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ST. THOMAS, SEPTEMBER 1, 1898.

League of American Municipalities.

At the first national convention of the mayors and councilmen held at Columbus, Ohio, about a year ago the League of American Municipalities was organized as an agency for the co-operation of American cities in the practical study of all questions pertaining to municipal administration; to hold an annual convention for the discussion of contemporaneous municipal affairs, and the establishment and maintenance of a central bureau of information for the collection, compilation and dissemination of statistics, reports and all kinds of information relative to municipal government.

The second convention was held at Detroit during the first week in August. About 700 delegates were in attendance. Among the papers presented for discussion, the most important referred to garbage disposal, street paving, franchise for street railway, water, light and telephone companies, municipal ownership, and public water supplies. A special feature of the convention was the entertainment provided by the Detroit City Council at an expense of \$6,000. Injunction proceedings were taken to restrain the city from paying this amount. The city charter provides for an expenditure of \$2,000 for entertainment purposes during the year. The injunction was granted and sustained. The attorney who applied for the injunction stated:

"The fallacy of the whole position lies in the assumption that the common council has authority to expend the taxpayers' money ad libitum, irrespective of the provisions of the city charter. The municipal officers are simply trustees of the taxpayers' money and are authorized to expend it in such manner as the municipal law authorizes, and not otherwise. Municipal corporations were not created for the purpose of giving public entertainments. That is outside and beyond the scope of their duties.

"A question of this character came before the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts at an early day. The mayor and aldermen of Lynn, Mass., had made an appropriation for a display of fireworks on the Fourth of July. It was objected that the expenditure was illegal and unlawful. The court said:

"The appropriation is neither necessary to the exercise of any power expressly granted to the city, nor is it incident to any right or authority, which, though not expressly granted, has its origin in well settled usage, and is founded upon the necessities, convenience, or even the comfort of the inhabitants. This is the extreme limit of the power of towns and cities to grant money, as settled by repeated adjudications of this court. Viewed in the most favorable light for the respondents, their vote authorized an expenditure of public money to celebrate the anniversary of a great event of national and historical interest in a manner which might serve to amuse the inhabitants, and perhaps excite in their minds a spirit of patriotism and love of liberty. But these objects, however laudible, do not come within the range of municipal powers and duties. If money in the treasury of the city can be expended to commemorate one event of interest and importance in the history of the country, so it may be to celebrate the anniversary of any and every other."

"This language is apt, and applies to the present controversy, and however laudable the action of the city fathers may be, in entertaining citizens of other states or cities, such objects do not come within the range of municipal powers and duties, and consequently are not vested in them."

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One of the most suggestive features of the convention was its practically unanimous approval of municipal ownership of all city monopolies except street railways, where leasing of public-owned tracks was preferred.

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The officers of the League for the ensuing year are: President, Hon. Samuel L. Black, Mayor of Columbus, Ohio; vice-president, Hon. William C. Maybury, Mayor of Detroit, Michigan; secretary, B. F. Gilkinson, New York.

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Syracuse, New York, was selected as the city in which the convention will be held next year.

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The success of municipal associations largely depends on the use of public money for sending delegates to the conventions. A council in a Massachusetts town appropriated money to send the mayor and aldermen to the Detroit convention. An injunction was obtained from the courts, and the delegates did not go.

The Louth Council has passed a by-law to commute all the statute labor in the township.

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The arrangement of the court rooms in the Stratford and Woodstock court houses is reported to be the best in the Province. The Toronto Board of Control recently visited these to obtain pointers for use in the new city buildings.

Municipal Investigation, West Zorra.

The books of the clerk and treasurer of West Zorra have been investigated under the direction of the Provincial Municipal Auditor. The report refers to a number of irregularities and shows that an ex-treasurer and the present incumbent of the office are indebted to the township. The report concludes with the following among other recommendations:

1. That the interests of the township will be better served by a division in the offices of clerk and treasurer.

2. That all funds of the township shall be deposited in a chartered bank, and that payments thereout shall be made by joint cheque of the reeve and treasurer. (The township will have no difficulty in arranging with some chartered bank to allow interest on its daily or weekly balances if the whole business of the township be done through one bank.)

3. That if for the convenience of the public it were thought desirable to have the township cheques payable at par at a point within the township, an arrangement might be made with Colonel Munro to pay through his private bank at Embro all cheques at par, the council to periodically pay the banker a small commission upon cheques so cashed.

4. That the present system of payment by the treasurer upon the order of the commissioners be abolished and that all accounts be passed by the council in regular session, before payment, excepting of course certain fixed charges, as debentures, interest, payments on school account and other payments fixed by by-law or statute.

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7. That a resolution or by-law be passed strictly forbidding the letting of works or contracts on roads or bridges after the amount of appropriations have been exhausted, unless by special order of the council and that the by-law be rigidly enforced.

8. That all accounts of the treasurer for salary, expenses or for other services rendered be authorized by the council before payment; cheques to be signed in the regular way by reeve and treasurer.

9. That the council should pass a by-law defining in detail the duties being performed.

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11. That copies shall be written in the by-law book (certified as to correctness by the clerk) of all by-laws.

12. That a debenture register should be kept as provided by law.

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15. That clause 2 of section 130, cap. 224 R. S. O., 1897, be followed by the clerk in the preparation of the roll. Attention is also called to section 129 of the same chapter, which provides that separate columns shall be used for each special rate levied, also for a division as between the county and township rates.

16. That the collector of taxes enter in the roll the exact date when all taxes are paid; and that he also prepare and enter in the roll a statement of all taxes with date of payment, upon which a percentage has been collected, together with the amount of such percentage.

17. That proper receipts be taken from all school sections to which payments are made and that the orders from the board authorizing these payments be attached thereto.

18. That all contracts, agreements, order books, stubs, etc., in the hands of individual members of the council in their capacities as commissioners on the roads, bridges, drainage or other works, shall be returned to the council together with a report in each specific case and that these shall be filed by the clerk, for use of the auditors, at the proper time.