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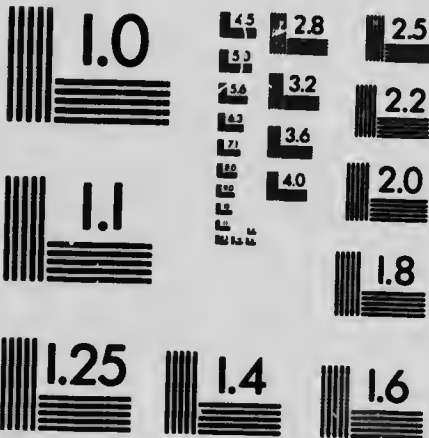


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VALEDICTORY

of

W. D. LIGHTHALL, K.C.,

On Retiring from the Honorary
Secretaryship of the Union of
Canadian Municipalities,

August, 1919



PRINTED BY THE
UNION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES

I want you, my municipal brethren of Canada, to bear with me while I say a few words to you on this, to me, rather solemn day of my retirement, for to me it is the completion of what I consider a chapter of my life's work.

So rapid and complete are the changes in our municipal life—far too rapid for best efficiency—that I feel myself almost the sole survivor of a very active past world of men and events.

Not a single one of the original officers of the Union is any longer in municipal office. A large proportion are dead. My old friend, Oliver Howland, who as Mayor of Toronto in 1901 loyally helped me to found the Union, has long since departed this life. The venerable ex-Mayor Bowlby, of Brantford, always to the fore in his time, is, I think the sole survivor of the first Convention, except myself.

The roll of our Past Presidents shows many names which have reached distinction in other spheres, but even of the latest ones, Mayor Church alone remains a Mayor. It is the same with the original battles of our association. We were formed because of attacks, by companies and charter sharks, on our rights, in cases which have long since been decided: As a survivor of those battles and those participants, I want to say a few things to the men of to-day and to-morrow:—

First—This Union Was Founded in Patriotism.

In 1900, the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company had just merged all the first electric companies of Greater Montreal and had obtained from the Legislature of Quebec, against the strenuous protests of the citizens, including that of Westmount, of which I was then Mayor, a new charter

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empowering it to enter upon, place its poles and wires along, and tear up, any street or highway in that large district—the most populous in Canada—without the consent of any municipal authority. Local circumstances threw me into the hottest of the fight and, after the charter had been obtained, I and others, saw the triumph of money and political trickery over honesty and popular right a precedent without limit in its evil presage for Canadian life and character. If money and wrong were inevitably to succeed, it was clear that all our commercial and public life would sink into a festering bog of corruption. It was equally clear that if the public could not preserve these rights, there was a sure end to our liberties, for all their rights could be similarly taken from them and sold for money. The cynical example to our young men that honesty was not the successful policy was one of the most dangerous aspects. Moreover, the triumph of corrupt money was not even good for property in general. It was inaugurating an unlimited reign of plunder, taxes, high costs, and “gatemoney.” And it would with logical certainty lead to what is now called Bolshevism, unless the forces of right and common sense could meanwhile find a remedy.

The Union of Canadian Municipalities was the remedy which then occurred to me. My friend Howland took up my call and, as Mayor of Toronto, convened the Convention of 1901 in that central city, he becoming the first President, and I the first Honorary Secretary.

In Toronto, and other Ontario places, the charter of the Bell Telephone Company was occasioning similar contests concerning streets and highways; although it must be said for that company that

it had obtained its charter quite honestly in days before the future scope of electric enterprises could be known. In due time a reasonable view of vested rights corrected its excessive powers.

It is not necessary to go into the history of the lively struggles in Parliament and the Legislature that followed the formation of the Union. Are they not written in our annual reports and in the volumes of the Canadian Municipal Journal. But there remain vividly in memory the living portraits of able and noble-minded men who carried our standards in the forefront of the fray. Of such were John S. Fullerton, Chief Corporation Counsel of Toronto; Edward F. Claine, M.P.; ex-Mayor Fred Cook, one of the wisest of the circle; Sir Herbert Ames; Sir Hormidas Laporte; Chief Attorney Ethier, and Senator David, of Montreal; Hon. Mr. Barker and Duncan McKelcan, K.C., of Hamilton; Senator Ellis, of St. John; Richard Paton, of Charlottetown; Senator Claude MacDonell; David Spence; Theodore Hunt, K.C., of Winnipeg; R. T. McIlreith and Judge Chisholm, of Halifax.

Others founded Provincial Unions, such as Fleming of Brandon; F. W. W. Doane, of Halifax; J. W. McCready, of Fredericton.

Sir Adam Beck, and ex-Mayor Detweiler led in the Hydro-Electric line, which was an off-shoot of our movement. But no name of honor and zeal stands higher than that of George S. Wilson, my ever high-minded and invaluable brother secretary. We were all of one mind and one spirit in the movement.

