

Union of N. B. Municipalities Convention Gets Underway Here

President Fred O. Creighton, of Woodstock Delivers Annual Address at Opening Meeting Urging Cooperation, Non-sectional and non-Political — Taxations, Assessments, Valuations and Administration of Justice to be Taken Up — Resolutions.

The Union of New Brunswick Municipalities Convention began its twenty-eighth annual session in the assembly chamber of the parliament buildings last evening at eight o'clock, about sixty delegates representing municipalities in all parts of the province being present.

Features of the opening session were the president's address, addresses of welcome by His Worship Mayor W. G. Clark, of Fredericton; Harry Morrison, York county warden; the report of the secretary-treasurer, J. B. McNair, of this city, and discussions on resolutions. Two new resolutions were introduced and two others discussed before the meeting adjourned shortly after ten o'clock last evening.

The sessions will continue this morning with addresses and consideration of important resolutions and matters relative to all the municipalities.

His Worship Mayor W. G. Clark spoke briefly in welcome of the delegates. The capital was a fitting and desirable place to hold the convention. He spoke of the excellent market situation in this city, it being a unique one and attracting farmers from all the counties. The educational institutions in the city were no small part of the attractions in the city the mayor pointed out.

The present time is an interesting one to be connected with public bodies he said. World conditions and affairs were troubled. Business conditions and especially price levels were problems to be met with. Conditions of all these things was part of the present era. Getting more people to work is the big thing before us today not making profits said the mayor. It is up to us, we who have to do with government in our constituencies, to help these people and get them to work.

The speaker referred to his visit to Europe and conditions existing there where the state is all powerful and the individual subjugated. He cited the despotic government existing under the Hitler regime, telling of a citizen being shot without trial. "That," said the mayor "is not the kind of government we want." We want responsible government. We should have faith in our own government and build up our own country. The mayor's address was greeted with a salvo of applause.

Second Speaker

Harry Morrison, warden of the county of York was joint welcomer. He welcomed the delegates and pointed out many of the natural scenic things to be enjoyed as well as any other courtesy that could be enjoyed. Claude Seeley, Saint John, a councillor of that county replied on behalf of the visiting delegates, thanking the welcomers. "We are here on behalf of the poor people. We are representing poor people who are starving to death. This country cannot go on unless these people are fed. Look after the poor people he reiterated for they are the life of the country.

Thomas Murray, town clerk of Sackville seconded Mr. Seeley's remarks and referred especially to Germany's government, declaring it not so good as the British Democratic system. No British subject, he said, could stand for the despotic rule of a Hitler.

Dr. Veniot

Dr. C. J. Veniot, mayor of Bathurst, delivered an illuminating address, interspersed with witty remarks on the side. He thanked the welcomers and congratulated the arrangers of the program.

Fred K. Brown, of Lower Brighton, Carleton County, also spoke. He believed that the council was capable of giving the leadership necessary. The speaker said we need constructive leadership and that this will be supplied by the municipal councillors. "We can pave the way to recovery if we try hard enough," he said. We need to feed the non-workers and we need markets. We must be careful of our credit, also he concluded.

Financial Report

Following the address of President Creighton of Woodstock, which follow-

ed at this point the secretary-treasurer, J. B. McNair, delivered his annual financial report. Total revenue were shown to be \$919.80. Total disbursements were \$551.02 and the balance on hand was \$368.78, a creditable showing on the year's work.

Mr. McNair welcomed representatives of the Medical Society present. Dr. J. M. Barry, Saint John, the first representative of the medical society introduced the matter of relief, which he declared was "a burning question." He told of the conditions existing among the poor people, saying that the medical body as a class were harder hit than almost anybody by the depression.

Our incomes now are not sufficient to carry on and the time has now come to give the medical body a share in the relief, said the speaker. He referred to the special circumstances which had combined to undermine the incomes of the medical fraternity.

The N. B. Medical Society wishes the broad principle of support established by this Union and endorse the Medical Society's request and possibly to arrange for a scale of fees.

Dr. Joseph Tonzmann added to Dr. Barry's request and said that the matter was a vital one.

