

Municipal Affairs in Alberta

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HOW TAX SALES HAVE WORKED OUT.

In the May article of municipal affairs in Alberta, special attention was paid to the Edmonton tax sale, the method of conducting the sale and how the purchasers would benefit from their investments. While this article is being prepared for the June issue, the sale is still proceeding, and it may go on for some time yet, as there are or rather were before the sale started, something like 27,661 lots with unpaid taxes.

A number of lists with this total number of lots inscribed with arrears owing, were handed to the city treasurer. He announced the sale, and at the same time notified the property owners that under the provisions of the Moratorium Act as it is familiarly called, but known on the Alberta Statutes, as the Volunteers and Reservists Act, that if they wanted to seek the protection of the terms of the act to immediately notify him and the lot would be struck off the list of "for sales."

After the moratorium brigade had done its worst the newspapers of Edmonton published several columns of properties for sale, totalling 19,313 lots, thus 8,248 lots were withdrawn under the act. Since the advertising of the sale has taken place, another 3,500 lots have been withdrawn. The auctioneers have called the entire list through once, and are now on the second call.

The Imperial Bank of Canada was the heaviest investor in the tax sale, and purchasers have receipts now in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Regina and Calgary. The tax sale has been the means of bringing in about \$350,000 of tax arrears, although this sum is frightfully small compared to the arrears outstanding. This is approximately half of the arrears for the year 1913, and on top of this are the arrears to date, amounting in all, according to the report of the city controller, \$5,230,257.03 as compared with \$1,082,745.59 in 1913, which includes that year and previous.

The tax arrear question is a serious one, and one which will have to be faced. Whether or not a system will be devised for long term payments remains to be seen. This system is being mooted, but anyway it is a question of time only before the majority of the taxes will be paid.

The city authorities in charge of the tax sale are expected to close down about the twelfth of May and adjourn for two weeks or more, then start up again. The procedure on the first call of the list was to take the property as advertised and in an automatic manner the auctioneer would keep on calling until a sale was made and then proceed. On the second call any purchaser can enter the hall, ask for any lot to be put up, bid for it and pay his cash. It might be called a preference call, for any one can have any lot put up at any time irrespective of whether or not the land was up the day before or would not in the ordinary event of things come up till the last day.

To be quite candid the sale has not been as pronounced a success as was anticipated. There is this consolation though, the city will hold tax sales every year now for some time to come. Another sale is due in 1918 to raise sufficient money to repay a loan which is redeemable in July. Then again the city council at a recent meeting made arrangements to borrow on 1916 arrears, thus making it compulsory to hold a sale in the spring of 1919. Land purchasers who think they are going to live again the past, and be careless about paying taxes, are going to make a big mistake. The time is not far distant when arrears of one year will be sold within eighteen months after the expiration of the year in arrears, so the city has made a good move in rehabilitating its credit at any rate.

There is one thing which could be impressed upon the minds of easterners—for westerners have the impression whether rightly or wrongly that the criticisms of the west come from the east—that for the year 1916, to quote the comptroller's report: "Edmonton shows a surplus for the year under review of \$44,094.83 over and above all expenditures." The policy of economy was inaugurated in 1915 with the change of civic administration, and as soon after the war broke out as possible. In the controllable expenditure of that year there was a saving of \$775,047.68 under 1914, and since then further savings have been effected amounting to \$410,452.45, making a total reduction in the past two years of \$1,185,500.13.

PUBLIC UTILITIES OF EDMONTON.

Of the utilities of Edmonton, the electric light and power

department reduced its operating cost 36 per cent. The surplus for 1916 was \$64,788.82, as compared with \$35,760.88 in 1915, and \$55,190.95 in 1914. The street railway reduced its operating expenses 27 per cent. and this is the only utility which recorded a deficit. The deficit for 1916 was \$119,597.66, of which \$4,669.60 is shown to be for shortage in the stock of stores and materials on hand, this having been ascertained as a result of an inventory during the month of February. The cost of operation was 73 per cent. in 1914; 68 per cent. in 1915, and 65 per cent. in 1916.

The telephone department shows a surplus for the first time since 1912 over all charges, the profit for the year 1916 being \$9,570.84 as against a loss of \$37,242.77 in 1915. From 24 per cent. in 1914, the cost of operation has been reduced to 18 per cent. in 1916.

The waterworks department reduced its cost of operation 4 per cent. Increased revenue, together with reduction in operating expenses places this department with those returning profits, a surplus of \$24,410.04 being earned in 1916, as against a deficit of \$5,749.98 in 1915.

The report also gives a forecast of the city's need financially for a few years to come. After taking into account all the available resources disclosed in order to liquidate its indebtedness, Edmonton will require the following sums in the years named:

1917	...	\$1,700,000
1918	...	3,200,000
1919	...	2,000,000
1920	...	1,400,000
1921	...	3,000,000

TRUE CITIZENSHIP.

C. J. YORATH.

It seems to me that the present position of our country and the Empire is similar to the example of the wrecked crew when endeavoring to escape in an open boat, and the boat is crowded, the provisions scanty and the prospect of making land distant. Laws are instantly established and enforced which no one thinks of disobeying. An entire equality of claim to the provisions is acknowledged without dispute and an equal liability to, necessary labor. No man who can row is allowed to refuse his oar, no man, however much money he has saved in his pocket, is allowed as much as half a biscuit beyond his proper ration. Any riotous person who endangered the safety of the rest would be bound and laid in the bottom of the boat without the smallest compunction for such violation of the principles of liberty, and on the other hand any child or woman, or aged person who was helpless and exposed to great danger and suffering by their weakness, would receive more than ordinary care and indulgence not unaccompanied with unanimous self-sacrifice on the part of the laboring crew. There is never any question under circumstances like these, of what is right or wrong, worthy or unworthy, wise or foolish. If there be any question, there is little hope for boat or crew.

The right man is put at the helm, every available hand is set to the oars, the sick are tended and the vicious restrained at once and decisively or if not the end is near."

So it is with our Province, our Dominion and our Empire to-day. This is not the time for playing politics, for courting with the foreign vote, for charges and countercharges of the two political parties.

The whole brain power, energies and patriotism of our rulers must be entirely concentrated upon perfecting our system of government, eliminating graft or suspicion of graft and working with a common united effort towards the goal of every true citizen—the establishment of an everlasting peace upon a foundation of justice.

Our Governments are on the threshold of a new era and upon the way in which the foundation of the new structure of the British Empire is constructed will depend the permanence of the edifice.

UNITED STATES BOND HOUSE AT REGINA.

The Wells, Dickey Company, of Minneapolis, a well known municipal bond house, is opening a branch at Regina, Sask. Mr. Stuart W. Wells states that this move is in anticipation of the larger development of Western Canada after the war.