxes apart from the current year's levy are owing, the one year redemption period to remain."

Adopted by the Government.

"Tax sales to be compulsory yearly."

Not to be submitted.

32. "That redemption be not two years instead of one year."

The effect of Section 39 is to put in force the substance of these two sections.

31. "Resolved, that this Convention respectfully request that when any amendment is contemplated in the Municipal Act, the Executive of the Union of British Columbia Municipalities be placed in possession of the proposed amendments in time to consider their effect on British Columbia Municipalities."

Re-submitted.

The Executive Committee very strongly pressed this matter upon the attention of the Attorney-General and to the attention of the Municipal Committee, and received assurances that so far as possible this would be carried out. Your solicitor, however, has to report that in this year's session the Hospital Act was brought down on the 16th May, 1916; received its first and second reading on Friday; was read in the Committee of the Whole House on Monday afternoon, and passed its third reading on Monday evening, the 22nd May, and the effect of this Act is to make a very considerable change in the law as affecting the collection by hospitals from Municipalities in the case of indigent patients. Your solicitor regrets to say that both the Local Improvement Act and the Municipal Act had received their third readings at the time, and that he was not paying very much attention to the proceedings of the House in consequence. Owing to the rapidity with which the Act was put through he was not aware that any such legislation was contemplated until after the bill had received its third reading, and what he could do and what the President could do after that time was attempted, but unsuccessfully.

The Executive Committee of the Union have sent a strongly worded protest to the Minister in connection with the same, and your solicitor is of opinion that the Convention might consider the advisability of supporting the action of the Executive.

Your solicitor also desires to bring to your attention, for your judgment thereon, the practice of certain municipalities at the last moment, without submitting the matters to the Union, and without coming before the Municipal Committee, using their political position with members of the Government, to have inserted clauses in the Act which have never been considered by the Union. Section 29 of this year's Act is a sample. It was promoted by Reeve Cunliffe of Point Grey, when the act was standing for its third reading. It was carried through over your solicitor's protest. It is badly drafted and practically unworkable as it stands, but if it were well drafted and could be worked out, it is mischievous in its idea, and of no use except to persons designing to make a commission out of the sale of the debentures of the Municipality.

Section 31 of the Act was also put in at the last moment. It never came before the Municipal Committee. It is the opinion of your solicitor that strong representation should again be made to the Government that no legislation should be made touching the Municipalities