

Municipal Preparedness

What might be termed the most positive problem (for the next few months) that was taken up at the convention was on municipal preparedness. For some time back this journal has been urging the municipalities to realize their responsibility and opportunity in the part that Canada must play if we are not to be caught napping when war ceases, and at the convention we again urged our case, supported by papers from Sir Herbert Ames, Dr. Page, Mr. Doble and Mr. Stewart, and a special address by the Hon. Robt. Rogers, Minister of Public Works, who spoke generally on Canadian preparedness. We regret that there was no time for discussion which probably would have brought out something more of a concrete nature, but the executive was commissioned by the delegates to go into the matter, and a special resolution was passed urging that every municipality give a civic reception to all returned soldiers.

In the meantime we have been asked to formulate some plans so that the local councils can judge of their practicability. To meet the demand we are preparing some practical suggestions which we will mail to the City and Town Councils, and ask for their criticism. This will save much time for if anything is to be done at all a start must be made at once.

Idealism in Municipal Government.

Two very instructive papers were given at the convention by Mr. Clinton Woodruff, of the National Municipal League of the United States, who presented the new model charter as prepared by his league, and by Dr. H. L. Brittain of the Toronto Bureau of Municipal Research who spoke on modern systems of municipal work and how best to introduce them. Both papers were listened to with interest by the delegates for they represented the carefully prepared ideas of men who had made a long study of their subjects. We would like to point out however, that Mr. Woodruff, while he quoted extensively from this journal to prove that municipal students in Canada agreed with the principles underlying his model charter, did not fully appreciate Canadian conditions which in many respects are totally different to those of some of the States of the great Republic to the south of us.

Dr. Brittain's paper was very practical—his central idea, which he made his slogan, being to get the facts first of the present local system, and the conditions, before introducing any new system. But it is one thing to get facts of a municipality and another thing to present them in a way so that he who runs may read. It requires the trained organization, such as the Bureau of Municipal Research of Toronto, so why tantalize the smaller municipalities with the slogan of 'facts' when they cannot get them, but in the larger cities and towns there is no better check, or help to good government than a bureau of research; provided it is under the control of a director with the training, thoroughness and tact of Dr. Brittain. There are research bureaus we know that would be better out of existence—that are simply used to bluff their subscribers by the supposed showing up of municipal deficiencies

that never existed. But the one in Toronto is not only under good management, but is backed up by responsible citizens.

The third paper in this group was that on the "Ideal Form of Civic Government and Administration," by Commissioner Yorath of Saskatoon, the outline of which was published in our July and August issues, and we understand that the government of Saskatchewan has decided to publish it in pamphlet form for general distribution. This publicity should place Mr. Yorath's ideas in the hands of a large army of students of municipal life and government, and as the subject is so important we hope to give a review of the paper in our November number.

Provincial Departments of Municipal Affairs.

Deputy Minister Bayne of Saskatchewan gave a paper on the subject of which he is the best qualified to speak on, that of provincial departments dealing with municipal affairs. Though he has spoken on the subject many times, and from many angles, Mr. Bayne always has some new thought to express which he does well. Mr. Bayne is one of the municipal men of Canada who take their work seriously and consequently his opinions are respected.

Town Planning Outlook.

Thomas Adams each time he speaks on Town Planning seems to broaden out the subject, so much so that we suggest his changing his title—say to Ideal Civic Government. We have always maintained that the gospel Mr. Adams preaches is much bigger in its conception than town planning, as the term is commonly understood. Mr. Adams understands his subject thoroughly and his travels in Canada have given him that line on the conditions prevailing in the different provinces, that his suggestions given before the convention were enhanced by this increased value. His paper was essentially practical and should bear result. This was evidenced in the discussion that took place after his address.

Proportional Representation.

A subject introduced for the first time before a U. C. M. Convention was on proportional representation which was handled by Mr. Howard Ross, who has made a study of the question. While everyone will agree with the principle it is hard to say how far the system could be made applicable to Canada, under the present general systems of ward elections where only one man is elected. Of course, where more than one candidate is to be elected from a community at large, such as controllers, proportional representation is the best form of election.

Good Roads Movement.

The good roads movement has now become a factor in Canada, largely brought about by those public spirited men who founded the Dominion Good Roads Association, and the President's (Mr. J. Duchastel) sane paper given before the U. C. M. delegates will do much to bring in still further support for the good work. It is to the interest of every urban municipality to see that the very best roads are made leading to and from their city or town.