

Report of the Seventeenth Annual Convention of the Union of B.C. Municipalities

Held at Nelson, B.C., the 6th, 7th and 8th Days of October, 1920.

The seventeenth annual convention of the Union of British Columbia Municipalities was held in the Council Chambers of the City Hall, Nelson, B.C., on the 6th, 7th, and 8th days of October, 1920.

The President, COUNCILLOR J. LOUTET, District of North Vancouver, occupied the chair.

The Convention was called to order by the President, who appointed a Credentials Committee, as follows:

Municipal Clerks Moore of Bunaby (Chairman), and Newman of Coquitlam.

Address of Welcome.

An address of welcome was given by MAYOR J. A. McDONALD, of Nelson, in the following words:

"It is with great pleasure, and a deep appreciation of my privilege as Mayor of this City, which we think we are justly entitled to call the Queen City of the Interior, that I extend to you one and all a cordial and hearty welcome. We appreciate your honoring us, as many other organizations have done during this year, in making this your Convention headquarters, and we trust we may again be able to have this pleasure at a future date.

We welcome you to Nelson because we are proud of it. Our City is growing, our location is ideal, our climate one of the most even in British Columbia, and we have many plans in thought for an ultimately beautiful City, and if you stay long enough you may become converted to some of them and see mentally some of the things we picture as going to happen. We trust, however, that your occupations will not be so continuous or strenuous and your time so much taken up as to prevent your seeing some of the beautiful things we have already secured and enjoy.

I wish to express my great hope that much good may result from your deliberations.

I think you will all agree that we are passing through a trying time of reconstruction, which requires our best thought and action in order that the spirit of unrest may be overcome.

Again, I bid you welcome, and trust you will find it as pleasant a city to stay in, as we find it to live in."

Replying to Mayor McDonald's address, REEVE L. E. MARMONT, of the District of Coquitlam, spoke as follows:

"In expressing the appreciation of the delegates of the Convention to the City of Nelson, for the very hearty welcome which they have extended to us, I am sure I will have the hearty co-operation and approval of all here, in what I am going to say. The climate is all that could be desired, and especially to those who have just come from the coast cities where the weather was not all that one could wish, it is indeed a pleasure to be able to enjoy such pleasant weather during our visit here.

"We are all charmed with the City of Nelson, and I am sure you will all agree with me in remarking on the beautiful mountain and lake scenery which encompass the City on all sides, and it is well named the Metropolis of the Kootenay. The Convention was wise in choosing Nelson as the meeting place for this year. It has been the practise of the Union of B. C. Municipalities to hold their Conventions alternately on the Coast and the Interior, to enable us to see at close range what each district needs, and deal with all problems accordingly.

"I am not going to take any more of your time, but again I am sure that you will heartily agree with me in expressing our cordial thanks and appreciation to the Mayor and City of Nelson for the very splendid reception they have given us, and for the good things to come."

The minutes of the last Convention were approved as read.

Presidential Address.

The report of JACK LOUTET was read as follows:

"In presenting my report for the past year, I desire to express my great regret at the death, early this year, of our Vice-President, the late Mayor McKenzie, of Nanaimo.

"Mr. McKenzie took a keen interest in municipal affairs and up to the time of his death took a leading part as one of the executive of this Union. His death is a great loss to the City he represented and to this Union.

"During the past year most of the special legislation arising out of the late war has now lapsed, and as a result new problems have arisen for municipal councils to solve.

"New legislation may be required to prevent unnecessary difficulties over assessments.

"Among the many matters dealt with during the past

year was the question of tax relief for soldiers and the special committee appointed to deal with this problem was fortunate in arriving at a decision which was approved by all interested parties. The resulting legislation while not entirely on the lines finally adopted by the joint committee appears to be working satisfactorily. Owing to pressure of business near the close of the session, the final draft had apparently been mislaid in Victoria and it was only by the prompt action of our solicitor that the present legislation was rushed through on the last day of the Session.

"The executive attended at Victoria during the session and as usual received a very courteous and favorable reception from the government and the municipal committee of the committee of the House. Practically all the recommendations of the Union were considered reasonable and fair and those deemed most important were incorporated in an amendment to the existing Municipal Act. This amendment included a clause simplifying the procedure necessary to obtain title to tax sale lands acquired prior to the year 1919.

"In connection with the Soldier Settlement Board a serious problem has arisen in the fact that the Board claims exemption from taxation in the case of lands which have reverted to the Government through the failure of the settler. Such exemption is obviously a serious matter for municipalities affected and action should be taken by the Union at this Convention to endeavor to have this injustice righted.

"Exemption of church property will also be brought before you, a recent court decision having thrown new light on this matter.

"The whole question of exemption should be carefully gone into, and I believe that the immunity of the crown from taxation in incorporated areas, which has only the halo of antiquity, to recommend it should be abolished.

"Another matter that will again come before you is the Hospitals Act. The present act, while undoubtedly a help to the hospitals in large towns, is a danger to the small municipalities, more particularly those which maintain a hospital of their own and find that they also have to pay for patients who have gone to the larger hospitals.

"The placing of the burden of caring for indigent families on the shoulders of municipalities where they have last resided for thirty days is so obviously unjust that comment is unnecessary. This problem which is largely interprovincial should be solved before it becomes more difficult.

"The most important item to come before you at this Convention is the Government's proposal for the local government board.

"The Penticton Convention favored such a board while the North Vancouver Convention, a year later, opposed it. These decisions, while apparently inconsistent, in reality, were not so. At Penticton the feeling was that such a Board, with the powers proposed, might be a help to the municipalities, but at North Vancouver the predominant feeling was that if the board personal was unsatisfactory, the municipalities would lose more than they could hope to gain. The Attorney-General has intimated that the Government could not forego its right to select the board which it would be responsible for creating.

"I am of the opinion that it would be quite in order, if the Government so wished it, to allow this Union to select two out of the three members of the board. Ample time has now been given for consideration of this proposal and I would suggest that your decision be communicated to the Government by special committee in order that the reasons for the decision arrived at may be properly presented.

"The problem of increased revenue for municipalities appears still as far from a satisfactory solution as ever and the proposal for a conference with the Federal and Provincial governments will no doubt appeal to you as being the first step necessary before a solution can be found. My own opinion is that if the Government would take over the burden of education, a burden which is fairly chargeable to the whole Province our search for increased revenue would be unnecessary.

"The present duplication of taxes and encroachment on municipal revenues by the Governments would be done away with and taxation so arranged that the rights of each should be clearly defined.

"In conclusion I wish to record my appreciation of the work of the secretary and solicitor during the past year and to express the hope that this meeting will tend further to