

WHAT DID LONDON'S COUNCIL DO DURING 1923?

TAX RATE WAS SLIGHTLY LOWERED; REORGANIZATION OF DEPARTMENTS ARE ITEMS IN WORK OF CITY FATHERS

Changes in Engineering Department Have Met With Satisfaction.

NEW STEPS HERALDED

Mayor Wenige's Next Inaugural Address Is Awaited With Interest.

By WILLIAM SHARMAN.
So this was 1923.

The men of civic affairs mark time as the scenery shifts gradually to 1924. This is the period of retrospection—the thrill that comes once in the year—when the old year is reviewed and the new year is planned. And there is nothing in the municipal procedure bylaw to discourage a search for a good reason for a group of reasons why 1923 should be listed in gold lettering. It is all quiet again along Main street, and no doubt that "easy attitude of super-modernity will persist until such time as 'Overtime' Wenige delivers another of his half-raising inaugural addresses. The defeated candidates have presented their allies and the successful have selected their favorite chairs for the ensuing term.

Just what is the aldermanic record for the current year? Just what concrete proof is there to submit to convince the skeptical that Mayor Wenige and his associates have achieved to their credit other than possible reputations as expert conversationalists?

Just what has Mayor Wenige and the members of the common council done during their term of office? Have they "done" those things which they ought to have done? Or have they "done those things which they ought not to have done?"

Much was said both in and out of the council during 1923. Much is said both in and out of the council every year. And much will be said both in and out of the council next year, and the next following, and the year after that. The mayor and twelve aldermen will expound their views, and lift their clarion voices in much the same manner and volume in one year as in another.

This Consolation.

And there is always this consolation; that no matter how incompetent or unreasonable one council may be or seem to be, to the general public, it will be always possible to elect a worse one.

Ald. George Burdick's timely comment at the farewell session of the council was also made to a Michigan mayor, who, year after year, threatened to throw one of his aldermanic opponents through the window. Nothing quite as sensational as that occurred during the session of the council, but the remark that the British right of free speech was ever violated. As a general rule, the municipal procedure bylaw is not so blatantly ignored. Members talked often and at length. Their opinions were voiced so all could hear, and very rarely did any member object.

Mayor Wenige did feel impelled one night to admonish Ald. William Wilson, while now and then Ald. Wilson felt it his duty to rebuke the mayor. The council, however, respected its position as "dean of all the councils," to correct Ald. Watt. But a sharp command, "Sit down, Watt," or "Don't be jumping up and down, Drake," was the extent of Ald. Wilson's lesson.

Taking them "by and large," as they would say in Ottawa (so it must be right), the 1923 legislators behaved about as well as they have done in past years. And now as to their record. While they appear in the public limelight probably more than any other of the city representatives, not excluding the city's delegates to the provincial assembly in the governments, the general public seems to have never quite gathered the significance of the fact that the mayor and aldermen possess but a 4 per cent spending power. They jangle together but 4 cents out of every dollar.

And this is what they did in 1923:

THE TAX RATE.

This was lowered; not much but a decrease in the rate from 34.9 to 34.7. Just what difference this actually made in the tax-bills and with the annual assessment increase, can best be answered by the ratepayers themselves, who naturally will know if they paid more to the tax collector in 1923 than they did in 1922.

ASSESSMENT DEPARTMENT.

This branch was completely re-

organized and the new commissioner, Harry Bennett has given the council assurance that greater efficiency will prevail despite a reduced staff of assessors. The employees of this department were put on a permanent basis and while wages were re-adjusted, a substantial saving was accomplished.

The council feels that a more equitable system of assessing will be continued. Commissioner Bennett states that many "gaps were plugged" during the year, while the income assessment returns will be greater as a consequence.

A good illustration of the work of the department was the elevation of the street railway assessment—the first revision of its kind in more than 20 years.

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT.

Here also was noted a complete reorganization and Mayor Wenige and the retiring councillors profess to be quite satisfied with the changes and work accomplished during the year.

City Engineer Near reports that about 45,000 feet of sewerage work was laid, about as much as in 1922 including Richmond street, and despite the fact that the start was made several weeks later than the customary, owing to the retirement of the former engineer and the subsequent reorganization.

Members of the board of works who have been in close touch with this work, as well as the construction of sidewalks, curbs, gutters, laying of sewers, etc., have voiced complete satisfaction with the work and the reported increased efficiency of the permanent employees, both in the city hall and on outside jobs.

The council feels that the increased efficiency and re-arrangement of duties and responsibilities will tend toward greater economy. In fact when the tax rate was struck the engineering estimates were cut to the bone and the policy of economy has been rigidly adhered to.

FIRE DEPARTMENT.

