

THE CONVENTION

Before this month is over municipal Canada will have had the greatest convention in its history, though many splendid meetings have been held by the Union of Canadian Municipalities and the different Provincial unions. The complications of municipal government have grown so great in Canada that no council can now afford to be unrepresented at these meetings. Civic finance in itself is so big a problem that the very latest knowledge and experience must be at the disposal of each council if municipal credit is to be kept up. This can be best secured by personal attendance, not only to get the full benefit of the papers, but for the first hand knowledge only to be gotten by contact with men who have successfully solved some of the problems still unsolved by one's own council.

And, as we have already pointed out in these columns, civic government is not confined to the collection and spending of the people's money. As the municipality grows so the responsibility of the council increases, in fact, one might say new responsibilities and duties are added every day, as those who have been in municipal harness long enough realize. The citizens to-day look to their councils to lead in every public movement which at one time were taken up by private citizens. While this is a compliment to the public spirit of Canada's

mayors and aldermen the extra work entailed makes their positions no sinecure. But since the burdens have been taken up by most councils it is well that they should know how best to carry them, and no doubt the executive of the U. C. M. had this in mind when preparing the programme for this year's convention.

The programme is given on another page and all that is required to make the convention the success it deserves is a representative attendance of mayors, aldermen and officials, and from the many favorable replies already received the officers of the Union will not be disappointed.

CIVIC PREPAREDNESS

When this war is over Canada will be face to face with the greatest opportunity of her national life, now made possible by the extreme sacrifice of so many of her sons and daughters, and which she has not only the right to, but must grasp if those great sacrifices have not been made in vain. How she will be able to take advantage of the opportune moment depends absolutely on the preparations being made now by the citizens through their public bodies, whether they be Federal, Provincial or Municipal; but especially municipal for the principal reason that owing to the exigencies of their office civic representatives are in daily touch with the people—hence their greater responsibility in rising to that standard of preparedness so magnificently set by our men and women who are today representing us on the fields of Flanders.

LAND VALUE TAXATION ADOPTED BY SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES.

The largest city on the Australian continent, Sydney, the capital of New South Wales, will hereafter raise its municipal revenues by land value taxation. A correspondent of The Public writes:

"On the thirteenth day of April the Sydney City Council decided to impose all its taxation, or rates, on the value of land apart from all improvements. This reform has been demanded for years. At the recent City Council elections a majority was elected in favor of it. . .

"The area controlled by the City Council is comparatively small. It is surrounded by forty suburban municipalities and one shire. The total area is 123,299 acres. The latest population figures are 713,260, and the value of land is set down at £53,138,686. Proposals for a Greater Sydney have been talked about for years, and a scheme drawn up, but no progress has been made with it. Throughout the whole of that area the whole of the municipal taxation this year will be drawn from the value of land exclusive of all improvements, except several hundred pounds in a couple of the suburban areas. There are no taxes on personal property.

"In addition to the metropolitan area given there is an outer area where quite a number of city business men and workers live. It comprises at least 400,000 acres, increasing the population to 800,000 and the land values to £60,000,000. In this outer area all local taxation is drawn from the value of land only, except in the municipality of Parramatta. This is a very slow, old-fashioned place, which has not been able to keep abreast of the times, but even in Parramatta fully three-fourths of the local taxation is drawn from land values.

"Sydney and the surrounding suburbs now show the most striking example to the world of the practical application of the principles of Henry George. Here you will find an installment of the single-tax system working in its best and simplest form. Not even in the United States is there such a monument to the genius and humanity of the Prophet of San Francisco. The suburbs and the rest of the state have for years obtained nearly all their taxation from land values. The success of the system is universal and unquestioned. Most people wonder how it is that it was not adopted sooner."

MUNICIPAL FREE LEGAL AID BUREAU.

The city of Lincoln, Neb., has an ordinance, introduced by the mayor, which authorizes the establishment of a free legal aid bureau, where persons unable to pay lawyer's fees can obtain legal advice. The bureau was opened in October, 1915. Since that time it has handled 197 cases and has collected in wages for its clients an amount approximating \$750.

The text of the ordinance establishing the bureau is as follows:

Section 1. There is hereby created a free legal aid department of the city of Lincoln, Nebraska.

Section 2. Said department shall be under the supervision and direction of the commissioner of public affairs, and shall be conducted by the city attorney.

Section 3. The city attorney shall, upon request by residents of the city of Lincoln, who are not financially able to employ counsel, such inability having first been shown to the satisfaction of the city attorney, furnish such persons legal aid and advice, and defend them in any civil litigation in which, in his judgment, they are being persecuted or unjustly harassed.

The city attorney shall prosecute for such persons actions for the collection of wages or other demands in cases in which the sum involved does not exceed \$100.00, and in which, in the judgment of the city attorney, the claims are valid and enforceable in the courts.

Section 4. The city attorney is hereby authorized to utilize the assistance of any member of the bar who has volunteered to assist in the work of said department, or any law student of the University of Nebraska, who may be assigned by the faculty of the law college of the University of Nebraska for work in said department, or other person whose training and ability makes him competent to act and who has volunteered to aid in such work.

Section 5. For the services performed in said department no fee or charge shall be made either by the city attorney or deputy city attorney, or any member of the bar or other person who has volunteered to aid in the work done by said department.

Section 6. The city attorney shall, annually or at any time when demanded by the city council, report to the city council the work done by said department.

Section 7. This ordinance shall take effect, and be in force from and after its passage and publication according to law.