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A BIG DAY OF BUSINESS.

THE MUNICIPAL REFORMERS AT WORK AND AT PLAY.

The Committees Bring Down a Number of Important Reports Which are Freely Discussed and Adopted—A Drive Around Town and a Lunch at Harry Webb's—The Mayors on Their Mettle.

When the general meeting of the conference to discuss exemptions, assessments, etc., opened yesterday morning in the City Council chamber there were present, besides the delegates, Hon. A. M. Ross, Provincial Treasurer, and Hon. A. S. Hardy, Commissioner of Crown Lands. They accepted an invitation to a seat near the chairman. Mayor Erratt of Ottawa.

The committee appointed to consider amendments to the Municipal Act favored arbitration of claims for damages against municipalities.

This proposition was strongly opposed by Ald. Baxter and McMillan of Toronto and Ald. Mason of Hamilton. They argued that it was better to leave such claims in the hands of the claims committee of the council with appeal to the judge and jury.

Mayor Morrison of Owen Sound: "All claims for damages resulting from defective sidewalks should be left to a judge without jury."

Mayor Heyd, Brantford: "In a claim against our city, brought by a farmer, all city men were shut off the jury and farmers put on. As a result we were stuck for $1700, whereas $300 would have been enough."

Ald. Macdougall, Toronto: "It is a serious matter to deprive a citizen, who has a claim against the corporation, of the means of enforcing that claim which he would have the right to use in establishing a similar demand against an individual."

The recommendation was abandoned.

Markets in Cities and Towns.

The committee also recommended that municipalities be allowed to have sole power to regulate markets and fees in cities, towns and villages. This proposition was opposed by Mayor Heyd, Brantford; Ald. Hobson, Guelph, and Ald. Mason, Hamilton. It also was defeated.

The proposal to include under the head of hawkers who may be licensed vendors of tinware, carpets, household furniture, boots and shoes, ready-made clothing and picture frames was carried without division.

The recommendation that corporations seek power to equip street railways or purchase existing lines by arbitration was also adopted.

It was further recommended that cities be given power to submit a bylaw for reducing the number of aldermen from each ward to two on petition of 100 ratepayers.

Ald. McMillan said that a city council should be forced to submit a bylaw on petition of one or two thousand ratepayers. The council would never submit such a measure unless compelled to do so. The recommendation, however, was adopted.

Assessor Gordon of Kingston got a resolution through in favor of imposing a fair share of taxation on merchants who travel from one town to another.

The report of the Committee on Local Improvements was next submitted. It recommended: That two-thirds of a council be permitted to force the construction of a sewer, sidewalk or other similar work as a local improvement, even against the wish of the property owners in the street; that the time for petitioning against an improvement be reduced from one month to ten days; to make exempted property pay local improvement taxes.

Ald. Sander, who presented the report, said the main object of the first clause was to prevent large owners on one street from keeping back necessary sanitary or other improvements. The report was adopted.

No Henry George in Ours.

In connection with the report from the committee on amendment to the Assessment Act, Ald. Mason, Hamilton, proposed that real estate, as defined by the Assessment Act, be the sole basis of taxation. In the course of the discussion which followed, Ald. Hobson of Guelph referred to the Henry George theory, which was nearly approached by the proposition, by saying: "We are scarcely prepared to accept the Henry George theory."

"Wiping out personal assessments would create a rebellion in our village," said Mr. McLean of Merritton.

Mayor Heyd: "Within one-fifth of the assessable property consists of personalty or income, and if I forbear to exempt that I would not long be mayor of Brantford."

"A tax on land only would create greater exemptions than we have now," said Warden Dwyer of Lincoln.

Warden Larke said that farmers were not opposed to the exemption of personal property. The last amendment to the Assessment Act was to remove taxes from farm stock.

Ald. Mason's proposal was only supported by eight members.

The Delegates Visit the Sights.

The conference then adjourned and at 2 p.m. the delegates drove out with Ald. Dodds' Reception Committee to see the sights of the city. They first proceeded to the Lombard-street Hall. The firemen turned out and showed the visitors what they could do.