No. 4 firehall was opened early in the year in response to the appeal from residents north of Oxford street. And this month witnesses the complete motorization of the department. The remaining four horses are being transferred to the garbage department.

And all this has been done within the estimates. Fire Chief Aitken has long since earned the reputation as being one who usually finishes the year within his estimates. The department apparatus and fire-fighting facilities are now on a par with any community of its size on the continent.

CITY TREASURER'S DEPT.

Important changes in this office set heralded for 1924 if Mr. Bennett's recommendations are to be followed. The experts hired by the city council for a general survey of the city departments recommended that City Treasurer James Bell's duties and responsibilities were greatly in excess of his position. More assistance was recommended, while the work of the staff was commended.

JUVENILE COURT.

The 1923 mayor and council made their business to eliminate another political football by the establishment of this court-long needed in London. The court has been active for eight months and a special committee of three aldermen receiving reports from time to time from the administration have submitted very favorable statements to the council.

WESTERN FAIR.

Negotiating with the Western Fair directorate, the councillors arranged for a 25-cent admission fee throughout the week. This cost the ratepayers slightly more than \$9,000 as the council guaranteed the fair board what they would lose by reducing their 50-cent fee on Wednesday and Thursday to 25 cents. Whether this was good business is for the ratepayers to judge.

THE YEAR BOOK.

Public opinion is divided as to the importance attached to the publication of all civic salaries in this book. It was only after a long, exhaustive controversy with Mayor Wenige and Sir Adam Beck taking leading roles, that the council received the pay lists from the London and Port Stanley Railway and the Public Utilities Commission. The books were finally placed on sale



MAYOR WENIGE AND THE TWO COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN.

Mayor George A. Wenige (center), Ald. Albert M. Judd (right) and Ald. L. H. Douglass, chairman of the board of works, three important workers in guiding the civic affairs of London during the past year. Wars

and rumors of wars floating from their camp did not block the progress in reaching action on many of the greater items brought forward at different periods during the term.

Mayor Wenige was returned by acclamation; Ald. Douglass is mentioned as chairman of the finance committee, while Ald. Judd has retired from the council, for the next year at least.

at 50 cents, but lately placed on the free list and disposed of.

THE BRITAIN REPORT.

The council ordered this report, paying one-half of the expense—about \$2,700. The remainder was met by the local branch of the citizens' research bureau. The visiting experts surveyed the fire, police and several departments at the city hall and a great deal of discussion until 1924. Despite the efforts of the members of the Chamber of Commerce and other leading citizens, the council declined to send the "commission form of government" project to the people, as recommended in the same report.

FIRE AND POLICE PROBS.

Many charges and counter-charges of "petty persecution" by police officers and "dissension in the fire department" were bandied about the council chamber from time to time throughout the year. Probes were asked for by individual members of the council and members of the department, but finally deferred until after the British report was submitted. The report cannot be now presented until 1924, the aldermen feeling that the time had not been adequate for a fair consideration of the problems.

INDUSTRIAL AREA.

The first real step to have this city property ready for possible factories was taken. Certain local improvements were approved with the consent of the ratepayers affected and a good half of the pavement authorized for Brydges street has already been constructed.

GRADE SEPARATIONS AND UNION DEPOT.

A special committee of the council re-opened negotiations with Sir Henry Thornton and his C. N. R. representatives and with the P. R. and action is promised. Preliminary reports are now under preparation as the initial move.

ANNEXED DISTRICT SCHOOL.

This was another question of ancient vintage to the consideration of this year's council and a "show-down" was ordered. The city authorities were ordered to collect additional taxes from industries in the "annex" of East London. These concerns refused to pay. The case was heard in county court; judgment reserved and a decision expected at any moment. A win for the city will mean another \$15,000 annually for the city for the next four or five years.

CITY SALARY QUESTION.

This problem confronted the mayor and his colleagues when they came into office—a long list of recommendations coming over from the previous year. No definite action was taken, however, until a few weeks later, when the question was finally settled and the bylaw passed in November.

HOLIDAYS.

At the last session of the council annual vacations with pay were authorized for all civic employees with at least one year's continuous service to their credit. This will affect chiefly "outside" workers, as garbage men, etc.

NEW CITY HALL.

All year the council battled in this regard, there being those members who persistently opposed any move to build on the McCormick site, as desired by the mayor. Plans were drafted and prizes given to the architects—an expenditure of about \$5,500. In the finish the people rejected the proposals.

SPRINGBANK DAM.

This proposal suffered in a similar manner at the polls. The issue was not "sprung on" the council until late in the year, and the majority of them were more or less apathetic as to the result.

STREET RAILWAY.

