

# Premier Would Allow Municipalities Leeway

## Enactment of Skeleton Legislation is Favored, Leaving Details to Local Bodies.

### STERNER ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENEMY ALIENS IS URGED

## Reeve Bridgman Would Intern Foes or Utilize Them in Industries.

VICTORIA, July 10. — Premier Oliver formally declared the national convention of the Union of Canadian Municipalities open yesterday afternoon with an address in which he sponsored civic home rule, the establishment of a provincial municipal department and other legislative reforms in the interests of municipal welfare.

Civic organizations, he said, have often been seriously impeded by technicalities placed in their governing legislation by provincial parliaments to safeguard against the possible over-reaching of authority by the cities.

### And Not Much Glory.

"The provincial legislature is apt to lose sight of the fact that it is in reality only a glorified county council without much glory at that," he said.

The premier favored the enactment of skeleton legislation by the legislatures, leaving the details to be worked out through the intelligence of the municipalities themselves. In that way special circumstances and local conditions could be met in the only common-sense way.

Mayor Hawkins, of Halifax, who was chairman of the afternoon session, said the broad-minded view taken by Premier Oliver was a revelation to him. In his own province he looked upon the provincial authorities more in the light of arch-enemies than big brothers. The home rule idea for civic government, after all, was the only sane proposal.

### Would Intern Enemies.

Action by the federal authorities

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towards the internment of all enemy aliens, and their utilization in industry at regulated rates of pay, was strongly urged by Reeve Bridgman, president of the Union of B. C. Municipalities. He held it was unfair that Germans and Austrians should be drawing equal pay with Canadian citizens and be exempt from military duty, and some of them were actually working on munitions board contracts. He also attacked the present system of food conservation. It was unreasonable, he said, to believe that municipal authorities could carry out many of the duties at present handled through many channels at Ottawa. Too much reliance was placed on voluntary conservation, and he urged that the sale of certain food commodities should be prohibited. His statements are likely to form the basis of resolutions to be submitted to the convention.

### Must Finance Own Cities.

In a vigorous speech, in which he pointed the way to civic reform in several somewhat novel directions, Hon. Wilfrid Garriepy, K. C., minister of municipal affairs in Alberta, told the delegates that the time had come when the people must finance their own cities, when the banking system must be reorganized, when authority at Ottawa must be decentralized and the status of civic employees improved. He declared that soon municipalities will not be merely a collection of property owners, but a collection of homes, families and people living in the same community, entitled to the same rights regardless of their land holdings. The effort should be, he said, to keep down indirect taxation to the minimum.

He contended that bond issues should be taken as extensively as possible by the ratepayers themselves, and the door thereby closed to the middlemen and commission agents. In regard to tax arrears he said some of them should be bulked together and borrowed against. The state might come to the rescue of municipalities and give assistance. If cities continued tax sales, values would depreciate to an unlimited extent, and the revenue would not be swelled appreciably.

### Effects of the War.

The war's effects on the cities of Eastern and Western Canada were dealt with in a discussion in which those taking part were Mayor Costello of Calgary, Mayor Hawkins of Halifax, Ald. Owen of Vancouver, W. D. Lightall of Montreal, Mayor Cater of Brandon and C. J. Yoreth, city manager of Saskatoon.

East and west were brought closer last night at the banquet tendered the Union of Canadian Municipalities by Mayor Todd, the city council and citizens of Victoria, at the Empress Hotel. Over 100 people attended, including nearly all the delegation to the convention, and the addresses throbbled with the true spirit of Canadianism.

The principal spokesmen were Mayor Gale of Vancouver, representing the west, and Mayor Bouchard, M. P. P. for St. Hyacinthe, Que., representing the east. "Unity and co-operation," Mayor Gale said, is the doctrine we may well preach throughout the length and breadth of Canada. If the business men of today do not make up their minds to throw sectional feeling to the winds and take advantage of our natural heritage we will have little to hand on to generations yet unborn, the foundation of the Canada that is to be.

The one great blot on our escutcheon has been politics. If Canada is not united today it is because our great problems have been made political footballs.

Mayor Bouchard spoke in similar vein, pleading for the elimination of religious and racial strife, for the triumph of progress over reaction and for national peace and plenty. Unity, he said, and the continual promotion of the gospel of good will, would make for a strong Canadian mentality that would mean sound democracy and racial harmony.