

The London Convention

Co-operation between the Federal and Local Authorities to put into Practice War Measures Affecting the People.

The Convention of the Union of Canadian Municipalities held last month in London, Ont., under the presidency of the Mayor (Dr. Stevenson, marked a new epoch in the annals of municipal Canada. Hitherto the conventions, with the exception of the 1916 meeting, have been confined to the discussion of local problems, but the war has created new conditions, affecting the communal life of the country, that have by their very immensity become national in their scope and character. The 1916 convention, in the papers and addresses, which dealt with the larger responsibility of the municipalities brought about by the war, epitomized this new aspect, but it was left to the convention just closed, to put into concrete form the new national spirit of the people. Every one of the main resolutions passed have a direct bearing on the war, and Canada's part in bringing it to a successful consummation, and to better meet after war conditions; and each subject discussed opened out a new vista of opportunity for national service, not only on the part of the municipal councils, but the provincial and federal authorities as well.

The first resolution, adopted unanimously, called upon the Federal Government to seek the co-operation of the municipal councils in putting into practice all war measures directly affecting the people. In Great Britain such co-operation has been in practice since the war began, with wonderful results, and it is strange to those who have studied the question that the Federal authorities have not before now taken advantage of the official machinery of the municipalities which cover every square yard of the Dominion, to assist in co-ordinating and conserving the human and material resources of the country, which we have every confidence in believing would have been placed at their disposal had the municipal councils been properly approached. But better late than never. The councils have since the commencement of hostilities done much patriotic work, and we are but repeating ourselves in stating that they have always been, and are willing to do still more by taking on further national responsibilities, but the councils must first have satisfactory assurances that the Federal Government is really in earnest in its war measures — that the war commissions and boards, and the departments themselves mean business. Canada is at war, and well the municipal councils know it. They also know that the resources of the country must be utilized to their fullest extent if we are to beat the Germans, and that the resources cannot be properly utilized unless there is real co-ordination between the different units—the Federal, the Provincial and the Municipal authorities. The municipal unit at the recent convention has expressed itself as more than ready to do its part; and it is now up to the federal and provincial units to express themselves in like terms, which, if acted upon—and as far as the local councils are concerned, they will act—the many social and economic difficulties now before us will soon be overcome.

A Food Commission.

One of the main resolutions passed at the convention, was proposed by the secretary, Mr. W. D. Lighthall, who has taken a keen interest in the subject. The resolution refers to the appointment of a Food Commission to investigate and control the source of Canada's foodstuff supplies—in fact, to handle all commodities required by the people. The idea is that the suggested commission be along the same lines, and have somewhat similar powers to that of the Railway Commission, which has gained the confidence of the country, principally because it is outside party politics, and that the members are men of outstanding ability. It is not proposed that the Commission take the place of the Food Controller, whose office would seem to indicate that his duties are confined to the conservation and control of the retail prices of foodstuffs, but that it takes the place of the Minister of Labour in the putting into force of the Order-in-Council relating to the high cost of living; of course with additional powers.

Better Pay for Soldiers and Equalization of Pensions.

A resolution was passed urging that the present pay of the soldier be doubled. A similar resolution had been passed by the Toronto City Council, and there is every reason why the suggestions should be taken up seriously by the Federal Parliament, and none in favour of the present rate of pay, which is inadequate, even with separation allowance and Patriotic Fund, for the soldiers' families to meet the increased cost of living. A further argument put forward in favour of the increased pay for soldiers was to help those who would not accept anything from the Patriotic Fund, because of the charity taint attached to recipients—unintentional, of course, but a fact. A second resolution that was also passed in favour of our soldiers was introduced by the new President (Mayor Hardy of Lethbridge), urging that in the granting of pensions the rank of the soldier should not be considered, only the nature of the wounds and the disability of the pensioner. This is, as it should be, in a democratic country like Canada, and where so many of her best men volunteered to serve their country as privates; were proud to serve as such. It was these men who made it possible for Canada to so quickly answer the call in raising an army which is at once the admiration and envy of the whole world, including even the Germans. The sacrifice of the rank and file was, and is, quite equal to that of the officers, and there should be no difference in the pensions between the one and the other, otherwise it would be putting a premium on the patriotism of the lower rank in favour of their more fortunate friends who received commissions, many of them, though not all, through influence.

Municipal Bureau of Information.

The educational session was largely taken up with a resolution urging the municipal councils to inaugurate in their respective communities a Mu-