After months of argument the council suddenly decided late in the term not to ask the people in 1923 in which to pay for its share of the street railway. Before the Richmond street pavement was commenced the council passed a resolution allowing the company ten years in which to pay for its share of the project. No formal agreement was drafted, however, and the city solicitor since gave his opinion that any such agreement would be illegal in any event and contrary to the provisions of bylaw 916—city's agreement with the company.

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NO ONE ALLOWED IN TAIL CHRISTMAS

Governor Wishes To Correct Impression Given to the Citizens on Question.

Contrary to a report in a local paper purporting to have come from Governor Byron Dawson, the prisoners at the local goal will not receive visitors on Christmas day.

"I don't know where they got their information, but I want it understood that inmates shall not be allowed to receive visitors," Governor Dawson said this morning. "Many of the turnkeys will be away and we will not have sufficient help to take care of visitors. There is positively no truth in the statement that Sidney Murrell's mother is to see her son. She may come today if she wishes, but not on Christmas."

It is against regulations that the report regarding visitors is likely to cause us much inconvenience."

PIANO PUPILS APPEAR IN SPLENDID RECITAL

Class of Miss Edith Irvine Assisted by Pupils of Miss Walker and Miss Houston.

The pupils of Miss Edith Irvine gave a successful piano recital last night, assisted by Miss Thelma Mantle, elocution pupil of Miss Jean Walker, and Miss Jean Houston, vocal pupil of Miss Nellie Burnip. The numbers were all well executed and bespoke patient study.

The program follows: "A Happy Thought," by Edith Kaufman; "Bedtime," by Marjorie Robinson; "Out of Doors," by Ruth Feeney; "French Child's Song," by Shirley Stewart; "Life Let Us Cherish," by Lloyd Bore; "Little Prince," by Bernice Sinclair; "Dreamland," by Gwendys Harper; "Rocking Horse," by Marjorie Sinclair; "Taranella," by Elsie Morrice; "Swaying Ferns," by Eleanor Colvin; "Harvest Home," by Eleanor Bende; "The Mill," by Constance Wood; reading, by Thelma Mantle; "Auf Capri," by Irene Bird; "Rondo of the Villagers," by Isabelle Beattie; "Sleeping Princess," by Nellie James; "Pink," by Jack Holmes; "Milkmaids," by Elva McGregor; "At the Fountain," by Vera Turner; "Sonata," by Agnes Mitchell; "Moon Moths," by Edith Fairley; solo, "Pegging Along," by Jean Houston; "Queen of Roses," by Margery Allender; valse, by Marguerite Thorne; reading, by Thelma Mantle; "Cabaletta," by Alleen Hallett; nocturne, by Vera Riddell; prelude in C sharp minor, by Florence Quinn; "La Pappillon," by Mildred McGay.

NO DATE ANNOUNCED FOR SPECIAL MEETING

No date has yet been set for the special meeting of No. 2 committee of the board of education, according to Architect L. E. Carrothers. The meeting, which is to discuss the plans of the new Empress avenue school, will in all likelihood be held next week, the last meeting of the board being held on Dec. 28. The special meeting was necessitated by the fact that several tenders received for the construction of the new school were many thousands of dollars over the debenture issue of \$180,000, and the contract was not let, the architect being asked to go over the plans with the object of paring down to this amount.

CHAMPIONS AUDITORIUM IN WEST LONDON SCHOOL

Ald. Douglas, Ward 2, scores any suggestion to eliminate the auditorium from the plans of the new West London public school. This would afford the people across the river, he points out.

MIDDLESEX STORM FALLS TO DESCEND, OFFICIALS SCORED

Election Pot Begins To Simmer at Manor Park Gathering.

MIRRIAM IS FAVORED

The predicted municipal storm over the administrative affairs by John S. Cousins, reeve of Middlesex; Walter Laidlaw, first deputy, and William Boler, second deputy, did not materialize at the meeting of the Ratepayers' Association of Manor Park last night. These three officials did not show up as anticipated, and the meeting therefore endorsed W. S. Merriam, oppose Mr. Cousins for the reevehip, while W. L. Wright will be candidate for the council.

The stewardship of Messrs. Cousins, Laidlaw and Boler during the year was vigorously assailed by a battery of speakers, who claimed they had not shown sufficient interest in the welfare of Manor and Highland Parks.

W. L. Wright declared the three present incumbents had become "moth-eaten" and urged the ratepayers to elect them from office. Others said the drainage system in those districts was "terrible," and still others charged Mr. Cousins with failure to live up to political promises.

"They have not pressed the claims of residents here in regard to the construction of adequate drainage system," one speaker said.

A. C. Jolley added that now was the time to show them that the ratepayers would not stand for a further period of alleged neglect.

"The present township councillors have failed to fulfill any of their pre-election promises," he said.