He hoped that a resolution would come from the present convention supporting Dr. Barry's appeal. Mr. Creighton, the president, answered the medical representatives that the request would be considered.

The secretary-treasurer's report was referred to the auditor after being read the motion being made by Major J. S. Scott.

Important Matters

The report of the executive which met this afternoon was read before the body by Mr. McNair. The two chief matters to be dealt with this year are first valuations, assessments and taxations, and second, administration of justice the secretary said.

Notice of two resolutions were given out having to do with an appeal of Section 161 of the Workmen's Lien Act, which is declared to have cost numerous lumbermen their entire winter's wages. This notice was given by Councillor McCullough, Charlotte County.

Notice of a second resolution was given by Major J. S. Scott, it having to do with the Rates and Tax Act and the exemption of widows from tax payment.

Last Year's Resolution

The final part of last night's meeting was taken up with the consideration of resolutions referred by last year's convention. The resolution which dealt with the Election Act having special reference to balloting, was dropped from the agenda as not being of sufficient importance this year.

The second resolution, that dealing with the Poor Act and the proposition to decide on a definite minimum period of residence. The subject called for a lengthy discussion. The Moncton delegates urged the establishment at once of a minimum period of residence, since, as he said, the city of



J. B. McNAIR, secretary-treasurer of the Union of N. B. Municipalities Convention.

Moncton had suffered greatly from the influx of paupers.

W. A. Ross, St. John county, secretary-treasurer, thought it was of provincial-wide importance. He said it would be difficult to establish whether a period had lived in a place one year or more. He suggested a five-year period as the proper procedure. There would be less confusion and more efficiency by use of the 5-year period of residence. Others favored the one-year plan. The matter was left over until tomorrow for further discussion on it.

The address of Fred V. Creighton, president of the Union follows in full:

Last year in your deliberations at Saint John you very graciously bestowed upon me the presidential honor of this worthy and useful organization. Considering the caliber of men preceding me and the material to be found in the ranks of this organization, I assure you the honor has been deeply appreciated, but could only conclude that your choice was influenced by the fact that some years previous you were entertained by the Municipality of Carleton and Town of Woodstock. However, while fully cognizant of my incompetency, when tendered the office I felt constrained to accept, as an honor bestowed upon the municipality which I have the honor to represent; and as such, it is indeed a pleasure as well as a duty for me to welcome the delegates representing the various member municipalities to this the Twenty Eighth Annual Convention of the Union of New Brunswick Municipalities.

I wish especially to extend a most cordial welcome and also to express deep gratitude to those outside of our organization who have so kindly consented to address the convention and participate in our discussions, thus permitting us to share the benefits of their wisdom and experience.

Although the depression is still with us, statistics prove a marked upward trend has obtained in business conditions since last we met, as well as a very material improvement in the employment and relief situations, which have occupied a position of paramount importance in municipal affairs for some years past and undoubtedly will continue to do so for some years in the future.

The degree to which morale has withstood the stress and strain of depression years through which we have passed, and the response manifested in all lines of commercial, industrial, and professional endeavour, considering the opportunities that have prevailed up to the present time, may well be regarded as a most encouraging aspect looking toward the future and a striking tribute to the courage and virility of our people, notwithstanding the fact that the paramount problems fundamental to permanent recovery up to the present time remain unsolved and in fact without serious attack. Plan as we may it would appear that the result of all recovery plans by governmental bodies—federal, provincial, and municipal—must inevitably fall far short of sound rehabilitation, lacking co-operation with some definite and equitable scheme to bring taxation and other overhead burdens in line with the ability of the people to bear. To bring about such a condition would obviously involve sacrifices; but granting such a state

of affairs is inevitable sooner or later to wholesome and permanent recovery, is there any reason we should not get on with the job and on the basis whereby the sacrifices would be equitably borne by all classes as well as the masses?

If the national and diplomatic policies now in vogue fail of adequate functioning for present day and future requirements is there any reason we should not turn to international and ethical policies while there is yet time to save our democratic institutions and British traditions, and effect the adjustments essential to wholesome prosperity and recovery in an orderly manner?

Guided by British opinion Australia, New Zealand, and even South Africa have solved their financial problems to a marvelous extent. Why should not we in Canada solve ours likewise?

