

U. C. M. CONVENTION—Continued.

vention" has assumed a new significance. We are no longer content to merely remove obstacles from the path of the public health, and permit the people, generally to imagine that these obstacles, being removed, never existed. A new ambition has seized us. Ardor and enthusiasm for the maintenance of health, we are resolved are no longer to be confined to any official class. Every man and woman, and even child of discretionary years, are to be in a sense, their own preventive officers and are to be taught to avoid of themselves, these harmful things and in a positive way, to learn to put away multitudes of other detriments to their well-being that their forefathers had not even a conception of. In a word, the predominating principle of modern hygiene is education, or to vary the popular expression for a better one, enlightenment.

The public is no longer to be driven; it is to be led, or rather to attain such a degree of appreciation of right living, that they shall be able to go forward largely of their own initiative. This, if not the latest, is certainly the most important idea introduced of late years into public health administration.

HOUSING

Take Housing, though one of the oldest problems, the subject of housing has assumed an urgency that really converts it into a late and pressing exigency. There seems to be not enough houses to "go around". Building was practically at a stand-still during the war, and the enormous advance in prices since its conclusion, has been almost prohibitive of new construction. Here the state has already stepped in, both in this country and in England. In the latter country, especially, a proper method seems to have been inaugurated, and according to last press report, the Ministry of Health in England is preparing to erect 24,000 houses at a proportionately large expense. I am not in a position to know the exact method by which such work is to be carried out, but I am sure you will bear with me, if in a few words as possible, I give you my own ideas relative to such an enterprise.

The Municipality should be given authority to borrow, from time to time, amounts of money sufficient to provide homes for its citizens in need of same; homes that are plain but substantial, that is; of brick or cement rather than of wood, for if constructed of the latter they, many times, serve but one purpose viz.—supplying fuel for a conflagration; which, I take it should not be the policy of a modern city. These houses should have within and without those features which are today recognized as absolutely essential for the physical and moral well-being of its tenants. There should be the air and garden space in the rear and a delicate measurement of nature's carpet in front as an appropriate finish. Internally ventilation, sanitation, heating and cleanliness should appear in their latest dress. These houses should be standardized in every particular, thus from a comprehensive viewpoint making it possible to build at much reduced rates. There is but one way that such buildings can be successfully erected and taken care of, this is,—being built and owned by the municipality.

This is one example at least, whatever we think of such generally, where municipal ownership can play a most important part in those matters that are today occupying a foremost position among the Nation's problems, viz.—Reconstruction, conservation and the ushering in or a lasting Peace.

To continue the building of houses as we have seen is most uncertain as to its results. In the majority of instances the monies are loaned to men whose obligations and responsibilities are already making it difficult for them to make both ends meet; add to these, principal, interest, insurance, depreciation or upkeep and increased taxes, and the result is that either the upkeep on the one hand fails to materialize or the owner becomes discouraged after he has made several payments; the home is taken and eventually falls into the hands of a Shylock who squeezes from it the "pound of flesh" and, in either case, the building becomes a further unit of our slum districts; in other words, that which we started out to eliminate we have done quite well in supporting.

In order to intelligently and successfully build and own, I would suggest that the Municipality act through a Commission whose personnel would be made up of an architect, a barrister and a public health physician, and who would be adequately remunerated. It would be their duty to see to it that these properties were properly taken care of, and, to this end, a schedule of rules and regulations would be prepared and posted in each of these municipally owned homes which would appear as a part of con-

tract between landlord and tenant. These Rules and Regulations properly kept would result in the house being protected from the usual effacement and depreciation which so frequently obtains in rented houses.

The rents of these houses should be made as low as possible to conform with only the necessary charges of maintenance and sinking fund. Should these make the rental beyond the ability of the ordinary workman to pay, then, the Government should intervene and become responsible for the deficiency.

In selecting sites for these houses, two objects can be attained, the clearing up of the slums, and giving to the laboring classes, practicable and comfortable homes. Regarding the first, other things being equal, it is more economical for this class of tenant to live within the confines of the city—for as a rule, the workingman has to be in the city in the evening to arrange for his work next day; in addition, two or three times a week, he wishes to attend places of amusement, meetings etc. Then if he has a family and they are working in the city, it pays him many times over to have his home in the city, thus saving car fare, etc., etc.

All of this being so, it should be one of the first duties of a municipality to house clean by eliminating as rapidly as possible, the undesirable and uninhabitable houses and in their place erect the modern workingman's house. This policy conducted persistently for a decade would present an entirely new dress to the city's appearance.

Public Health

But also another vital step forward has been taken. Heretofore, it has been adjudged sufficient that public health matters be placed in the hands of a committee, usually styled the Provincial or State Board of Health. Indeed, this obtains yet in the great majority of the provinces and states of North America. But public health is fast outgrowing such swaddling clothes. It is being recognized everywhere that the subject matter to be dealt with is of too great importance to be thus relegated to a subordinate body. If roads and bridges, if agriculture, if forests and mines and the collection of revenue be of sufficient moment to demand the immediate attention of the government, and to necessitate the direct supervision and control of a minister it is surely more than evident that public health is at least of equal importance. If a government is to be judged by the measure of care it gives to, and the success it attains relative to the conduct of the services first mentioned, should it not also be condemned or approved, as the case may be, in accordance with the attention it gives to that dearest interest of all—the health and well-being of the men, women and children whom it governs? For long, the development and perfection of the horse, the health of cows and of hogs, have exercised the keenest wits and the highest talents of our governments. Yet, is it to be admitted for a moment that these interests can compare with the welfare, comfort health and development of man himself? Surely such an interest is too great a thing to be handed over without restraint to any secondary body, no matter how high its personnel may be, nor how great its mental and spiritual attainments. Boards, ever since their conception, the world over, have been famous for gradual decadence. They are apt to lose sight of their original and fundamental functions; they become more concerned regarding the supposed interests of the board itself than with the objects they were established to promote; they many times fall into ruts, routine and "red-tape"; their members linger on into senility and become filled with conservatism. Such unfortunately, is human nature, and such has been almost universally, the course of permanent boards.

With governmental departments, it has not been so. They do not grow old, and obese, and case-hardened. Their vitality is maintained and quickened, periodically, by a necessary appeal to the people, and, continuously by the "white light" of public attention and criticism, which beats not only "upon the throne", but on every one actively engaged in political life. They have not time to grow stale; even their political friends will see to that not to mention their political opponents.

Hence, at last, logic has prevailed or is prevailing. Public Health is being placed under direct governmental control, and he under whose care it is placed must answer directly, without circumlocution or apology or evasion directly to the people.

Provincial Department of Public Health.

In New Brunswick we have had the privilege and honor to have been the first to recognize this great truth, or at any rate, the first to put it into practical application. In 1918, a complete revolution was made in that Province in