



The First President's Address

Delivered September 26, 1906, by Samuel B. Williams, City Comptroller, Rochester, New York To the Officers and Members of the National Association of Comptrollers and Accounting Officers:

I was highly honored at the preliminary meeting held in Washington last winter, by being selected as the first President of this Association. I am glad that so many have attended this meeting, and hope that the interest will continue until the result will be a large and permanent organization.

To have uniform accounting so that the Government and State officials can promptly make their reports, which are beneficial to so many, would be a step in the right direction. An exchange of reports by different officials, showing the exact conditions prevailing in their respective localities, would help bring about the uniform report.

Besides the interesting subjects that will be presented by the officials whom we all respect and honor, which no doubt will be fully discussed by the members present, are several other subjects that some of us, perhaps, would like to have talked about, either in the public sessions, or private conference. If this is done, then everyone can take away full rations, for there will be enough and to spare.

What is the best method of getting competition in purchases made for the city? How to collect the business licenses due the city, as well as its revenue outside taxation? How to secure money for the General Sinking Fund, when the officials who have charge of preparing the Tax Levy decline to place an adequate amount in the levy?

In regard to the Pension Funds for the Firemen, Policemen and Teachers: Should this be a regular, uniform charge in the Tax Levy, or should it be partially that, and the balance a "catch as catch can" from the different business licenses and revenues due to the city?

How to treat the so-called unbalanced bids for Local Improvements? When you have no independent press, how can you interest the citizens in regard to city business? How can that information be made known?

Should not the public be advised as to the exact expenditures of the different departments? How can you get a good office force of able and competent young men, when such material is not on the eligible list, and you have no exemptions from same?

In regard to interest on city funds, what rates can be obtained on bank balances, and should this be computed on daily or monthly balances? How large an amount in surety bonds should be required from the banks, and in what ratio to the average amount on deposit?

Should all depositories be treated on the same basis, no matter what their financial standing is? Can better terms be had from the banks for the city's funds by receiving competitive bids?

Regarding the issue of municipal bonds, should they not be exempt from taxation, and issued in smaller denominations so that as the rate of interest increases, the people can be educated to invest their funds, and thus create a better demand for them? With a low rate of interest, the banks at present do not care for municipal bonds, as can be proved by referring to recent bond sales, or strictly speaking, bond offerings.

In regard to having a large membership and keeping those interested who have thus far carried on the good work, we cannot say as does a well known organization, "Once a member, always a member," for we do not know how long the dear public will keep us their pay rolls in our present positions. For this reason we should show by our actions and the good work accomplished, that the Association is worthy of confidence and support, so that the powers that be, when we have completed our terms, will see to it that our successors shall take up the good work and carry it on to a successful issue.

I will not take up any more of your valuable time at present, except to make kindly reference to the good work done by my associate officers to further the interests of the organization. While all have done well, our worthy Secretary, Howard C. Beck, is entitled to extra commendation for what he has done, what he is doing, and what he will do.

The gentlemen who have been selected to speak are fully posted on the topics assigned them, and after the regular subjects have been presented I hope that a full, free, and informal discussion will be had of the subjects named, those that I have suggested, and such others as the different members would like information on. If this is done, I think every member can truthfully say — "it was good for us to have been here."