

The Oldest Municipal Union in the World

We recently received the annual report of the "Convention of the Royal Burghs of Scotland," which received its first charter from King David of Scotland over 750 years ago. This union which was organized as a kind of appeal court to settle questions affecting the internal administration of the then four cities of Scotland has probably been the strongest known factor in building up local government in civilized countries. Through all the vis-

situdes attendant of the history of the Scottish people during the seven and a half centuries of its existence the Convention of the Royal Burghs has not only kept its charter intact but in spite of its great age is today the most powerful organization in Scotland.

Last year the Convention held over fifty committee meetings as well as its annual meeting,—strong evidence of its vitality.

A Central Advisory Municipal Bureau

The Quebec Union is to be congratulated on the progress made with its Central Advisory Bureau that, under the constitution, has been established for the purpose of helping member municipalities, through expert advice, to solve the problem of, and adjust the difficulties that beset their administration. The legal and engineering committees have been completed with men of high standing in their professions, and when the financial and accounting committees are appointed the Union will be in a position to advise its members on any and every question affecting the government of their respective communities. What is more the advice will be authoritative, because of the professional standing of the advisors.

If the Union does nothing more than the successful establishment of its advisory bureau it will have done a useful work for the direct benefit of the municipalities of Quebec for the special reason that the smallest community, that is a member of the Union, will have the benefit of such legal, engineering, financial and accounting advice, either

free or for a nominal fee, that would be impossible under ordinary circumstances because of the expense.

Of course, the bureau would be impossible with the small fees charged by the Union, without the co-operation of the members of the different professional committees. These gentlemen have entered whole heartedly into the scheme, not only in giving freely of their services so far as the Union as a whole is concerned, but in the generous co-operation they are prepared to give any member of the municipality that has any problem to solve. Such co-operation, while unique in the annals of municipal government, is evidence of the new spirit of the times. Formerly professional men looked askance on anything that looked like free service, even though it be of a general character, but today they are keen to help in the public service of the country, because, like the fine fellows they are, they feel that they have a public responsibility. The other municipal unions of Canada would do well to follow Quebec's example.

Profiteering

Mayor Booker, of Hamilton, who is a merchant tailor in private life, has, according to press reports, given his endorsement to the plan of citizens wearing overalls to meet the high cost of clothing. He has also endorsed the action of a local committee of women who have gone in for a boycott on the high prices of potatoes by the simple process of not buying potatoes for a month themselves and by each member securing the pledge of six other women to do likewise. By this action Mayor Booker has given tangible evidence that he is in favour of all legitimate means to put down the excessive profiteering that is so adversely affecting the economic life of all our communities.

In our last issue we referred to the curse of profit pyramiding, even when the profits are limited to 25 per cent on each exchange of goods, but when these profits are increased to 100 per cent on each exchange, as they actually have been on some goods, it is surely time for the local authorities to take drastic action, otherwise the citizens will never be able to exist, much less live.

It is all very well to use the world's shortage of supplies as a reason for high prices, but Canada is a producing country of everything that her citizens necessarily require, with the exception of cloth, condiments and tea. In fact, she is a heavy over-producer of most of what her own peo-

ple require for their sustenance, and yet the prices of her products are higher in Canada than in the countries to which she exports these same products and her exporters are certainly not losers in their foreign transactions, otherwise they would soon stop their shipments. There is only one reason then for the high prices in Canada and that is the middlemen, who are making excessive profits at the expense of the Canadian consumer. This is not conducive to contentment amongst the great bulk of the taxpayers, and every means possible should be taken by the powers that be to stop this vicious profiteering.

The Federal authorities have tried their hand in putting down profiteering but have failed, largely because the means chosen—namely the Board of Commerce—has too limited power to be really effective, as was recently proved by a ruling of the Supreme Court. The Provincial authorities have done nothing in the matter—unless it is to wear overalls—and so it would seem that it is up to the municipal authorities to act. Herein lies a splendid opportunity for the Federal and Provincial municipal unions at their coming conventions to discuss ways and means by which this miserable profiteering in food, clothes and rent, which is sap- ping the vitality of our communities can be stopped.