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THE LONDON ADVERTISER, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16.



LOOKING BACKWARD.

Public Meeting of the London
West Ratepayers.

The Year's Doings Reviewed - Civic
Problems Discussed - The Amalgama-
tion Question - London West's Side of
the Story - Electric Light Contracts.

As is the annual custom in the village, the members of the London West Council met in Collins' Hall last evening to render an account of their stewardship during the past year and for a general discussion of municipal topics. The meeting was a lively one, much more so by the presence of a large number of the rising generation, who applauded liberally and indiscriminately, interjecting all sorts of witticisms, to their own great amusement. Reeve Lacey was voted to the chair. He did not know that the members of the Council had much to say. They had done nothing this year and done it very well. The statement for the year showed the school board account to have been \$2,442 64, an excess of the estimate, he believed; the Board of Works had dis- bursed \$476, a decrease on last year's expenditure of over \$1,500; salaries were \$347 00; relief, \$37 72; printing and stationery, \$90; electric lighting, old account, \$101 63; Board of Health, \$35 37; solicitors' fees, \$1,409 57 ("Oh! Oh!"); rent, \$12; white on taxes, \$81 85; expense account, \$123 54; making a total of \$3,540 38. The amount of taxes collected this year up to date had been \$4,500, with about \$2,000 to come yet, a bank account of \$800. There seemed to be some merriment over the solicitors' fees, but that was a thing over which they had no control, with the exception of about \$100. The other charges were for suits entered previous to this year's Council coming into action.

A Voice—What is next year's Council going to do for money? You have nearly all this and last year's taxes.

Reeve Lacey—If next year's Council will be as economical as the present has been, there will be no difficulty.

A Voice—How much uncollected taxes did you have last year?

Reeve Lacey—We had the large amount of \$23 25.

Councillor Duff, chairman of No. 1 Committee, said they had had little to do in the way of spending money this year, unless paying lawyers. They had no control whatever over the school board expenditure, and the December salaries were not yet paid. There was \$101 63 marked as being paid for electric lighting, but that did not pay for lighting for the whole year. The total amount of which was about \$1,400. They had had a dispute with the electric light company. When the Council came to the members felt it was advisable to cancel a contract, as the amount was more than the village could reasonably afford to pay. Negotiations had been entered into between the Ball Company and the Council with a view to securing better terms. It was probable that some concession would be obtained, but the particulars it would not do to make public just now. The solicitors' fees of \$1,409 57 had been paid; it seemed to be unfortunate that the village was blest by the lawyers.

A Voice—Are you through with them now?

Mr. Duff—Well, I hope so there are some little bills to come in yet. ("Oh! Oh!") There was the Foster case, where the old gentleman fell and broke his ribs, for which they had paid so far \$651 10, with \$300 or \$400 more to pay before they got through with it. Then came the Hueston affair, in which a dilapidated old hack was damaged near Mount Pleasant Cemetery, and for which they had already paid Meredith & Co. \$200, while the village solicitors, \$837 20, probably be \$200. (Derisive cheers.) But the present Council were not responsible for that; they simply defended themselves. The account of \$136 60, re amalgamation, they were willing to stand; it was forced upon them. The special committee appointed to satisfy conditions with the city committee, but the Council refused to ratify this. The village was going to have a meeting in the waterworks dam or see London West was 20 miles and in the city prompt payments the village rate was really 19 miles. Their tax collector was paid 1 1/2 per cent. of all he collected, and was bound to hand over 2 per cent. of what he failed to collect, thus leaving something to pay him with. Of \$3,000 liability in the bank, they had paid off \$1,500, as it was thought better to allow the ratepayers 5 per cent. than give the bank 6 per cent.

Chairman Brodie of No. 2 Committee thought he had little to say owing to the light expenditure. He would have made little more improvements in the village, but expenses had to be kept down, and they had kept them down very well.

Chairman Spence of No. 3 said the relief expenditure had been very low as they considered the Councils of the past two or three years had spent enough on that for five years to come. He claimed the action of the Council in refusing to submit the amalgamation bylaw

to the people quite right. They were there to watch over the public interests and did not think such would be forwarded if they plain the ratepayers would not be benefited by amalgamation. Their rate of taxation would be much higher, and their property would not be increased \$1 in value.

A Voice—We would have water and fire protection.

