

Victoria the Next Convention City

The executive of the Union of Canadian Municipalities have decided to hold the next convention in the City of Victoria, B.C. This will entail some time and some expense on the part of eastern delegates, but it will be worth it all for we have been given to understand that the convention will be taken up with the discussion of ways and means of how the local councils can best carry out their obligations in the war, not only to bring it to a successful issue but to the citizens after, in the way of seeing that in each municipality adequate provision is made for the employment of every one willing to work. This can only be done by preparations being made right now. We have already pointed out in previous issues that the principal industry of Canada during the last three years has been the making of munitions, which of course will cease on the cessation of hostilities.

There has also been a boom in agriculture in Canada these last two years because of the scarcity of foodstuffs throughout the world and because of the nearness of this country to Europe. The demand—at good prices—will be a continuous one for many years to come, so that as the great basic industry in Canada agriculture offers great prospects to the farmer and worker. But the majority of the people in Canada are not agriculturists, and not likely to be, even with all the many inducements that have been and are offered. The white way of the city is too attractive. Yet there must be some scheme to get men back to the land—some community scheme for instance—and a keen rural municipal man may have it at the back of his head. It will be up to him to lay his ideas before the Convention so that concerted action may be taken. It is certain nothing of a definite nature has been done as yet in this matter of making city men into farmers. Possibly one of the weaknesses of the so-called inducements is the matter of wages, which in comparison with the profits of the farmers is miserably small. Be that as it may the problem of agricultural help is a very important one and should be taken up at the Convention.

Then comes the city man, who knows not the farm and having been brought up in the machine shop, factory or office has no special inclination for mother earth—with the exception of his garden—and consequently wants to keep to the city. And this man represents a large proportion of the working population. What is to become of him when war ceases and orders are cancelled? Unless some preparation is made to-day he will be thrown out of employment and become, with his family, a burden instead of a help to the community.

To many the discussion of after-war conditions might seem out of place at this time when we are fighting for our national existence, but a little study will show that it is the bounden duty of the heads of each community to look to the future. National and municipal economic reconstruction must be made as much a feature of Canada's propaganda of nation building as it is of other units of the Empire. The livelihood of the greater part of our population demand it and woe betide the public leaders who have neglected their obligations if this country, in spite of her great resources, is left behind in the race of progress. And let it be understood the public

leaders in this case are the members of our local councils, for the particular reason that they, being in daily contact with the people, know what they (the workers) have to face. This means double responsibility. Surely then the time to take up the problems of reconstruction is now, and the Convention could not discuss a better subject.

In the mobilization of Canada's human and material forces the councils can play a large part. But what part and how? This is a problem that can be best discussed and answered at a gathering of municipal men. There is the question of next winter's fuel. Some councils remembering the experience of their citizens last winter have taken upon themselves to buy a stock of coal, though the action may not be legal, the councils rightly considering that their first duty is the people, whatever the disabilities may be. But still the legalization must be made. There is the question of greater food production which affects every council. There is the question of keeping up municipal credits, not a small matter in these days of increased cost in material and labor, and impossibility of securing cheap money. And there are many other questions directly affecting every municipality in Canada that can only be profitably discussed by the executives conferring with each other, so that there is every need for each municipal council to send at least one delegate to the Victoria Convention.

THE POSITION OF THE MUNICIPAL OFFICIAL.

In another part of this issue Dr. Arthur Wilson, the Medical Health Officer of Saskatoon, deals very succinctly with the position of the municipal official. He maintains, and rightly so, that he does not get a fair chance—no opportunity to show what he can do in the interest of the municipality; no feeling of security for the present and no guarantee for the future. What is surprising to us is that the municipal service of Canada is as good as it is—and taking it all in all, the standard of efficiency of the local public services is really high—when it is taken into consideration that the remuneration is comparatively small and that the officials are subject to all the kicks and abuse that any citizen with an axe to grind may like to make. Dr. Wilson's appeal that the local civic official's job should not only be made more permanent, but that he should be encouraged to fit himself for even better positions deserves the serious consideration of the municipal councils, though we cannot agree with his suggestion that the advancement should be from local to provincial and then to federal positions, for the reason that local government is getting more complicated each year with the consequence that even the under officials must become more proficient, and in a short while only the expert will have any chance to become head of a department. Even to-day, local administration is more complicated and more difficult than the larger fields and requires more specializing, so where is the advancement. But what is wanted, and badly wanted, in Canada is better pay for our municipal officials. It pays the municipality. A good head of a department given sufficient inducement in the way of pay will save his salary many times over in increased efficiency.