

CONVENTION OF U. C. M.—(Continued).

municipalities. Many years ago we had obtained, after bitter fights before Parliament against all kinds of franchise companies and all kinds of charter sharks, the adoption of certain "standard clauses" which are inserted in every new charter of electric light and telephone companies, and which are carefully worded to impose the necessity of municipal consent before the erection of poles or wires in, under over, or along any highway, square or public place, and the consent must be imposed by by-law and be upon the terms and conditions stated in the by-law.

We have had the greatest trouble with the Senate during the past Session over the question, a strong group of Senators having insisted on striking out the expression of municipal consent by by-law. If this deletion were permitted it would bring us back to the days of which we once had experience, when any kind of a nod or a wink by anybody around the City Hall, or even a silence, was interpreted as a sufficient consent. Our municipal delegations during the year, have, however, revived their old fighting spirit, and by appeals to the Government and the House of Commons have so far prevented the will of these Senators from prevailing, and the House of Commons seems disposed, as a whole, to stand by us and by popular rights in the matter. Similar action was attempted by the same Senators in changing the definition of "**Lands**" in the Act to include in it "easements", the effect of which would be very troublesome and injurious in expropriations in cities' and towns', and to some extent in villages. The action of the Executive in combatively opposing these changes ought to be now supported by an emphatic resolution of the present convention, so that when the Railway Act comes up again next Session we may be able to renew the fight with the support of such an unqualified backing, and if during the year, the cities' and towns' and Provincial Unions are called upon by telegram or letter from the Union Executive for special action, they will understand how serious the call is. Another leading item connected with the Railway Act is the matter of the Toronto and Niagara Power Company, regarding which the City of Toronto has found it necessary to ask for a special clause in the Railway Act, and as the principle concerns all municipalities, it is to be hoped unanimous support will be equally accorded that great and public-spirited municipality. It might also be noted that during the month of June of this year the new Municipal Commission of Montreal has vigorously taken up the numerous breaches by the utility companies' of the laws and by-laws and municipal rights relating to the cutting up and encumbering of the streets, and bids fair to soon evolve law and order out of company anarchy in the matter of pavements. The central Union has always derived much comfort from the constant loyalty of the Provincial Unions. They are ready to support every measure of municipal protection and progress, and one of the pleasant elements of this Western Meeting is the opportunity to meet and confer with the officers of these Unions and of the Departments of Municipal Affairs. The constant preaching of the Union that each Province ought to have a Department of Municipal Affairs has borne fruit in the Province of Quebec, which has at last added to such a Department, with a Minister at its head and it has

begun to produce beneficial results in the finances of the Quebec municipalities. We hope that the suspended promise of Ontario in the same direction may ripen without further delay. During the year the Union was represented at most of the Conventions of the principal Unions, as well as of the National Municipal League of the United States and of the League of Minnesota Municipalities, and has kept in touch with all international municipal associations in so far as permitted by the War. We are glad to feel that the present Convention meets in conjunction with the City Improvement League of Canada, and to have with us that eminent authority on Town Planning, Mr. Thomas Adams, of the Commission of Conservation of Canada. We feel that Mr. Adams and his work will be valued in our West in the full measure of his knowledge and fame, and we hope that his views will be everywhere sought after and leave their beneficial mark in our institutions. Our organ, the Canadian Municipal Journal, will make a separate report. I scarcely need to testify of the good work it has done during the year under the able editorship of Mr. Frederick Wright. The finances of the Union have been somewhat slender, but in War times one must be satisfied with a little less money than usual, as well as a little less food.

On the whole we ought to feel satisfied that the municipal situation is as good as it is, and that the ability of our municipal authorities and the good sense of our citizens have been able to meet all necessary demands. Whatever we do, we must keep the fires of our patriotism burning in their full heat and brightness, and our hearts and energies turned up to the heroic spirit of our unconquerable army in the field,—the glory and the hope of Canada.

The Parliamentary Report, which appears on page 293, was then presented.

This closed the morning session.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

Address by Premier of British Columbia.

The Premier of British Columbia was introduced by President Hardie:

HON. JOHN OLIVER: Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, and Delegates:—I feel very highly honored at being asked to formally declare this Convention open.

One remark was made to me on coming into this room, was that the Provincial Legislature have the habit of hanging a milestone around the neck of the Municipalities. I have a good deal of sympathy with that statement because I have had the experience of serving a number of years on a Municipal Council, both as Alderman and Reeve, and I have often wondered what was the reason of your conventions, and now I take it that it was largely because of this hampering of your movements and because of the imperfections of the Legislature. You have certainly my heartiest sympathy and my best wishes, and possibly it might not be amiss to indicate some of the ways in which I think improvements could be made. Legislators have made a mistake in hampering municipal action and I think when they are groping around for improvements, a tendency exists to put something into their laws that they think is necessary to prevent Municipal Councils making a mistake. I think that better results could be obtained by the enactment of what I would say skeleton legislation, which would say that the Municipality may do certain things, and leave it to the intelligence of each Municipality itself to work out the details so as to fit its special circumstances. I think that a great deal of improvement might be made in the establishing of a Municipal Advisory Council Board and a legal expert adviser and provincial municipal administrator. The Provincial administration would then be at the call of the Municipalities at a moment's notice, with expert advice on all problems which arise. All the troubles of the Province would be concentrated in that one officer, and that executive officer would be the most competent man to advise the Government in