Continuing Mr. Spence said they had all the water they wanted. He, for one, would be willing to go in for amalgamation if reasonable terms could be procured. As to the question better than those signing. It was different from the prohibition petition. The latter left the matter to the votes of the people, but the other case meant union with the city.

Mr. D. C. Macdonald—Talk a little sense. That bylaw would have been submitted to Mr. Spence and carried, too.

Mr. Spence held there was no parallel between the cases at all. The Council was prepared to stand or fall by their actions.

Mr. Spence—There was not much to fall from. They had served the best interests of the village, and he contended they had saved London West \$1,000 on that action.

Some cross firing started between the speaker and Mr. W. Smith. Mr. Spence remarked casually that Mr. Smith would quarrel with his own mother; that he never had a good word for anybody, and Smith didn't enjoy this sort of thing and was called to order amid the jubilation of the small boys.

Mr. W. Scarrow strongly commended the record of the Council for the past year. It had come into office under very disadvantageous circumstances; the bungling extravagance of the previous Councils had nearly stranded the municipal ship. They had found things in bad shape when they took office, and they had done well to make an electric light contract that compelled them to pay nearly \$1,400 a year, absorbing one-fourth of the taxes. It was surprising that five men could be found to make such a bargain. In the city of London the rate was 30 cents per light per night, and in London West 40 cents, and that a five-year contract, while the city would not enter into more than a one or three year contract. Other towns were getting lamps at from 15 cents to 20 cents per night for 12 o'clock lamps, and if the village had done this it would be \$4,000 or \$5,000 ahead at the end of the five years. He did not think any five children or old women would make such a foolish agreement unless they were drunk. He believed amalgamation with the city to be the ultimate destiny of the village, but it should be on a fair and equitable basis. The village had got many concessions out of the city and would get more yet. The Council of 1891 would be in shape to negotiate upon a basis of the most favorable differential rate of 6 mills on the dollar; we went even further, and in conference with the Special City Committee, asked a concession of 3 mills. The City Council refused to ratify that committee's recommendation. Some of the terms of the agreement were to cut the village No. 7 ward; to straighten out the river, and to place a breakwater at the forks. But the only real need was the opening of the dam, and would come as a matter of course. However, London West was not in the position of a suppliant, and could get along nicely alone. Many of the ratepayers of South London regretted they ever entered the city. A resident had told him that last year his taxes were \$31 15, and this year \$41 01, and his assessments \$3,800 and \$6,000 respectively.

Mr. Wm. Smith—My taxes in South London last year were \$5 50; this year they are only \$6 60, and I have water at my door. ("Hear, hear.")

In conclusion Mr. Scarrow claimed the Council had done its best for the village. Instead of drawing from the bank they had reduced the account. (Applause.)

Reeve Lacey did not think amalgamation would increase the value of property, or raise the rate a foot higher. The breakwater proposed would likely be for the city's own interests. He took exception to Mr. Scarrow's remarks on the electric light question. He was one of those "old women" who made the contract, and he would not drink either at the time. A man who would say that would slander anything. (Prolonged cheers.) He defended the contract.

Mr. W. H. Bartram took objection to such discussion. It was prejudicial and entirely out of place.

Mr. Macdonald thought Mr. Lacey had a right to defend himself.

Mr. Lacey continued, and maintained that he had acted in good faith.

Mr. Scarrow—Why didn't you call for tenders?

Mr. Lacey—We did.

Mr. Scarrow—I can prove you didn't.

Mr. Lacey—Go and see Mr. Hunt; he'll tell you.

Mr. Scarrow—I saw him to-day and he said it was the year before the contract was given.

Mr. L. Ludwig mounted the platform, but did not make himself clearly understood. His speech seemed connected with "grave" roars, "smallpox," "Mr. Scarrow's house."

Mr. Alf. Butler complimented the members of the Council, with the single exception of Mr. Scarrow, whom he characterized as false to the ratepayers. If he hoped they would be returned again next year, omitting that gentleman. He desired to know why church members, like himself, if they wanted prohibition, did not canvass themselves, instead of sending their children to solicit signatures.

Mr. D. C. Macdonald was received with applause. "We know how it is to throw mud at outgoing Councils," said he, "but you, Mr. Chairman, with your nice little Council have deserved none. You were elected to do nothing and you did it well."

