

How One Municipality Prepares to Meet After-War Conditions

Ald. ROBT. RYAN.

I am perfectly in accord with your ideas in regard to Civic Preparedness. Your propaganda as outlined covers the ground very well and should bear good fruit providing the Municipal Councils and Boards of Trade get alive to the possibilities that their localities possess and make same known to capitalists and manufacturers looking for investments.

I have been agitating municipal preparedness in Three Rivers since 1911, the first year I entered municipal politics. It took some time to get our people to realize the possibilities we had here which if properly handled would make Three Rivers an important industrial centre and that the only way to draw attention to our city and attract capitalists was by well planned out truthful publicity. I was successful a short time before war was declared in creating a publicity and industrial bureau which has done good work and from which work I am certain we will get results that will satisfy even the most skeptical.

Local improvements in our city had been neglected up to 1913 when we decided to carry out the laying of concrete sidewalks, pavements, new lighting system and other improvements found necessary. We were also successful in having a company build a first class equipped tramway in our city and we expect this tram line will be extended to the different towns within a radius of 25 miles east, west and north of our city.

We carried out all these different works during the hard times in 1914 and 1915, and last year as there was a demand for labour we stopped all public works, and have no intention of carrying on any as long as the demand for labor continues, unless what is found necessary for the health and safety of the people.

We have secured the services of good engineers to report on our water and sewage system and make plans covering our present system as well as for future developments.

We also intend having a town planning engineer make an industrial survey of our city and report on the possibilities of making a town planning plan so as our city will be developed on scientific as well as economical lines.

We expect to have all this work done within the next year and should there be a reaction after peace has been declared and the demand for labor decreases we will then undertake improvements so as to give employment to those in need.

Although we are devoting much attention to the development of our city I would like to state that we are also doing all we can to develop our rural district as we are well aware if our city is to progress the farming district must also prosper.

Last year we purchased the exhibition property here which was owned by a private company and placed same under municipal control. Our aim in purchasing this property was to allow the City Council to control the administration and award suitable prizes to the farmer for his cattle and produce exhibited and to properly advertise our annual exhibition and interest the farmer to prepare for this annual affair. Judging from the attendance we had last year during our exhibition week I am quite satisfied we can make a success of our undertaking and that this department will be of great assistance to our farmers in this district. It is our intention to make a public park and playground on this property as well as using same for our annual exhibition.

It is my ambition to have our Corporation place under municipal control or have a company formed under the special act passed by the Quebec Legislature to erect suitable homes to be rented or sold on a monthly payment plan to cover interest and capital. By building a number of houses at one time the cost per house can be reduced considerably.

In 1912 I suggested that our City Council buy a large tract of land near our city and operate a municipal farm. I was then confident of the success of this undertaking and I am now convinced that it would be very profitable for our people if we had such a farm. The idea was to build homes on this farm and have each family operate a garden or small piece of ground. Have a manager and necessary help to instruct each man or woman how to farm or work his plot of ground so as to get the most out of it. Have a large piggery, hennery and sufficient land

to raise a certain number of cattle. Have a central heating and lighting system and furnish light and heat at about cost price. Have a wet laundry where all washing would be done for the homes. The object I had in mind was to get all the poor men and women who were too old to do ordinary manual labor and have them locate on this farm where they could perform sufficient work to pay for the cost of their living expenses. Under this plan they would live under much more sanitary conditions than it is possible for them to do now. It would also have permitted us to get our city work done by able-bodied men and at a much cheaper cost than we have to pay at the present time. It is well known that a Corporation has to supply work for a certain number of men who cannot get employment elsewhere. I am firmly of the opinion that not only would the old men and women take up their residence on this farm, but there would be quite a number of younger men to whom such a proposition would appeal. I have by no means abandoned the idea, and I hope before many years to see such a farm in operation here.

There are many things that I expect will be realized here within the next few years that will make this good old city of Lavolette the envy of every other city of this province. As long as I am connected with the Municipal Government of our city it will be my ambition to make Three Rivers not only the best industrial centre but the most healthful city to live in.

I believe in administering a Municipality for the people and I am of the firm belief that this is the way that Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments will have to be administered in the future.

The time has arrived when Municipal Governments must be administered on a business basis like large railway, industrial or banking business. The usefulness of the aldermanic system of government has outlived itself by many years. This is the age of scientific management and should be applied to government as well as to industry and commerce.

The Governments should give home rule to Municipalities as regards taxation. Every Municipal Government should then adopt a uniform system of taxation so as the burden will be levied equitably. The most uniform system of taxation to my mind is the land value tax. With such a tax the cost of making the assessment and collecting the tax levied can be reduced to a minimum. With such a system there must be a uniform system of arri- land values.

The money that will be required by our Federal Government to meet interest and sinking fund charges on the war debt we all know will be enormous, but if our natural resources are properly developed and a tax system adopted so as it will fall on our natural assets the burden will be easily carried and our resources will be developed at a much greater rate than ever dreamt of by any living man before the war.

To my mind there are three things necessary before municipalities can be economically and scientifically administered, viz.:

1st.—Proportional representation which was outlined by Mr. H. S. Ross, K.C., at our last convention.

2nd.—City manager, with a board of directors composed of the heads of departments. A City Council to act as legislators only to pass by-laws, appropriations, etc., and make suggestions to city manager. According to my way of thinking the manager should be elected by the people for an indefinite period; subject to the recall.

3rd.—All revenue to be derived from a system of tax on land values only. This to my mind is not only the most equitable system but the most economical in the making of the assessment and collection of taxes.

You have my best wishes in the good work you have undertaken and I trust that success will attend your efforts.

"We must devote ourselves to real patriotism, for there is pending an epoch in Canada's history that will have results of huge proportions for all time, and in this there is no place for partizanship. As the great war will be the crowning event of all future histories of the world, so the strides Canada makes within three years after peace is declared will mark the emergence of this country into the status of a great nation."—Exchange.