The new aerial truck was paraded, Foreman Frank Smith climbing to the top. The delegates were then taken up Jarvis-street to Bloor-street and through Rosedale to Yonge-street, thence to the Reservoir. Queen's Park was next visited, and via College and Spadina-avenues, Queen-street and Strachan-avenue Exhibition Park was reached, where the visitors were entertained by Park Superintendent John Chambers.

Returning to the city shortly after 5 p.m., the delegates and members of the Reception Committee sat down to a choice cold collation at Harry Webb's. Mayor Clarke presided over the festivities. On his right were seated Mayor Erratt of Ottawa and Ald. Dodds. On his left was Mayor Taylor of London. His Worship of Toronto first proposed the customary toast to Her Majesty. This toast, said the chairman, was received nowhere with a greater degree of enthusiasm than in Toronto, the Province of Ontario and the Dominion of Canada. He trusted that these sentiments would always continue. There, referring to the conference at present being held in the Queen City, Mayor Clarke said: "There can be no doubt that the meeting will be productive of substantial benefit. The interchange of views and ideas would be productive of good to the cities, towns and rural municipalities of Ontario."

Ald. McMillan proposed "The Municipal Institutions of Ontario," coupled with the mayors of Ottawa, London and Brantford. The toast was responded to by Mayor Erratt on behalf of the council of the Capital. When they had commenced to agitate for this convention the gravest fears for the result had been apprehended. But the commencement of the conference had been most auspicious.

The Forest City Heard From.

Mayor Taylor of London responded for "The Forest City." In connection with this assessment question there was one change suggested which deserved the consideration of the people of this province, that was the change respecting the doing away with the assessment of personal property and income. While in favor of such a change on certain conditions, still at present His Worship would not feel inclined to commit himself to an opinion. He was personally in favor of the suggestion because it was very difficult to get at the personal property and find out the incomes that individuals were receiving. It was a question whether they might not suggest to the Local Legislature the advisability of sending circulars throughout Ontario asking the various corporations what their opinions were. Upon the answers received such legislation might be adopted if necessary as would remedy the evil. He believed that a feeling existed in the western part of Ontario in favor of the abolition of exemptions.

Mayor Heyd of Brantford said that while Canadians should be proud of the institutions under which they lived there was a certain element of weakness in our municipal institutions. But if there was on the statute books any enactment to which they objected the remedy was in their own hands.

Warden Larke, Warden of Ontario County, paid a high compliment to Toronto by saying that no city had attained such rapid growth, retaining at the same time such order and morality.

Mayor Erratt proposed "The Mayor and Reception Committee of Toronto."

Mayor Clarke responded. It was a great privilege, he said, to welcome to Toronto so many representative men. The results of the deliberations of the delegates would doubtless lead to substantial benefits to all the municipalities of Ontario.

For the Reception Committee Ald. Dodds responded. When the American Scientific Association visited Toronto they were astonished at her growth and prosperity.

Ald. Roaf and Baxter also spoke. Ald. Frankland, who has always had the welfare and prosperity of Canada at heart, and who is no lover of annexation with the United States, said that if we could get 6,000,000 people in the great Northwest we would hear no more of Commercial Union or of annexation. Canada had started on a small scale; so had he (the speaker). "But look at me now," said he. "Am I not solid? [Laughter.] Is my weight not very heavy?"

Ald. Shaw and Gibbs concluded the speaking and the diners then started down to do business at the City Council chamber.

The Plan of Assessments.

Arrived there consideration of the report from the Committee on Assessments was resumed. Clause 2 read:

That sub. sec. 1, sec. 42, chap. 193, R.S.O., be repealed and the following be enacted in place thereof:

It shall be the duty of every person assessable for personal property or income in any city, town or village municipality to deliver to the assessor or assessors, a statement sworn to before the assessment commissioners, or the said assessor or assessors, or a justice of the peace, before Aug. 1 in each year in municipalities where the assessment rolls are returnable on Oct. 1, and in all other municipalities before March 1, containing all the particulars respecting the personal property or income assessable against such person.

