

## Convention Banquet

The delegates were banquetted in splendid style at the Randolph Hotel on Tuesday evening. Congenial company and a royal spread combined to make the event very enjoyable and music from Salsbury's orchestra brightened and enlivened the gathering.

After the toast to "The King", Major-General Sir Archibald Macdonell, the newly appointed commandant of the Royal Military College, spoke. In discussing various features of the war Mayor-General Macdonell remarked that on the whole the Canadian people realized very little of what the Canadian Corps had done in Europe.

He declared that General Currie was one of the "finds" of the war and that his leadership had been largely responsible for the fact that the Canadians had the smallest percentage of loss with the greatest percentage of gain of any corps on the Western front. He pointed out that while the Canadian corps had constituted but one-twentieth of the entire British army it had succeeded in capturing one-sixth of the prisoners and guns that were taken.

Mayor W. D. O. Hardie, of Lethbridge declared that if Canada was to have good government there must be true and enlightened municipalities. Countries in the British Empire, enjoyed the greatest liberties in the world. Mayor Hardie made an earnest appeal for still greater interest in municipal work.

Mayor Harold Fisher of Ottawa pointed out the many advantages of such a convention as that which was being held.

Mayor T. D. Bouchard of St. Hyacinthe in a witty speech reminded his hearers that he was handicapped in speaking by two drawbacks. He had learned the lesson that ginger ale was the enemy of easy speech and furthermore he was retarded from eloquent oratory by the fact that he came from a place where French was almost wholly spoken and he had had to learn what English he knew from the newspapers. Nevertheless, he thanked the Mayor and Council very cordially for their reception.

Dr. J. W. Edwards, M.P. for Frontenac, spoke eloquently on the high cost of living, remarking that in the past there had been a disposition on the part of the urban municipalities to neglect a consideration of rural problems and they were now paying the penalty for their indifference to the economic problems which caused the alarming rural

exodus. He noted that in the census of 1911 rural population had shown an increase of only 17 per cent while the urban increase was 62 per cent. Nor has the depopulation of the rural districts ceased for the speaker remarked that every county in Ontario showed a steady loss for many years back. In 1918 the rural population was 31,992 less than in 1916 while the cities had added 35,288 during the same time.

Dr. Edwards could see that there should be any antagonism between the federal, provincial and municipal governments for he perceived that there was a connection between them. Their objects were the same for they all seek the advancement of the citizens regardless of party affiliations.

"Is there anything new about profiteering," inquired Dr. Edwards. "Is it not a fact that there was profiteering before the war and that it is perhaps more apparent now because larger profits were piled up when gold flowed into this country to pay for purchases? We say that the high cost of living is a problem. But let me tell you that it is a problem now because it is pinching people now who were never pinched before. When the necessities of life cost a lot it creates a problem, people say. Is it not also a problem when it cost the people less to buy goods than it costs other people to produce them? And that was exactly what was happening before the war."

Dr. Edwards believed that the big problem was to make the farms profitable.

Controller John Murphy, Halifax, took the opportunity to express to the delegates the thanks of the city of Halifax for the many kind offers of aid that had come from Canadian municipalities after the explosion disaster.

Mr. J. G. Elliott, Editor the Kingston Whig, praised the Canadian municipalities for their work and declared that he was convinced that the men representing the cities and towns of the Dominion were doing the utmost for the welfare not only of their own communities but for the whole country.

Throughout the banquet was most enjoyable and a splendid spirit of congeniality prevailed. Particularly gratifying was the attendance of many French-Canadians officials with whom the Ontarions and Westerners engaged in earnest discussion concerning the cultivation of an abiding spirit of amity and concord between the two races.

## High Cost of Living

At the opening of the Wednesday morning session of the convention Ald. Grant, Edmonton, moved, seconded by Ald. Murphy, Halifax, that a committee of five consisting of Mayor Fisher, Ottawa, Ald. Grant of Edmonton, Mayor W. D. L. Hardie, Lethbridge, Mayor Alex. Thurber, Longueuil, Que., and Mr. Arthur Roberts, K. C., be appointed to considered the proposed revision of the Union's constitution. The motion was carried.

### HIGH COST OF LIVING.

In introducing the discussion on the high cost of living Mr. W. D. Lighthall, K. C., said he had put his proposals in the matter before the Union in 1917, and referred to his paper published at the time, proposing as one remedy the appointment of a Commission similar to the Dominion Railway Board. Canadians felt the grind of the high cost of living because the war had made people poor. The purchasing power of one dollar had been reduced to forty-six cents and the effect upon the poorer classes had been grave. When living expenses are twice as high as formerly the poor man has cause for demanding high wages and the restless spirit which is rankling the masses has a tendency to become revolutionary when it became known that some men have been making millions.

Mr. Lighthall attributed the high cost of living to mergers, by the system of combinations completed in 1911, corporations in the past few years had merged many things necessary to life, such as the rubber, meat, milling and oil trusts, and consequently he was unable to agree with Dr. Edwards who had said the previous evening that the present condition was merely an aggravation of a permanent problem. He believed that such large-scale conso-

lidation resulted in virtual monopoly which had for its obvious purpose the dictation of prices. "That is the condition to-day," said Mr. Lighthall, "and the question with business men everywhere at the head of such monopolies is simply, 'How much is it safe for us to ask?'"

As an instance of this misuse of power he pointed out the rise in the price of rubbers some twelve years ago when consequent on the forming of this present rubber trust they were advanced from sixty cents to one dollar and a quarter. Such advances he declared were bound to cultivate bad feeling.

Such conditions had resulted in the annihilation of the law of supply and demand. He held it as a fixed principle that no monopoly ought to be allowed to dictate the price of any commodity. To curb that inevitable tendency he urged that they be controlled by the Dominion Government. Unless this were done he believed that revolution was inevitable.

"The big man and the small man must obey the rules of law and order," declared Mr. Lighthall. "The courts must exercise the function. One court, the Dominion Railway Board, has shown that it can control the railways which are virtual monopolies. Before it was appointed the municipalities had trouble with the railways but not afterwards and if the high cost of living is to be solved there must be a similar court or courts and the establishment of commissions. The Government has recognized this by appointing the Board of Commerce; President Wilson has recognized it and is appointing investigating commissions; and in a recent inquiry W. F. O'Connor of the Cost of Living Commission was asked for his remedy and urged such a cost of living court, of which he is now a member.