

16th Annual Convention of the Union of Canadian Municipalities

The Sixteenth Annual Convention of the Union of Canadian Municipalities opened at 2.15 o'clock on the afternoon of August 21st in the City Hall at Montreal. The President, T. L. Church, Esq., K.C., Mayor of Toronto, was in the chair.

The Mayor of Montreal (M. Martin, Esq.,) extended a most hearty welcome to the representatives, saying that Montreal was honored by their presence, and that he hoped that not only his own city but all cities throughout the Dominion would profit by their deliberations, particularly with reference to the problems with which they were faced on account of the crisis in their affairs brought about by the war.

Ald. D. McDonald, Montreal—As Mayor Martin had spoken in French—welcomed the delegates on behalf of the city in English.

Mayor Church of Toronto, Mayor Stevenson of London, Mayor Hardie of Lethbridge, Mayor Cater of Brandon, Mayor Young of Saskatoon, Ald. Ryding of Toronto, Mayor Sylvestre of Sherbrooke and ex-Controller Spence, Toronto (secretary of the Ontario Municipal Association and one of the founders of the Union of Canadian Municipalities) replied on behalf of the delegates.

The President then delivered his Inaugural Address as follows:

"Owing to the war there has been no Annual Convention held since August, 1914. It was deemed advisable, however, to again hold our Annual Convention this year. We have to thank His Worship Mayor Martin and the City Council of Montreal for inviting us here to this splendid City. I take this opportunity of thanking the various officials of the Provincial Unions and our own officials for the services they have performed in war time.

This Union of Canadian Municipalities was formed in 1901 for the double purpose, first, of securing beneficial legislation, and second, for safeguarding municipal interests generally throughout the Dominion. It is composed of delegates appointed by various municipalities having a membership in the organization.

The Union has a complete system of provincial branches and a large record of useful work to its credit. As a body it has been of far greater public usefulness than can be gathered from the history of merely actual measures which it has initiated or promoted. It has been a steady educator of public opinion, which, after all, is at the root of all progress.

The need of concerted effort by the municipalities to protect municipal rights was never more apparent or more necessary than during the last session of the Dominion and Provincial Parliaments. Our Union has made itself a force in Canada as the protector of the rights of the municipalities. Unfortunately, when legislation affecting the municipalities is being considered, there are always to be found in Canada's Parliaments some representatives of the people at least who invariably take a stand against our rights on almost every occasion. We are confronted with powerful lobbies, and it is a deplorable thing for the people of Canada to think that the municipalities have to fight as they have to secure their rights, as was the case when the Radial Bills were being considered at Ottawa last Session. The Union should make a list of the members in question. There was no use in having a Union that met once a year; passed a few resolutions; had a reception and dinner; heard addresses from gentlemen of high sounding names and then adjourned until the next year, but one that would be in operation for 365 days in the year; that would check legislation, both Dominion and Provincial, and be a defender of municipal rights. Provincial and Federal rights were safeguarded, but municipal rights were being encroached upon and violated. It was for this reason that our Union was found to be a necessity in Canada. There was never a time that there was more work for it to do than at the present. Companies which could not obtain provincial and municipal charters went to Ottawa last Session and secured them there and had legislation passed, as in the Radial fight, which upset the rights of the municipalities. "The various Provincial Governments

also are no better, in my opinion, than the Parliament of Canada in this respect." Many of them are easily lobbied.

The Committee of the Legislature are also easily lobbied; for example, the ratepayers of Toronto carried a By-law at the polls by a nineteen thousand majority in favor of annual election of school trustees in the interest of efficiency and economy, but aided by a powerful lobby of the interests, the Legal Committee of the Ontario Legislature, threw out the Bill. It is the duty of this Union to awaken the public against encroachment on their rights and privileges in the various parliaments of Canada, and to vote only those to Parliament who were known to have the interests of the people at heart, and the rights of the municipalities.

Clean Municipal Government.

It is a matter of congratulation that while there were so many grafts and scandals, since Confederation, connected with the parliaments of the country, the municipalities had been, on the whole, comparatively free from these evils. The governments of the municipalities of Canada for efficiency and economy, would compare very favorably with that of the Dominion and the Provinces, and decidedly to the advantage of the municipalities.

Franchise Votes.

The time has arrived in Canada when the people should further safeguard municipal franchises of all kinds, from a present and future standpoint. In this respect the legislation of the Province of Ontario is beneficial, which provides that no franchise could be granted or extended without the vote of the ratepayers at the polls, and without every agreement in this connection being submitted to the ratepayers. This would be a wise proposal in the case of Montreal, and should be a public law generally for Canada. It would have been a good thing for the City of Toronto in 1892, when the present Company got our street railway franchise for thirty years, if such a law had been in effect.

Hydro Policy for Canada.

I am sorry that Sir Adam Beck, the head of the Hydro light, power and radial scheme in Ontario could not be present to address the Convention. In my opinion he is the greatest statesman in Canada of this generation for the boon he has conferred on the people of the Province of Ontario. Canada is rich in lakes, rivers and inland streams, with a vast quantity of power available in every Province. It would be a good thing for the delegates from the several Provinces to look into the Hydro situation in Ontario. There should be a Hydro policy for the whole Dominion formed, and every Province should have the boon of cheap light and power, which they could have if they had a Sir Adam Beck in each Province. He cut two million dollars off the light and power bills of the citizens of Toronto in one year. This direct saving went into the pockets of the people. His radial scheme would solve the question of under-production, cheap farm produce, and build up the cities and towns. The farming community would also benefit. The farmer and toiler would share equally in this great boon of cheap light and power.

Key to Good Government.

The key to good municipal government, in my opinion, is to have good heads of departments. Give them a free hand and hold them responsible. They should have full power to appoint their subordinates. This plan has worked well in Toronto. It has led to good government and is in the interest of efficiency and economy.

The War.

I would like to refer to the War in so far as it affects the municipalities and recruiting. When the war opened we were attending our annual Convention at Sherbrooke in August, 1914. An appeal was then made to us by the Government to assist them. The country was not ready for war and it is the duty of the Province and the municipality to assist in strengthening the Government's hands and do everything we can to help them in relation to the prosecution of the war. The municipalities have loyally