Of all municipal problems the financial situation stands out as the most pressing and most difficult of solution. Increased obligations thrust upon all municipalities arising out of depression conditions accompanied by the consistent diminishing ability of rate payers to meet tax obligations has created a condition to test the courage and resourcefulness of all municipal bodies.

A very material percentage of former taxpayers has for some years been in need of relief. It has been amply demonstrated that lavish expenditures with resultant increased taxation is not the avenue to recovery. In fact to prevent further increased taxation and to offer some hope of alleviation in the future, it is clear that a policy of rigid economy and effective collection methods must be adopted and pursued.

It is unfortunate that municipal governments having the most essential and costly services to provide have the least control over their revenue and expenditures. As the revenue of the federal and provincial governments fell off as a result of the financial crash which followed some fifteen or twenty years of lavish spending and mountains increase of public debts, these bodies had the power, which they did not hesitate to exercise, to augment their revenues through institution of numerous new forms of taxation; all of which reflected adversely in municipal revenues.

Municipalities have practically no choice. They may tax what the governments permit, in fact what is left over the federal and provincial governments have taken their choices, which in practice works out that the municipality may levy little more than a property tax—one of the most unpopular and expensive taxes to collect. Notwithstanding the limitation of revenue and expenditure control, I believe it can be claimed without fear of successful contradiction that the record of municipal governments do bear very favourable comparison with that of other governmental bodies.

The improvement in our basic industry of agriculture I regret is not so marked as we might have hoped for. Yet there is encouragement from the fact that a substantial price advance has taken place in some farm products, and slow but healthy improvements in others. Unfortunately some products of the farm remain sadly depressed. The depression in the potato market this year is unprecedented and threatens to create a calamitous condition throughout the potato specializing sections of the province.

The increased activity in the lumber industry is a bright spot on the horizon and of particular interest to most of our municipalities, inasmuch as it holds out promise of material alleviation with respect to relief obligations. The departure of our neighbouring country to the south from the gold standard resulting in equalization of our currency with that of the United Kingdom has been an important factor in broadening our export market.

The fishing industry which I understand has enjoyed at least average improvement in keeping with the general upward trend has also been materially benefited through expansion of the export market.

Winning has not retrogressed. Coal output being considerably and the general interest in mineral resources, as shown by prospecting and explorations, has increased.

Reviewing the past year we can find abundant justification of optimism,

but nevertheless, until such time as the products of the farm reach a more favourable comparative price level with manufactured products, and the producers in our other primary industries are in receipt of adequate remuneration for their investments, services, and labor, to create a normal purchasing power, patience must necessarily be exercised.

Among the numerous matters coming before this convention some of which have been previously discussed, I might make special reference to several, concerning which the conditions in connection therewith and the burdens are entirely out of line with the financial resources of the municipalities to bear. Therefore, in my opinion they demand your earnest consideration and solution; namely:—

The provincial and tuberculosis hospital charges.

Administration of justice charges, with a view to a greater measure of control being invested in the municipalities.

An extensive revision of the structure of municipal machinery might be considered desirable whereby each municipality would have control over the services and expenses for which they are held financially responsible.

More uniform and equitable methods of valuation and assessment with a view to removing existing

anomalies and defects. It is obvious that real estate is bearing an unfair portion of taxation. As an illustration I might refer to the manner in which operations of the various boards having to do with settlers have affected municipal and school revenues. In a very material percentage of cases tax-paying owners have been replaced with non tax-paying occupants. Thus inflicting increased taxes on others already taxed beyond their ability to pay. In cases of the former owner having removed out of the country or to the cities, the taxes are entirely lost to the rural municipality. In cases where the former owner has removed to a village within the municipality to lead a retired life, as frequently has been the case, the purchase price of his farm has been to a large extent invested in bonds. Whether of tax exempt nature or otherwise, generally there is little effort made to tax bonds or other personal property to any great extent in rural districts.

To achieve the results for which our organization exists, the confidence and co-operation of the governments are essential requisities. Therefore, in the interests of our organization it is important that all matters be approached and treated from non-sectional and non-political angles. In the framing of our resolutions, part-

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