

Convention of B. C. Municipalities.—(Continued).

"The Mayor of Vancouver and aldermen present know that the central city churches in Vancouver have paid no taxes this year and some are owing for 1914. The First Presbyterian Church in Vancouver has actually been sold for taxes because of the inability to keep the church going.

"I now ask for relief from the Government through this Convention, not for exemption on all church property, but merely the actual site on which the church stands."

Mr. A. McC. Creery then addressed the meeting, on behalf of the Anglican Church in Vancouver:

"I first of all desire to thank you for giving us a hearing. The subject is one which has already been extensively covered by Mr. Casey, but perhaps it may be in the minds of some of you that there are representatives of other churches who are likewise seeking Government aid in this matter.

"It would seem unfair that the large city churches should have to be sold, and removed to the outskirts of the city, because of not being able to pay their taxes. I feel that the subject has been argued by Mr. Casey so thoroughly that I have but little to add to his remarks.

"We all know that the general effect of the churches is good, and that the highest principles of manhood are encouraged by the lessons the church teach, and no community can afford to lose sight of this influence.

"In short, we desire exemption from taxation of the site on which the church stands, not the rectory or school house or local improvements, merely the site, and I ask you in all sincerity and earnestness to pass a vote to exempt the churches from this taxation."

Councillor Loutet asked if non-Christian churches be exempt from taxation?

Mr. W. H. D. Ladner, representing the Presbyterian Church, Vernon: Yes, I think so.

"In the question of church exemption I believe that British Columbia was the only part of the whole Empire. In 1913 the Act was amended and the Municipal Act to eliminate the exemption. I believe that the good influence of the churches permeates through the whole Municipality, and therefore that the regular church-goer should not have to shoulder the expenses of the church, when the whole neighborhood derives a benefit."

Reeve Bridgman asked for exemption from soldiers and sailors institutes.

Mayor Smith asked if improvements on churches are exempt from general taxation to which Mr. Casey replied that they wished for exemption from the actual site on which the church stands, and would be quite willing to pay for street paving or other improvement taxes.

A Committee be formed to consider the question of Church exemption.

A Special Committee on War Relief Act was also formed.
Report of Resolution Committee on Solicitors Report.

The various matters and things which were adopted by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities in convention assembled at Chilliwack, which were entrusted to me for presentation to the members of the Government and to the members of the Legislature of the Province of British Columbia, and looking towards amendments to the Municipal Act, have all been brought to the attention of the Government and to the attention of the members of the Legislature, and the following is a detailed report of the action taken on each:

1. Municipal Elections Act, Section 59. As this section stands at present the presiding officer at a municipal election can only require a voter to take the Statutory Declaration when the said voter has been challenged by a third party, who must be a duly qualified elector.

"It is proposed that this be amended so as to give the presiding officer power to challenge any voter on his own initiative, exactly as when taking a poll on a money by-law. This was granted and now forms the second section of the Municipal Elections Act Amendment Act, 1916."

Dealt with by the Government.

2. "It is proposed that Section 85 of the Elections Act be amended so as to include school trustees as well as members of municipal councils."

Not granted, recommended same be dropped, the same as the Municipalities. This is a matter affecting school trustees.

3. "That a clause be enacted enabling the municipality to establish, maintain and operate public slaughter houses and abattoirs, and to prevent, regulate and inspect the location or continuation thereof, and prohibit the slaughter of animals intended for food in existing or other slaughter houses or abattoirs, or inspect any slaughter houses or abattoirs designed in the By-Law."

This was granted and forms part of Section 12 of the Municipal Act Amendment Act, 1916.

4. "Provide for the registration of bearer debentures."

This was granted and forms part of Section 28 of the amendments of this year.

5. "Subsection (1) Section 247 (as amended in 1915), adding 5 per cent on taxes on land due to be sold, make this optional." This was granted and forms Section 40 of the amendments of this year.

6. "To amend Section 228 by adding after the word, 'Municipality' in the fourth line thereof, the following words, namely: Provided, however, that the appeal from the decision of the Court of Revision shall be limited to the question whether the assessment in respect to which the appeal is taken is or is not equal and rateable with the assessment of other similar property in the municipality, having equal advantage of situation, against the assessment of which no appeal has been taken."

This was the most contentious piece of legislation that came before the municipal Committee. Deputation after deputation came from Victoria City and other places in opposition to this section, and after many amendments had been proposed, and much discussion, the Committee adopted Section 37 of the present year's act in lieu thereof, reading as follows:

"37. Said chapter 52 is hereby amended by inserting the following immediately after Section 227:—

"227 A. 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 centum than the assessment as fixed by the Court of Revision of the year next preceding; and

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

(c) If the assessment of the land in question is fair and equitable in comparison with other lands of the same class 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."

Be not further gone on with. Carried.

7. 'Better Definition of Wild Land. That the following definition of 'Wild Land' be inserted in the Municipal Act, Section 2, in lieu of the present definition: 'Wild Land' shall mean and include any land which is unoccupied, uncultivated and not cleared or not used for growing hay or for pasture or for buildings."

Recommend that this be dropped. Carried.

8. "Weight of loads on Highways. That Subsection (204) of Section 54 of the Municipal Act as amended by Section 13 of Chapter 466, 1915, be further amended by striking out the words Chapter 46, 1915, be further amended by striking out the words 'Provided, however, that before such by-law shall come into force, it shall receive the sanction of the Lieutenant-Governor in Council.'

Not adopted. Carried.

9. "Noxious Weeds Act. That Subsection (2) of Section 3 of Chapter 66, the Noxious Weeds Act be amended by striking out the same."

Be re-submitted. Carried.

10. "Trustees Act. That the Provincial Government be respectfully urged to amend the Trustees Act to authorize the investment of trust funds in the debentures or stock of British Columbia Municipalities.

Re-submitted. Carried.

11. "Provincial aid to Municipalities for the maintenance of main trunk roads."

Re-submitted. Carried.