

17th Annual Convention of Union of Canadian Municipalities, Victoria, B.C.

JULY 9th, 10th and 11th.

The first part of the Report appeared in the October issue.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 10TH.

The President, Mayor W. D. Hardie, of Lethbridge (Alberta), in the chair.

Keeping up of Municipal Credit.

There was submitted a resolution upon the Maintenance of Municipal Credit, as follows:—

"We the members of the Union of Canadian Municipalities, being fully seized with the importance of preserving the credit of the country so that during and after the war the ability to raise capital necessary for the carrying on of the war and the development of the country shall not be placed in jeopardy;

AND WHEREAS, any self-governing public body, such as Provincial Governments, Municipalities, School Districts, etc., which does not promptly meet its obligations in connection with its outstanding indebtedness, has the effect of not only injuring the credit of that body but other similar bodies and the country generally;

AND WHEREAS, there are at present a number of Municipalities that are many months behind in the payment of their interest and principal on Debentures outstanding in the hands of investors in Great Britain, Canada and the United States which is having a very injurious effect on the credit of the Dominion of Canada at large;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT we, members of the Union of Canadian Municipalities, consider it in the interest of the country that, where such conditions may occur or where there are evidences that such a situation is likely to occur, that, as the Municipalities are created by the Province, the Province immediately take such action as they may find to be effective to provide that the just debts of these self-governing bodies are redeemed and the good name and credit of the country thereby maintained;

THAT a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Premiers of the various Provinces."

Upon motion by Reeve Bridgman, seconded by Alderman Owen, it was resolved that the resolution as to the Municipal credit be received and filed.

Protest Against Changes in The Railway Act.

SECRETARY LIGHTHALL submitted a draft of resolution re the "Consolidated Railway Act," now before Parliament.

Upon motion by Alderman Owen (Vancouver), seconded by Mayor Costello (Calgary), it was unanimously resolved:

"That the Municipalities of Canada, as represented by the Union of Canadian Municipalities in Convention assembled, at Victoria, B.C., have heard with regret and alarm of the changes made in the Senate to the clauses of the Bill consolidating the Railway Act, which affect municipalities, particularly as regards the necessity of obtaining consent of the municipal authority by by-law, previous to constructing works on streets, highways and public places, and also as regards permitting easements and servitudes to be expropriated by public utility and railroad companies in cities, towns and villages; and whereas the rights and privileges of municipalities are thereby seriously endangered, and any invasion of these rights are a direct assault upon municipalities. This Union records its unalterable opposition to such changes, and energetically demand that they be not made.

The Executive of this Union are instructed to take all measures they may deem advisable to prevent the changes in question; the said provisions having been originally introduced as the result of grave evils, and being the result of years of discussion and useful consideration.

The resolution was carried.

War Measures.

The following resolution was also unanimously adopted: "Whereas the Union of Canadian Municipalities in Convention assembled in London, Ont., in 1917, expressed their willingness to co-operate with the Government of Canada in every way possible in the carrying out of its various war measures;

"Therefore, be it resolved that this Convention reiterate its willingness to further co-operate in every way to assist

the Government in carrying out its various measures in the prosecution of the war to a successful termination."

Public Works after the War.

MR. YORATH.—At the present time the whole of the Municipalities are being organized with the view to obtaining information as to what public works can be started immediately after the end of the war. This I brought up in Montreal two years ago, and nothing has been done to provide work for the amount of labor which will be thrown on the market. Now, this should have the serious consideration of this convention. It is being dealt with in other countries, and if it is not dealt with in this country it will be a very serious matter.

MAYOR PERRY (Prince George).—I gathered from the remarks by the various Mayors who spoke on the subject yesterday, that is in regard to the very large amount of back taxes. If that condition exists the credit of the cities throughout Canada will be impaired. Should these back taxes be permitted to accumulate year by year the condition continually becomes worse, or should there be tax sales year by year. If these back taxes are continually left, when the war is ended and the problem of finding employment for returned soldiers all cities will not be able to cope with the situation; there will be suffering after the war. The fact that we have large orders for munitions from the British Government means that we are enjoying prosperity, but as soon as peace is declared there will be a change from that. They are all shifting the responsibility from one body to another. They are all asking the co-operation of the Municipalities. It is one of our most important duties, at this Convention, to pass resolutions to assist the Dominion and Provincial Governments as to how to cope with the situation. The question of the returned soldiers I am not going to say anything in regard to that until this afternoon.

With regard to back taxes, it is better to have annual tax sales. It is unfair to have the city carrying property from year to year, and the man who does not pay his taxes to be carried by the city from year to year. It is unfair. In regard to the unemployed I think that we should pass some resolution guiding the Dominion Government in that regard. You know that after every war that has ever been held there has been depression. After the South African war men were walking the streets looking for work. Another thing I think the Government should do in order to avoid a collapse of financial plans in the country would be to nationalize the banks. The banks should be owned by the Dominion Government. I think it is a shame that the banks of this country should be permitted to issue paper money on their capital which is being invested in buildings and stock and bonds, and they can issue paper money to a very large degree and gain a tremendous profit. I say that condition should be avoided, and the Dominion Government should gain that profit whereby they would have more money after the war.

ALDERMAN McBAIN, Vancouver.—To have a successful tax sale we do not want the land, but the money. I think we should adopt some system, such as Victoria has done, a ten-year system. We need money not property at the present time.

COM. YORATH, Sask.—In the Province of Saskatchewan the tax sale procedure was renewed in 1914. The fact is that these Municipalities have held tax sales and made a larger number of tax payers pay their taxes. The arrears of taxes in Saskatchewan are very much smaller than in Alberta and British Columbia. If the holder pays 1-10 arrears of taxes the Municipality would not dispose of the property. The arrears of taxes in Saskatchewan are reduced on account of actual, collections coming into the Municipal Offices.

CITY CLERK DICKINSON, North Cowichan.—The experience which Commissioner Yorath has pointed out is an experience which has worked both ways. It is applied to blocks of land which has fallen to the Municipality through tax sales, whereby the purchaser has to pay to the Municipality in annual instalments the arrears which are due. In the meantime the property is deeded to the Municipality. The moral effect of the annual tax sale is beneficial. One reason why we have held a tax sale is