The petitioners for the amalgamation bylaw, he claimed, merely wished the question to be submitted to the people to test their sentiments. It would only have cost \$23; but those wiseacres—the five councilors—knew so much more than these coupled hundred ratepayers. He was going to vote for those men, and so were a great many others. He was a strong amalgamationist and it was time to have the question submitted. Why could they not do so now? The only cost would be the ballots. Let the people vote yes or nay. (Cheers.) He had no fault to find with the present Council; everybody was liable to mistakes, but he thought they had done wrong in not submitting the amalgamation bylaw to the people. As regards the electric light question, they had asked Mr. Hunt for a tender, but found his price very high. Mr. Jones, of the Ball Company, pointed out to them the very large area the lights must cover, the long stretch of wire and number of poles, and seemed to have reasonable conclusions for his price—40 cents per light. He was one of the "old women" and not "drunk" when he signed the contract, ready to answer for it. (Applause.)

Mr. W. H. Bartram was next called on. He thought it was very evident that the Council had done nothing and done it well. The public had come to hear statements of village affairs and had it not been for Mr.

Duff they would have known nothing about it. He did not see how they were going to ruin the Council next year; the village was in a bad state and it impressed him that new blood was wanted in the Board. (Applause.) They did not want a Council who were going to do nothing and who brought out a statement at the end of the year which no one could comprehend. ("Hear, hear.") The present Council, when any litigation was pending, would rush to their solicitor and should go to defend his legal opinion. The village should have a solicitor who would use his efforts to keep his clients out of law. They had an expenditure of \$1,500 or \$1,600 last year for that purpose, with a possibility of \$500 or \$600 more. How were they going to pay all this? He thought of litigation, if common sense had been used would have been satisfactorily adjusted without law. He had no objection to making money as a lawyer, but when it came to paying one-fourth of his taxes towards law it was time they had a Council who did not know everything. (Cheers.)

Reeve Lacey said the Council had a hard row to hoe. The members might have been straightforward at the start, but the office soon made them different. He blamed Mr. Bartram for the school board bungling.

Mr. Bartram replied that he was not responsible for the school board's actions. He had a big building there they did not occupy, and there were a large number of children in the village with no school accommodation. The School Board did not do it; it was Mr. Lacey and his friends. The matter was dead and gone. Why did they wish to resurrect it? It was possible that had been done in the contract business. He had been done in the contract business. He got up and attacked every body.

Mr. Lacey asserted a right to reply to any attack on himself. He would say that the school board was just as much answerable for the debt of the village as anything else.

Treasurer Nichol (excitedly)—Does Mr. Bartram say that the statement furnished by the treasurer is incorrect or that the builders and contractors grieved their fingers?

Mr. Bartram said the school cost too much. He was sure some talk about contracts which were higher than others being accepted.

Mr. Wm. Smith stoutly affirmed that if last year's Council had managed the civic affairs the past year, the village would have been bankrupt. He considered Mr. Duff as one of the straightest fellows in the Council. He wanted to know what Mr. Duff had to say about the school board.

Mr. Smith resumed his seat amidst applause.

Mr. Spence started on the amalgamation question business again. He was sure many who had signed it did so under the impression that it only called for a public meeting. They were conserving the interests of the ratepayers in not then submitting it to a vote.

Mr. Macdonald maintained the Council had no voice in the matter at all. As soon as the petition was presented it was their duty to put it to the people to vote on.

Chairman Ramsey, of the Board of Health, knew perfectly well what he was signing when he attached his name. He did not see why they should not entertain it and then grant the prayer of a public petition. The Council had done very well with that exception.

Mr. Lacey said there were only two in favor of it at a public meeting.

Mr. Macdonald moved a hearty vote of thanks to Reeve Lacey for the efficient manner in which he had filled the position of reeve and acted as chairman for the evening. Carried unanimously.

Reeve Lacey made a suitable reply and the meeting broke up.

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- Ask to see our \$10 Sealettes at \$6 95 during this sale.
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- Ask to see our 25c All-Wool Flannels, in plain or twill at 15c a yard.
- Ask to see our 25c German Plaids, all wool, at 12 1/2-2c a yard.
- Ask to see our \$5 White Wool Blankets at \$3 95 a pair.
- Ask to see our \$2 50 White Wool Blankets at \$1 29 a pair.
- Ask to see our 75c Home Made Flannel Sheetings at 59c a yard.
- Ask to see our \$10 Beaver Cloth (in all shades) at \$1 75 a yard.
- Ask to see our \$10 Tweed Ulsters at \$7 50 during this sale.
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