It is also recommended that sub-sec. 2, sec. 45, chap. 193, R.S.O. be amended by striking out the figures "$20" and inserting instead: "Not less than $20, nor more than $200."

It is also recommended that the present mode of appointing assessors in cities where there is an assessment commissioner should be amended by adding these words to sec. 251:

That in the event of the mayor and assessment commissioner not agreeing as to the persons to be appointed as assessors, that the county judge be a third person to assist in making said appointments at such time as the law requires.

In reference to the Court of Revision the report continues: "This much vexed question has caused considerable thought and earnest discussion amongst the members of the committee. It is thought that the following of many suggestions made will be found nearest to a solution of the difficulty:

"That in the opinion of the committee the Court of Revision, as at present constituted, is not constructed satisfactorily in cities and towns, it being composed of members of the council, and that a more independent court could be appointed as follows, viz.: Two members to be appointed by the council and one by the mayor, these three to be persons not members of the corporation, to constitute a court of revision, each of whom shall be paid as the council shall determine, a final appeal to be had to the county judge as at present.

Referring to the sale of lands for arrears of taxes in counties it is recommended "that the law as at present in force be allowed to remain without alteration, as it would not be in the interest of the general public to have the same collected by the local treasurers."

This exhaustive report was considered clause by clause and was productive of a good deal of discussion. It went through without amendment with the exception of these additions:

Moved by John McLean, seconded by E. F. Dwyer, that in cases where manufacturing companies have their factories or storehouses situated in the municipality and their headquarters in another municipality, that the municipality in which such factories or storehouses are situated shall have the right to assess the personal property contained in such factories or storehouses.

That the municipality in which income is earned shall have the right to assess such income.

J. H. Peck, seconded by J. T. Carson, also moved: "That in the opinion of the convention all personal property should be assessed wherever found in any municipality."

Striking at Exemptions.

The reports of the Committee on Exemptions made these recommendations:

That all exemptions should be abolished as far as practicable and moved especially recommending that clause 3 of sec. 7 of the Assessment Act be struck out.

That clause 4 of said section be struck out.

That clause 21 be struck out.

That clause 25 be struck out.

In order to comprehend the above amendments a perusal of the original clauses is necessary. Clause 3 exempts "every place of worship and land used in connection therewith, churchyard or burial ground." Clause 4 exempts "the buildings and grounds of and attached to every university, college, high school or other incorporated seminary of learning, whether vested in a trustee or otherwise, so long as such building or grounds are actually used and occupied by such institutions or if unoccupied, but not if otherwise occupied."

Clause 21 exempts "so much of the personal property of any person as is equal to the just debt owed by him on account of such property, except such debts as are secured by mortgage upon his real estate, or unpaid on account of the purchase money therefor."

Clause 25 exempts "the stipend or salary of any clergyman or minister of religion while in actual connection with any church and doing duty as such clergyman or minister, to the extent of $1000 and the parsonage, when occupied as such or unoccupied, and if there be no parsonage the dwelling house occupied by him with the land thereto attached to the extent of two acres, and not exceeding $2000 in value. This subsection shall not apply to a minister or clergyman whose ordinary business or calling at the time of the assessment is not clerical though he may do occasional clerical work or duty."

Mr. Shannon of Kingston moved an amendment favoring the retention of the exemption from taxation of burying grounds. After a prolonged discussion it was carried.

Mr. Beck moved an amendment favoring the retention of the exemption of churches and lands occupied for church purposes, assessing them for local improvements. This amendment was voted down.

The conference will resume at 9.30 to-day, when the remainder of the report will be considered.

In the ladies' dining room at the English Chop House theatre parties receive special attention.

Alleged Rate Cutting.

NEW YORK, Nov. 13.—The Board of Trade and Transportation to-day adopted resolutions asking the Interstate Commerce Commissioner to investigate the charges that some of the trunk lines and their connections are discriminating