

Convention of B. C. Municipalities.—(Continued).

Capital and workers and enterprise are needed to develop this natural resources. Capital will always follow the line of least resistance, i.e., where it can be the most cheaply invested with assurance of adequate returns. The workers must be developed. The United States has found it necessary to import much of its skilled labour from Europe. She is now awaking to the fact that she ought to be producing it herself, and is completely reorganizing her school systems in the various states to make this possible. We ought to be taking steps in that direction ourselves, getting the workers ready.

The public school is the proper machinery for doing this work, as it is done in Germany for instance.

One trouble with the school systems of America is that they lag behind in the rear instead of being in the van. They act as a sort of rearguard while the great mass of public opinion is ahead of them. They should be vanguards leading us on, clearing the way, destroying our enemies, taking us into the promised land of great achievements.

Now how may we get a better system for the education of the young life of this Province. The German, French or British systems will not suit us in toto. They all recognize class distinctions, which we never want to introduce into this country. They each, however, may possess some things worthy of imitation.

First then, education should be removed as far as possible from the control of party politics, and therefore from the patronage system. In France the head is the

minister of public instruction who has about him an advisory council of 60 members. Of these three-fourths are appointed by the professors and teachers and one-fourth by the president.

Second, more thoroughly trained teachers. The raising of the status of the teacher to that of the highest of the professions. The appointment of teachers by the State. In the pensioning of the teachers the German and French systems are worthy of imitation in this respect, and the British in so far as certified teachers are concerned.

Third, if we wish to improve our schools we must be willing to spend our money. A vast amount of money or property has been designated in this province for the maintenance and endowment of the Provincial University, which educates the few. We must spend freely in the future for grade and secondary schools to educate the many.

The Province can well afford to support both. But if to redirect our schools, we must redirect our appropriations, then let it be done. In the face of the tremendous wastage of this war, surely none of the nations concerned can refuse a few paltry millions for a constructive work of the highest and best kind when so much has been spent for destruction. Even our provincial share of the Patriotic Fund if appropriated each year in addition to present appropriations would give us upwards of a million dollars additional for the extension of our educational work. Let us not forget that the most important work that our hands and minds and hearts have to do, nothing else assuming like importance, is the proper education of the boys and girls of this country.

School Trustees and Their Relationship to Municipalities

J. L. R. RAYMUR.

Mr. James L. R. Raymur, Comptroller, Victoria, then delivered a paper on "School Trustees in Their Relation to Municipalities."

The financial relations that exist between the Municipalities and the Boards of School Trustees, the better adjustment of which in my opinion, constitutes one of the most important problems that confront the municipalities in British Columbia to-day. The ideas that I am putting forward have not been officially endorsed by the Victoria City Council, but they are my own conclusions, reached after a long experience as City Comptroller in Victoria. I also wish it to be distinctly understood that, in which I may say, I have in no way any intention of criticizing the actions of the Trustees, or of trespassing on delicate ground by even suggesting that the educational value received is not commensurate with the expenditure. Every one realizes that the schools of this Province must be kept up to their present high standard, and that there should be no curtailment of the educational facilities provided, but every one does not agree with the financial methods employed to attain this end.

The Legislature, in its wisdom, created two bodies; one the Municipal Council, to which was given into alia the power of taxation limiting the rate for general purposes to 15 mills on the dollar and allowing a rate for school purposes sufficient to cover the estimated expenditure of the Board of School Trustees. To the Board School Trustees was given the management of schools, and to meet the cost of this, the right to make a demand on the Council for such funds, without limit, as they may require, which funds have to be provided no matter what the conditions may be, and without any regard to the other requirements of the council. This demand can not be amended or in any way altered by the Council, it has simply to be met, nor is there any appeal to the Council of Public Instruction, as there is from the demands of the Police Commissioners to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council. This system has worked great hardships on the Municipal Councils during the last few years of difficult financing, for the demands of the School Board must be met to the last dollar, even though the collections on account of the special school rate may be any where from 20 to 30 per cent in arrears. The Council, has therefore, to make up the deficiency in the school rate out of their equally depleted revenue, consequently, many a work of civic necessity has to be omitted. Section 48 of the Public Schools Act, and Section 201 of the Municipal Act, both authorize the levying of a special rate for school purposes, but the Schools Act goes much further than the Muni-

cipal Act for it also provides that "if, and so far as, the moneys raised by such rate and received from the grant paid by the Minister of Finance under this Act, are insufficient for that purpose, the Council shall apply a portion of the ordinary revenue for school purposes." Thus the amount of money that any Council has to spend is just so much as the Trustees choose to leave them. The practical result of all this is to make the Board of School Trustees the superior body, and the demands of the Board a first charge on the Municipal Revenue, leaving the Council to get along as best it may on what is left. This is a condition of affairs that I do not think was ever contemplated by the Legislature.

There is a further objectionable feature in the shape of Section 56 of the Public Schools Act which provides that "in case of any judgment being recorded against the Board of School Trustees, they shall forthwith notify the Municipal Council of the amount thereof and the Municipal Council shall levy and collect the same as in other cases provided for by this Act." I gather from the wording of this section that the Council has power to levy an additional rate, but should the rate be already struck, the amount of the judgment would have to be met from the general funds of the Municipality, and no provision having been made in the estimates, some other service would have to suffer. There is also no provision for charging the School Board with interest on advances made prior to the receipt of taxes. The friction is maintained all through the Act, and regulations of the Councils of Public Instruction and in the actions of the Superintendent of Education that the School Boards handle their own funds, for the Superintendent has assumed the right to withhold the government grant from the Trustees for any action that he considers a dereliction of their duties, thus penalizing the Municipal Council for the actions of the Trustees. Section 23 of the Schools Act provides that "no school district shall be entitled to receive any portion of the legislative grant whose Trustees have neglected to transmit within the time provided by this Act, the returns of the preceding year, or whose school has not been kept in operation at least six months during the school year, unless with the sanction of the Council of Public Instruction." This is the only authority for the withholding of the Government Grant, yet the superintendent threatens the Boards that the grants will not be paid, and actually does not pay them, for other causes than those mentioned in Section 23. In any event the Council are the sufferers, and that unjustly so, for their revenue may be reduced as a punishment for the alleged wrongful doings