

NEW ORGANIZATION FOR NORTHWEST ONTARIO

Union of Municipalities Formed at Meeting of Central Canada Colonization and Highway Association

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THE annual meeting of the Central Canada Colonization and Highway Association was held in Fort William on November 23 and 24. It was a history making conference as well as an unique one. Representatives were present from the four provincial electoral ridings of Fort William, Port Arthur, Rainy River and Kenora, an area which is larger in extent than that of the province of Manitoba.

One hundred delegates were present from the different public service organizations. There were representatives from the city councils, boards of trade, Independent Labor Party, U.F.O., Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, Motor Club, municipal leagues and rural municipalities. It was an instructive and a business conference. No time was lost in foolish discussion. These delegates had met with one object: that was to find ways and means of improving existing conditions in this part of Ontario, and also to find ways and means of bringing in new settlers.

Appearance is Deceptive

This part of Ontario is rich in minerals and timber. Travellers passing through the country, sitting in the arm chair of a Pullman observation car refer to the country as a barren wilderness. If they could have only heard some of the delegates explain the richness of the country, the wonderful crops of clover, roots, etc., that were being raised, how they would change their opinions. There are large tracts of land in this immense country that are waiting the hand of the settler. The soil is productive and farmers already settled here speak highly of climatic conditions.

True, it takes hard work to clear the land, but with pulp wood ranging high in price as at present, a settler is assured of a fairly substantial income while preparing the land from the sale of this commodity. One delegate stated that he had farmed in the north of England and other parts of the empire, but he had yet to find better crops of roots, or better variety, than those grown here and shown at the different fall fairs.

Municipalities Union Formed

Two or three outstanding resolutions were unanimously adopted. The first one of primary importance was the formation of a union of municipalities in the four electoral districts. A temporary organization was formed with Norman M. Paterson, a Fort William business man, as president, the mayors of Fort William, Port Arthur, Kenora and Fort Francis as the executive committee with the writer as temporary secretary.

These gentlemen will immediately begin to organize a strong union of all the organized and unorganized municipalities in this part of Ontario. They will correlate and co-ordinate all existing efforts and present a united front to the provincial and federal governments. The primary and fundamental function of the union of municipalities will be to bring in more settlers, which can only be done systematically, after the building of colonization roads. The new organization has the best wishes of every citizen in northwest Ontario.

The second resolution, which was unanimously accepted, has reference to the appointment of colonization agents in the four electoral districts, and the provincial government will be asked to appoint these gentlemen. There was a slight difference of opinion as to whether one colonization agent would not be sufficient for the four districts, but the resolution as passed called for the appointment of four officers, one for each riding. Whether one or four are appointed there is sufficient work to keep them busy for the next twenty years.

The provincial government will be well advised to listen to the pleadings of this resolution. It is the concensus of opinion that nothing will do more good to open up our part of the province than the appointment of these colonization agents.

Better Roads Wanted

The third resolution has reference to the building of roads for agricultural purposes only. This part of Ontario is undoubtedly lacking in this respect and previous governments have not had any definite programme in this regard. It can be definitely said without any fear of successful contradiction that the provincial government has over a period of six or seven years received a million dollars more revenue than expenditures from these four districts. This million dollars should be immediately spent on the building of roads and the bringing in of settlers.

These delegates did not and do not believe that the provincial government is being asked for anything that is not fair and honest. Every dollar spent by the provincial government in the opening up of this immense territory will, we think, be returned with interest in the course of a few years.

There was only one rift in the lute. The Hon. Frank H. Keefer, K.C., M.P., under secretary for external affairs, Ottawa, was a guest of the convention and made a fighting speech in favor of these four electoral districts seceding from old Ontario. It was replete with information in the way of statistics, and created a very favorable impression on the minds of his listeners. Being a guest, however, to the convention, his speech was not discussed and no resolutions were passed in this regard. Nevertheless, it can be truthfully said that there is a strong under-current prevailing in this regard, and it depends to a marked extent on the treatment of the provincial government to this part of Ontario, as to whether this feeling grows or dies a natural death.

BELLEVILLE CONSIDERS MUNICIPAL INSURANCE

The question of municipal fire insurance was brought to the attention of the Belleville, Ont., council by Messrs. J. N. Pringle and W. C. Mikel, K.C. The idea is that municipal insurance could be made compulsory and the premiums collected with the taxes. In this city the real estate is valued at between five and six million dollars and about five million of personal property available for insurance. It is estimated that between \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year could be made for the city, and yet not add to the burden of the taxpayers. The matter was referred to the executive committee of the council for consideration.

BRITISH COLUMBIA REPORTS SURPLUS

British Columbia, for the last year, has had a surplus of revenue over expenditures, according to the financial statement made public on November 29 by Hon. John Hart, minister of finance. The statement shows a total revenue for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1920, of \$13,861,605, and expenditure for the same period of \$13,511,123. This leaves the province with a net surplus for the year of \$350,470.

In announcing a financial policy for British Columbia, Hon. John Hart, minister of finance, states that it is the intention to establish a provincial bank, so the government can assist dependents and keep the money of the people in this province for the development of the country instead of having it sent east by the banks of Canada through their branch system and loaned out at high rates in Toronto, Montreal and New York. Another feature of the policy is the proposal to establish a capital reserve fund in which all moneys from the sale of natural resources must be placed. This capital fund would never be impaired, but loaned out on interest for the development of British Columbia.