The second thing I was to say is that the Union is a great power in the state. And this notwithstanding certain limitations. After

fighting for the insertion of municipal protective clauses in various single characters—such as attempts to obtain for nothing all the water powers in the West, powers over all the streets in Canada, and we framed, and obtained the adoption of the well-known standard municipal clauses. For years they have been automatically inserted at Ottawa in all electric company bills and others similar. We also took a chief part in the Act establishing the Dominion Railway Board. In battling for our principles we ran up against the most powerful and persistent combinations in the country and downed them by sheer force of right. Incidentally we demonstrated the creditable and hopeful fact that the bulk of our public men are honest and faithful to their trust, and not boodlers as is so often superficially contended.

In the protection of the rights of the people the question of rates charged by railways, street railways, telephone, telegraph, power and light companies were necessarily prominent. These all partake of the nature of monopolies, either absolute or virtual. That fact shapes certain principles for which we fought, and these I ultimately put into the following form as fundamental and permanent stands to be taken:—

Principles.

1. The Canadian people shall not be ruled by any irresponsible monopoly.
2. They shall not submit to methods of fraud or corruption.
3. There shall be no perpetual franchises.
4. Our heritage of natural resources affecting municipalities must not be sold, but leased, if not publicly operated.

5. One generation cannot legislate away the rights of another.
6. Municipalities must control their streets.
7. Each Canadian shall have a fair deal from all who are granted corporate or other public privileges.
8. Some court or council must always exist free and equipped to enforce the fair deal.
9. The life of the poorest citizen must be made worth living, through his share of the best civic conditions and services.

They express forms of our original British constitutional birthright of personal liberty and right. In asserting them under fire, we have in fact been making constitutional history.

The third thing I want to say is that **we are now at the beginning of a vastly important struggle** which is connected with the foregoing principles. Control of all the essential necessities of life—bread, meat, oil, shoes, rubbers, textiles, have recently passed into the hands of mergers which are virtual monopolies. By the nature of monopoly the monopolist fixes his price. The era of the laws of supply and demand has thus passed away. The people will not obtain the fair deal unless these irresponsible monopolies are absolutely controlled. In bringing about such control—in which process I believe a series of special tribunals like the Railway Commission are necessary—it is the duty of municipal movements to take a leading part.

The fourth thing I wish to say is that fighting has not been our sole aim, but rather we have principally sought to confer together for improvements in all that concerns the happiness of our communi-

ties. When we visit the cities and towns of both East and West, the results of the Union's past work in pressing for parks here, incinerators there, and vast systems such as the Government telephones of the three prairie provinces, testify to the imprint we have been able to make by thus standing together, by thus standing together we are indebted for much light on these things to the municipal men, and Unions of the United States, as well as to those of Great Britain, with whom we have kept up a constant contact. The National Municipal League and its splendid Secretary, Mr. Clinton Rogers Woodruff, have been invaluable.

The fifth thing I wish to say is that **Municipal office is a great privilege, a great opportunity for service, a dignified and most important part of the Dominion's system of government.** Not only so in itself, but in this and our Provincial Unions, the humblest holder of office in the smallest rural municipality will find that he has an opportunity outside his local circle, to help forward and upward the whole national life—be it only by a faithful attention to a part of the work of his Union, or by some loyal and inspiring word fitly spoken at a Convention. And I have taken some personal satisfaction at times in feeling that this Union has enabled me to help at introducing far more beneficent legislation into Parliament, and to contribute far more to the establishment of beneficent institutions like—rural telephone systems, hydro-electrics, parks, playgrounds and so forth, than at least nine-tenths of our Members of Parliament.

We have seen the mayoralty of our principal cities eagerly sought by Cabinet Ministers and Senators

JOHN D. BROWN

as a crown to their careers. It is so because they recognize the large field open to municipal activity.

My advice then is to value highly your municipal office, and regard it from the point of view of an opportunity to serve, and of making as many human beings as possible happy.

The sixth thing I want to say is: **Do not let this union die.** It will always be needed. Even were it to fall to pieces temporarily, it would have to be recreated, because the needs for which it has existed will continue. Appoint a small special committee to consider its future. Find an energetic and zealous secretary, knowing Canada well and if possible speaking French. Let him study the methods devised out of our experiences of the past twenty years, and improve on them if he can.

Form some good financial plan which may afford a permanent and adequate support to the institution, which it has lacked in the past. Bring the permanent officials into our councils. Make the Union thus a permanency in place of an interesting makeshift. It will then have a more regular place and a still more powerful influence.

My last word is an appeal to you to **preserve the spirit in which the union was established.** If it should fall down to self-seeking for salaries and positions, it will go to pieces, and rightly so. But if its single and persistent aim be to advance the ideal of a happy and free people, it will have a field as large as the Empire, a message as profound as life, and results as far reaching as time itself.

W. D. LIGHTHALL.

Montreal, August 1st, 1919.



