

# FUNDING SANITARY IMPROVEMENTS AS A MEANS OF INCREASING WATER CONSUMPTION\*

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**W**HEN Moses, who appears to have been the first sanitarian of whom we have any authentic record, laid down a code for living and being clean, he fitted his laws to both the rich and the poor.

He set out, as you will recall, very specific methods by which those persons who had become unclean could cleanse themselves. He specified no other germicide than fire and water, and he wrapped up the sanitary measures in a parcel of rites which might be compared to the red tape of contract laws of to-day.

But Moses did one thing that the sanitary engineers of to day are not doing. He recognized a distinct division between the poor and the rich, and he provided a way by which the unfortunate, without worldly goods, could comply with the laws he established as well as the rich could meet their requirements.

Moses said that if the unclean person was too poor to sacrifice a sheep or a goat on the altar as a part of the purging process, he might sacrifice a fowl.

Just as in the present day, a sacrifice was necessary then to cleanliness. But unlike the present day, the sacrifice might be of two values, one for the rich and one for the poor.

In this day, however, there are not two prices for the water service necessary to sanitary disposal of sewage. Nor is there any considerable deviation in the price of bath tubs and plumbings. Each demands financial sacrifice, easy for the rich and prohibitively difficult for the poor.

What Moses did in the way of making clean the poorer class has largely been forgotten by sanitary engineers of to-day, who, in their zeal to give the general public what they know to be the best for it, have overlooked the inability of the poorer classes to comply with the sacrifices therein prescribed.

This inability of many to contribute to the sanitary progress of all should not be confused with ignorance or lack of interest in proper sanitation. We may not agree that all persons would rather be clean than unclean, but we must confess that every individual values his health, and the great majority value the health of the community as a whole.

Were it possible to have proper sanitation in every community without interfering with the pocketbooks of the people, sanitation would be a simple problem. But you, gentlemen, who have long been familiar with the difficulties that rich municipalities have in such necessary steps as sewage disposal or the procuring of potable water, know that there is always a strong fight waged against necessary measures because of the investments involved.

Too often we are inclined to lose all patience with this opposition. We accredit it to ignorance or indifference, regard it as miserly, and hope for the day of enlightenment when all property owners will be willing to expend the money necessary to produce proper sanitary conditions.

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If possible, the engineer and the enlightened sanitary officer will ride roughshod over the financial opposition. He will regard the expenditure as a necessity, and will rightly point to the vast returns on money so invested. This course may be well enough when a municipality pays the freight, and the pro rata cost is so small that it involves no great sacrifice. But its repetition only meets with opposition of a more forceful character until the time comes, as it has in more than one city, when the money necessary for these improvements is not forthcoming and the improvements become impossible.

Opposition to public health measures is generally analyzed as due to ignorance. Perhaps it generally is. But there is a point where the public debt becomes a private hardship, and one has only to hunt up the owner of a lot with a big sewer assessment against it to find a man who has been called on in the interest of cleanliness to sacrifice a sheep when his financial condition justifies the sacrifice of a fowl only. This situation becomes all the more common when the question involved is one of individual sanitation rather than municipal or community sanitation.

In every community in Indiana there are hundreds of citizens who would thoroughly appreciate the advantages of sanitary closets, but who are still tolerating open vaults on their premises. Bath tubs are luxuries they forego, not through lack of desire, but through necessity. These people by no means constitute all those who are living in unclean surroundings, but they form a class so large, their conversion to sanitary living would be a step toward community health that would almost solve the problem of the sanitary engineer and reduce his opposition to a comparatively negligible quantity.

These are the people whom Moses declared could sacrifice a fowl instead of a sheep. They are willing to sacrifice a fowl on the altar of health, but they have no sheep, and the rigid law of the sanitary sacrifice is a sheep or no sacrifice.

Providing a sacrifice which is within their ability is the coming big problem of proper sanitation. It is a problem that has long been neglected, ignored, and little understood by the engineers and others who have, in spite of all opposition, forced their communities to healthy surroundings.

Progress has been made in other fields that should be applied in the sanitary field. Distributors of luxury have evolved methods of coordinating the financial problem with their merchandise. Sellers of service have found ways by which the poorer purchaser could be accommodated as well as the rich, comforts have been brought within the reach of the small pocketbook as well as the large.

To-day you may buy an automobile on a partial payment plan that brings its luxury in reach of the moderately well-to-do. You may enjoy the benefits of electric lights and power, and pay for your equipment while you enjoy it. Gas is brought into your kitchen, and a range sold to you on terms that you can meet out of a very small income. But you cannot have a sanitary toilet in your home until you have scraped together the cash with which to satisfy the plumber and the sewer digger.

Experience has taught the engineers and managers of water utilities that it is neither profitable nor practicable to develop large consumers of water at low rates faster than smaller consumers at higher rates. There is a certain point, varying with each utility, where it means a sacrifice of profits to deliver water in large quantities at a low rate. The proportion of manufacturing