E. G. Robson appealed for a handsome majority for Mr. Merriam. He recommended that the latter be elected by the greatest majority ever given a candidate.

"We've got to be very emphatic and subdue them for all time," he said. About 45 men and women attended the meeting. F. G. Taylor acted as chairman.

"BOOZING EARLY" CHRISTMAS PLAN

Five Drunks Appear—One Complaints of "Foggy Night."

"Do your Christmas boozing early" has been the password in local "drunk" circles, the consequence being that five persons were taken to the police court today.

All had the cash to pay their fines, and were saved a "state dinner" on the day at the expense of the government in the jail on their bank.

Only one prisoner had the nerve to fight his case, but it didn't get him any further.

This man claimed he had been taking a little medicine, and it might have gone a bit to his head.

"I don't know what you're talking about," he declared. "Can't walk on it very well."

"All right, I'll call the evidence," said the court.

Constable Leach stated he had picked up the prisoner in the patrol at Central avenue and St. George street at 10:40 last night. The man was incapable of looking after himself and smelled strongly of liquor.

Constable Knight stated he arrested the prisoner at Hyman and Richmond streets. He was dazed and unsteady on his feet.

"Well, it was a foggy night, and—" "Think you were a bit foggy," interrupted the court. "Ten dollars and costs."

PUPILS OF COLLEGIATE HOSTS OF MERRY DANCE

Central Assembly Hall Presents Gay Scene When the Students Entertain.

The assembly hall at the Central Collegiate presented a gay scene last evening when the students' union entertained at a jolly Christmas dance.

Ninety of the student bodies were festooned across the room, and brightly-colored balloons were also used as decorations. Palms and ferns barked the plinth, where Pudney's orchestra played irresistible dance music, and games as well as dancing were arranged in the study room. During the evening punch was served.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank McDonald and the members of the board of education and their wives were among the guests who numbered over 250. Other guests were the principals of the high schools, Mr. H. B. Beal of the technical school and Mrs. Beal, Mr. Graham of the London South Collegiate and Mrs. Graham and Mr. O'Neill of the East London Collegiate. Representatives of the student bodies and the other collegiates were also present.

Miss McPherson was convener of the refreshments and Miss Dorothy McCann was in charge of the games, and the decorations were arranged by a committee, with Mr. Brock as convener.

MAYOR PROMISES "GOODIES" IN HIS INAUGURAL ADDRESS

What's going to be in Mayor Wenige's next inaugural address? Nobody knows yet but his worship, and he promises some real goodies in the grab-bag.

"Next year is 1924, the year after 1923. There was considerable action this year, and we will have to keep

VIOLETT DE PAUL AT SANATORIUM IS BRIGHT EVENT

Y.M.C.A., Red Cross and Many Local Societies Join in Entertaining Patients.

JAMES GRAY PRESIDES

Nine o'clock at the Queen Alexandra Sanatorium last night saw the Christmas party at its height, with Santa Claus distributing gifts from a glittering tree. The recreation hall, crowded with almost three hundred patients, was the scene of the fun, and every man, woman and child wore a gay paper cap, the gift of the Y. M. C. A. The orchestra played. The children shouted with glee as they discovered new toys, and stockings filled with candies and nuts. James Gray, chairman of the military hospital committee, was a dominating figure, presiding over the great gathering.

Another interesting guest of the occasion was Sir Adam Beck, who has an interest in the sanatorium, having been largely instrumental in its erection.

Never was there such a Christmas party as that party, largely because for the first time, soldiers, civilians and children all had a part in it. Hitherto their Christmas fun has been enjoyed apart.

From the tree came gifts from the Red Cross Society for the soldier patients—150 soft, gray dressing gowns, beautifully trimmed with blue, which had been cut out by the Red Cross committee and made up at the Helena Costume Company, through the generosity of Ernest Little. To each of the civilian patients was also given a present, all purchased under the supervision of the Ladies' Auxiliary to the London Health Association, of which Mrs. G. E. Brown is the president. And for the children were quantities of toys, which came from Mr. Donahue of Hay's Stationery Company and other friends in the city. And when the tree had been stripped every man, woman and child had been made happy.

Fine Program.

The distribution of presents from the tree was by no means the only event of a very full evening, however. It was preceded by a very fine program, which included songs by Miss Marion Beck and the Sunset Male Quartette. The military hospital committee of the Y. M. C. A. was responsible for the evening's program and carried out its part well, under the direction of James Gray, E. J. Jenkins and Robert Liddle.

Leading up to the party in the recreation hall were the Christmas dinners, soldiers, civilians and children dining separately. The outstanding event, of course, was the dinner tendered the soldier patients by the Red Cross Society, an annual event which is always looked forward to with interest.

The members of the Red Cross Society visiting committee became waitresses for the occasion, and