

MUNICIPAL UNIONS

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It is a faithful saying, that of the three governments under which we live—the federal, the provincial and the municipal—it is the latter with which our citizens come most directly and continuously in contact, which has most to do with the comforts and conveniences of their life, and for whose maintenance they make the largest contribution, and it was a matter of regret that in days, I think I can safely say, gone bye, it was the one with respect to which they showed the most indifference. But there has been during the present generation a great awakening, a modern movement of ever-increasing activity in all parts of the British Commonwealth, and in the United States as well, in all that pertains to municipal life, that has led to the elevation of that life and the emphasizing of its duties, its importance and its dignity. Men in commercial life, above all others, can appreciate the fact that whatever makes for better conditions in government, for honesty and efficiency on business principles, is deserving of our very best consideration. The bringing about of such conditions is the primary purpose of our municipal unions. It is the same spirit that has brought into existence the numerous kindred associations—Civic Improvement Leagues, Good Citizenship Clubs, Good Roads Organizations, Canadian Clubs, etc.

Municipal Government in Great Britain.

The movement in the old country was, perhaps, more than elsewhere, a natural growth and development,* which has always been characteristic of British governmental systems, designed to meet the exigencies of modern civilization with its problems of taxation and assessment, and the regulation and protection in a multitude of ways of the public safety, health and well being, and to meet the requirements of an ever growing insistence for equal rights and opportunities for all classes of citizens in the way of education and the enjoyment of the decencies and comforts of life. As a result they have there the Ministry of Health, a very efficient governmental department with general supervision over municipal duties and activities; and their urban and rural councils that have successfully in a large measure coped with problems and responsibilities of great magnitude. One interesting feature there to-day is that municipal life and honors, with its duties and responsibilities, are accepted and highly prized by many of their ablest, and most distinguished men and women, among the first of whom was Lord Rosebery, well known for his work in the London County Council. It is in growing favor with the best of their aristocracy, part of the saving grace in this aristocracy. One of the sons of our present Governor-General is now the Mayor of an English town. The creed of public service, stimulated and encouraged by war time sacrifices, is becoming more and more popular, and is rightly looked upon as one of the best forms of practical patriotism.

In the United States.

What I have said with reference to the old land is also applicable, more or less, to the United States and to Canada. But in the United States particularly there were other conditions which contributed to the movement which there also has had such far-reaching results. Some twenty-five years or so ago public opinion in the United States was being continually outraged by the exposure of flagrant civic graft in many of their cities, and in their legislative halls, while their citizens were not on guard and their representatives were asleep or actively leagued with the purloiners of civic

rights and privileges. It was to some extent mixed up with politics, and no relief was expected from the political parties, because the grafters and purloiners were themselves low grade politicians and ward bosses, and usually the providers of campaign funds. These unfortunate conditions gave rise to municipal unions and kindred organizations, and led to an awakening interest in and study of municipal conditions, with the result of much improved and more efficient forms of municipal protection and government, especially applicable to many of their cities, such as the Commission form of government, the city manager system, and other forms, with a growing demand for more civic home rule, which has done very much to ameliorate the unfortunate conditions to which I have referred, and has produced an infinitely better state of civic affairs than existed there during the past generation.

Not so many years ago in Canada, and even in the Province of Nova Scotia with its high standard of education and public spirit, it was not counted as unrighteousness for company promoters, known later as charter sharks, to seek gifts from Parliament and the various Provincial Legislatures in the way of public franchises and invasion of municipal rights without compensation to the municipality concerned, and it was not an uncommon thing for such promoters to obtain what they sought. The Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities has had occasion to oppose such applications in the Legislature of Nova Scotia even in connection with bills in which members of the Legislature were personally interested. But that now, thanks to the work of the Union, is largely a matter of history. Some twenty years ago such an application was made at Ottawa in connection with the city of Westmount. The mayor of the city of Westmount at that time was Mr. W. D. Lighthall, K.C., and the experience made him realize the hopelessness of any fight of a municipality against the highly organized and well paid lobbyists of a large corporation. He communicated with and was successful in getting together in conference representatives of various cities, and the result was the birth of the Union of Canadian Municipalities.

Activities of U. C. M.

It is an organization, as its name implies, that in membership and work covers all Canada. Its officers and executive annually elected, include a President, three Vice-Presidents, a Secretary-Treasurer, and an Executive Council. Many of its officers in the past were and have since been prominent in our public life. The three Vice-Presidents now are Dr. Rondeau, Alderman of Westmount; Mr. Marsden, until recently a Controller of Toronto, and Reeve Pearson, of British Columbia. The Secretary-Treasurer is Mr. A. D. Shibley of Montreal, who has the necessary energy, initiative and capacity to make the work of the Union of all possible benefit to its members. Then we have also a parliamentary agent at Ottawa—Mr. Cook—an ex-mayor of Ottawa, who with Mr. Shibley watches in the interests of the municipalities all proposed legislation, and takes with the co-operation of the Executive such action as may be necessary in that connection. The Executive includes the mayors and other men prominent in the Councils of the cities, and other municipalities, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and meets as often as may be necessary. In general terms its work is protective and educational. The educational work is largely carried on through its conventions, which are held annually at different cities from year to year. In 1906 it was held at Halifax, and I think it is time that this city was again favored. Its protective work covers, of course, the work in connection with our federal parliament that I have referred to; but it also

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