

Municipal Affairs in British Columbia

By COUNCILLOR LOUTET.

All seven by-laws placed before the electors of the City of Vancouver on June 28th were decisively defeated, the polling varying from seven to one against the proposed purchase of additional land to complete the Georgia-Harris Viaduct, to about two to one against provision of money to repair the Connaught Bridge. The general feeling was against any further debt being incurred, and the vote was also interpreted as a protest against several over-expenditures on works previously authorized.

The city council has now planned further economies in the running of the city, including a reduction of the police force.

The standard rate of wages has been reduced from \$3 to \$2.25 per day of eight hours. The Connaught Bridge will be temporarily repaired with timber at a cost of about \$8,000.

Treasury notes on the security of arrears of taxes to the amount of \$850,000, have been sold to a firm in Toledo, Ohio.

The notes bear interest at 6 per cent, and the sale price is 97%.

This is considered a fairly satisfactory deal in view of the fact that arrears of taxes bear interest at the rate of 8 per cent per annum.

The Georgia-Harris viaduct was formally opened on July 1, and is now bearing a large share of the East and West traffic.

The Provincial Government has offered to lend the City \$30,000 to carry on the relief of the unemployed, but the general opinion appears to be that this amount should be in the form of a grant. It appears that most of the unemployed come from outlying points and it is noticeable that there are few unemployed outside of the large cities.

In South Vancouver the Council has been successful in obtaining an interim injunction restraining the Reeve from further interference with the clerk in the execution of his duties. It was alleged at the hearing in court that Reeve Gold was endeavoring to prevent the holding of a tax sale because his mother, from whom he held a power of attorney, was heavily indebted to the municipality. Since then the Reeve has announced in Council that the power

of attorney has been revoked. The foregoing will show how far the South Vancouver Council or the Reeve have departed from the business that they were elected to transact.

Personalities are all too common, but the fault is said to lie chiefly with the Reeve.

The court in delivering judgment, commented on the lamentable state of affairs in South Vancouver and the tendency of the Reeve to over-ride his council.

With the completion of the Sooke Lake water system a movement is now on foot in Victoria to introduce a system of irrigation for the lands adjacent to the city.

The council before whom the matter was brought by Commissioner Cuthbert decided that present financial conditions would not allow of anything being done at present.

In an appeal brought before Judge Lampman in Victoria last month the appellant was successful in having his assessments considerably reduced. One lot assessed at \$21,000 was reduced to \$10,000. In his written judgment the judge stated that in his opinion the assessor had evidently done his best to keep pace with the speculators, and that the war was not entirely responsible for the present dullness in real estate, or the lower rentals now prevailing. He thought that with a proper assessment, taxes might be higher, but as an alternative, the council might do as other people—spend less in dull times.

The government has promised to consider the question of exempting from tax sale proceedings lands of men on active service, and will take the matter up at the next sitting of the house.

The "back to the land" movement is assuming considerable proportions, with resulting decreased population in the cities, but the net result is to the advantage of the country as a whole.

An unusually large number of fires has been apparent in Vancouver lately, many of supposed incendiary origin. In one or two cases stores had been robbed and then set on fire.

Tourist traffic this year is very heavy mainly owing to the exhibition at San Francisco.

CITY OF NORTH VANCOUVER ARE MEMBERS OF UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA MUNICIPALITIES.

July 8th, 1915.

The Editor,—

In the June issue of your valued Journal an item appeared at the bottom of page 204 under the heading of "Finance," written by Councillor Loutet of the District of North Vancouver.

The Council of the City of North Vancouver takes objection to the latter part of this item wherein Mr. Loutet says: "North Vancouver City has intimated that it cannot pay the annual membership fee to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities. This action is much to be regretted, and is likely to do much harm to North Vancouver. It seems hardly possible that an ambitious city such as North Vancouver cannot afford the fee, and in view of the splendid results achieved by the Union the City would do well to reconsider their decision. This is the wrong kind of economy—penny wise and pound foolish," as being untrue.

The position is as follows:—

The City of North Vancouver paid their membership fee to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities in April, 1915 for the year 1915, and to-day is a member of the Union in good standing and will continue to belong to the Union for they realize the splendid results achieved by the united efforts of Municipalities.

The City is willing and able to pay the small annual fee and do not propose to be what Mr. Loutet intimates, "penny wise and pound foolish."

The City of North Vancouver would be pleased if you would correct this apparent error made by Mr. Loutet in the next issue of the Journal, and if necessary publish this letter.

Thanking you in anticipation for immediate attention to this matter.

I have the honor to be, yours truly,

J. F. COLLINS, City Clerk.

MUNICIPAL "MOVIES" FOR NORWAY.

The Norwegian Diet has just passed a law providing that the licenses of all motion picture theatres in the country shall expire in 1916, when the municipalities will have the choice of either renewing the licenses to private exhibitors or establishing municipal theatres.

The measure is reported a non-partisan step since in some cities, as in Christiania, the proposal to municipalize these theatres was made by the Socialists, while in others, as in Trondhjem, it originated with the party of the right. The new law is in line with the tendency of the Scandinavian countries to municipalize amusements both from the altruistic motive of giving better fun for a lower price and from the fact that government revenue accrues from such sources.

While up to this time none of the northern countries of Europe has actually municipalized the theatres, all of them have followed the policy of granting monopolies to a very few motion picture companies which the government controls and taxes rigorously.

The governments of Sweden and Denmark have made use of the motion picture extensively for the past few years in popularizing the extension work of government universities. In the Latin countries, in England and in the Far East, however, the management of moving picture theatres is still in the hands of private investors and stock companies.

A number of smaller Norwegian cities, such as Vardo, Tromsø, Fredrikshald and Notodden, have already signified their intention of taking advantage of the new law to municipalize their motion picture houses and the larger cities are now considering the question.

The mayor of Trondhjem lays great stress on the educational value of the cinematograph. He considers it the duty of the city in the interest of its youthful citizens to control the performances. In order to avoid unnecessary hardship to the proprietors of the theatres already in existence, the city of Trondhjem will not expropriate the private establishments until 1918. According to the mayor's plan the municipality will maintain only two theatres, both on a large scale, thereby considerably reducing expenses.—The Survey.