

CONVENTION OF U. C. M.—(Continued).

connection with any difficulty which might arise from time to time. In taking this view we have a double matter to fix. When you come to consider means for the purpose of collecting taxes which are assessed against property you will find that after a tax sale has been held at a large expense the whole thing has been taken into court. That experience is common to all Municipalities. In my mind, there is a simple and easy way of getting away from this. If you make your legislation so that when property is in arrears of taxes that this property passes to the Municipality, and you get away from all the expense for advertising tax sales, etc., and you get away from taking it into Court, and all these difficulties which attach to a tax sale.

I want to assure you that I firmly believe that the best, most economical and most efficient administration can be brought about by the decentralization of power. By giving each Municipality power to handle its own affairs. I do not believe for a moment that all the intellectual wealth of the people is concentrated in the Parliament. I believe that you have men in your Councils just as competent to enact legislation, as well as any man in the House of Commons. We are trying to work out our problems along democratic lines. That the people must govern and learn to govern themselves, and getting the people to do their duty by the State. I speak for the members of the Government as well. We are desirous of helping you to this end.

MAYOR HAWKINS, Halifax: We are favored with having the Premier with us this afternoon, and appreciate the broad-minded view he has taken on civic matters. The fact is that we were prepared to go down within the precincts of the Provincial building. The Premier has taken the broad-minded view that there should be a certain amount of home rule in regard to civic matters. He has touched upon the matter of taxation, and of collecting civic taxes. I am pleased to see the Premier of the Province open this Convention to-day, and I say we have heard the Hon. Mr. Oliver with extreme pleasure.

President of B. C. Municipalities.

REEVE BRIDGEMAN, President of the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, was then introduced.

Gentlemen:—It is with more than ordinary pleasure that, as President of the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, I extend to you on their behalf a most hearty welcome to British Columbia on this annual convention, now being held in our capital city, and also through you, to the Dominion Civic Improvement League.

It has been our earnest wish for many years that you, the parent municipal organization in Canada, should visit us. We realize the time and expense that you will be put to, but are sure that seeing the western outposts of our Dominion will well repay you, and hope that this visit will be the forerunner of others, as we have more of interest for you to see than could possibly be covered during the period of one convention. I know that the City of Victoria will entertain you royally, as their hospitality is well known throughout Canada, and feel sure that all matters that properly come before this convention will receive every consideration, and that all interested in municipal affairs throughout the Dominion will derive both benefit and pleasure by attending.

I am also glad that your presence here gives me the opportunity of thanking you publicly, on behalf of the Provincial Union, for the splendid assistance your Union rendered at Ottawa two years ago in protecting our interests when the charter of the Western Canada Telephone was before the House.

There is one question of local interest I would like to bring forward, viz., that of representation on your Executive for our Union. I hope you will not think that we in British Columbia are asking too much in seeking to have three representatives from this Province. Our idea is that the President for the time being should be a member, and that at our annual convention two other members would be appointed to act. I believe it would be our purpose to select two men, members of the Federal House, who had had municipal experience, so that you could have the active co-operation during the sitting of the legislature of at least two men who would be thoroughly conversant with municipal conditions in British Columbia.

There are a few matters I would like to touch upon, concerning special administration throughout Canada, need

for which has arisen through the war, on which some action might well be taken.

One is the expense the country is put to at present in connection with the conservation of food. Both the Federal and Provincial Governments appear to have many persons employed in preparing and distributing literature regarding this grave question, printing and paper alone costing many thousands. To save national expense, is it not possible that municipal officials already employed should handle the food situation, under direct authority from Ottawa, without its having to go through so many channels?

Further it appears to me that too much is left to the voluntary system in the conservation of food. When commodities are offered for sale, it is human nature that if people have the money they are going to buy them. In view of the national crisis could we not petition Ottawa that they should prohibit the sale of certain commodities, which in their opinion are deemed necessary for the prosecution of the war, providing they have accommodation for storage until transportation can be effected.

Another matter which appeals to us very strongly is the treatment of interned alien enemies. At our convention held in Vernon in 1916, after visiting the internment camp there, our Union passed a strong resolution which was forwarded to Ottawa asking that the interned men should be employed on some national work; for instance, on national highways or food production, that they should receive a small allowance, and the value of the balance of their work to go either to assist returned soldiers or to be used by the Government in some national work. It appeared to us then, and I believe our views are unchanged, that the treatment of these interned aliens is both costly and unprofitable, as they are very well fed, do nothing, and a large number of men are required to guard them. These guards could be equally well employed in watching the aliens doing some useful work.

Further, there are numbers of alien enemies, German and Austrian, who I know are not interned, employed in this Province, and I believe in other Provinces of our Dominion, drawing equal pay with our own citizens. They are exempt from military duty, and their only penalty is to report at stated intervals to the police. Some of these men are actually working under Munition Board Contracts. Such a condition, gentlemen, is unfair in the extreme. Even if the removal of these privileges should work some hardship on any well-intentioned alien enemies, we are at war, and it is not unreasonable that they should feel the result of the guilt of their countries. Could not these men, as suggested before for those already interned, be employed for the benefit of the country?

Then, again, we find many positions filled by aliens, not enemies, who can barely speak our language, but who to-day are drawing good wages, and are exempt under the Military Service Act through not being citizens of this country. This condition is not logical. Why should our own people have to fight and die for the betterment of humanity at large, while within our land others are exempt, and risk nothing to help this great object, which benefits them as much as it does us. Our Province is hard hit in this respect, because such a magnificent proportion of our men have gone overseas of whom we are very proud, and in their name, and the name of all who have gone from Canada, let us do everything in our power to help bring about a better state of affairs. Would it not be possible to press for legislation to be enacted whereby those of alien birth, who are enjoying all the privileges and protection of our country, should at least pay some special tax for the privilege of being exempted?

I believe in National Service in its entirety. It has become necessary to conscript life, and such being the case, there can be no honest reason why every man in the country, other than alien enemies, should not bear the burden equally. Profiteering must go; excess profits made through war conditions are nothing more or less than blood money. Everything that the country has should be put in the melting pot. No amount of difficulties, real or alleged, should be allowed to interfere with the attainment of the one great object, namely, the winning of the war. Surely if Canada is good enough for people to make their home in, the burden of protecting that home should be shared by all alike, thus making good our boast, "Equal rights for all, and special privilege for none."