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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1920

BETTER GOVERNMENT FOR BELLEVILLE

There is a general feeling of dissatisfaction throughout the city in reference to our system of municipal government.

Much of the feeling of unrest lacks the capacity of vocal expression. It is not very clear, even to itself, where the source of dissatisfaction is to be found. But there is a dim and intangible realization that some way or somehow things are not right with the body politic.

This sense that something is wrong is not confined to the professional grumblers, but extends generally to the men of moderate opinions who are given to serious thinking and who do not form hasty conclusions.

The dissatisfaction that is so general at the present time has been accentuated, it is only fair to state, by the recent payment of tax-bills, the heaviest in the history of Belleville.

The payment of taxes is never a popular pastime. But reasonable people will not grumble if they are satisfied they are receiving somewhere near one hundred cents in value for the dollar that is taken. The trouble is that they are convinced that the money is not always being spent to the best advantage. Here and there they see evidences of bad management of inefficiency and they soon convince themselves that bad management and inefficiency are general in the city administration.

The consequence is that the ratepayer believes that the city's affairs are being hopelessly bungled, that our revenues are being scandalously wasted and that our municipality is getting nowhere but is being buried beneath a mountain of useless debt.

When the property owners in a city begin to feel that way it is a serious thing because of its effect on our future progress and prosperity. The dissatisfied taxpayer is a bad advertiser. He loses all enthusiasm. His local patriotism wanes. He shies away from movements that would contribute to our advancement for fear that our money will be squandered by incompetents. He has no good word to say for our city, either at home or abroad, because he has lost that basic pride and loyalty that are founded upon local faith and confidence.

Get these fundamental facts into your mind—a satisfied, contented and confident citizenship is a loyal citizenship. A dissatisfied, discontented and non-confident citizenship may not be deliberately and intentionally disloyal, but their lack of spirit, continual grumbling and carping expressions to outsiders promulgate disloyalty and injure their city far more effectively than if their campaign was carefully planned, with malice aforethought.

They seize upon such a job as the "improvements" to Murney's hill. They call attention to the undoubted fact that thousands of dollars have been needlessly wasted in the accomplishment of the work on this small stretch of highway.

For instance, in the late summer of 1918 an excellent macadam pavement was laid all the way up the hill, a pavement that would in the usual course of events have lasted ten years. Ald. Whelan was chairman of public works and he saw to it that the work was well done. But at the end of that year Ald. Whelan retired from the Council and he was succeeded by Ald. Woodley. Under Ald. Woodley's administration, it was decided that a new sewer must be laid up the hill, and also that the grade of the hill should be reduced to accommodate the Provincial Highway. Therefore, at the end of six months, the beautiful new macadam pavement was ripped up from end to end and the road metal was all carted away. The fall of 1919 saw the roadway in a rough and miry condition with large boulders thrown on the driveway to fill the sink-holes. The expense of removing the surplus grade and the excavation for the sewer, which had all been done by hand work and by city labor, was indeed very great.

Ald. Woodley was succeeded by Ald. Hanna, as chief of the public works department, in 1920. The Standard Paving Company was given a contract for paving the hill and it was anticipated that a few weeks after the opening of spring the work would be completed. This is the 27th day of October and the pavement is not completed yet. The paving company is not

to blame for the delay. There has been a succession of excavations and counter-excavations such as probably no city on earth ever saw before. Four organisations, the Belleville Public Works Department, the Belleville Waterworks, the Belleville Gas Department and the Bell Telephone Company seemed to vie with one another in trench-digging and to see which could hold out the longest. But the time arrived a couple of weeks ago when human endurance could hold out no longer. The trench diggers desisted, from total exhaustion, and the payors were allowed to proceed with their work. They expect to have it nicely completed before the freeze-up.

The Council of 1920 has spent more money than any Council in the history of our city. The Council of 1920 has been more generally and adversely criticised than any Council in the history of our city.

But the Council of 1920 is composed of some of our most capable business and professional men. We have no hesitation in saying that its members have worked hard and faithfully and have done their best to serve the public interest. They have not earned the reputation for extravagance that has been assigned to them.

It should be borne in mind that contracts for the bulk of the public works undertaken this year were let by the Council of 1919, but could not be completed that year. The Murney hill trouble was also bequeathed by the Council of 1919. The Council of 1920 took up the question of the shifting of the Grand Trunk track on Pinnacle street and thus, at trifling expense to the city, accomplished one of the most important improvements that has been brought about here in years by giving to Belleville two main business thoroughfares instead of one. It must also be recalled that Belleville's program of paving and sewer-laying was held up by the war. Belleville is now about fifteen or twenty years behind other cities of our size and importance in the matter of improvements of that nature. We should, even at that, go slow until prices have eased up a bit, but it cannot be denied that practically all of the public works being completed this season were many years overdue.

The Council of 1920 is, in its personnel, one of the ablest that we have had for years. Fundraising is easy and faults undoubtedly exist. But the fault is more to be found with the system than with the men who are compelled to work under it.

The best of mechanics cannot succeed in their work without proper tools.

The dissatisfaction and unrest that are so apparent in Belleville are not peculiar to this city alone. They are to be found in many other centers, in even greater volume.

Of all branches of our public service and government, the municipal administrations are the least capable and satisfactory. With all their genius for democratic government the English-speaking nations of the world have been going along with a system of municipal government, that has been perpetually blundering, inadequate and inefficient.

The causes of weakness are not hard to discover. The annual election and changes of personnel in the councils prevent continuity of policy. Amateurs succeed amateurs year after year. Our Belleville Council is divided into nine departments, each practically independent of the other. This prevents co-operation, or co-ordination, and insures over-lapping of effort and needless expense.

But the chief central defect in our municipal system is that the legislative and administrative branches are combined in the one body—the council. Our system assumes, for instance, that we can take some private citizen and through the magic of an election transform him overnight into a specialist for the highly technical work of managing the gas department.

With quite as much reason might a chartered bank go out and hire a blacksmith to come in and manage one of its important branches.

The process is so manifestly absurd that the wonder is we have tolerated it so long.

The cities of the United States have been worse governed than those in Canada, not because of an inferior system, for their scheme of municipal government has been almost identically the same as ours, but because of the prevalence of graft.

In their efforts to escape the combined yoke of incompetence and dishonesty, they stumbled, almost by accident, upon the system of government by commission.

It was when Galveston, Texas, had been overwhelmed by a hurricane in 1900 that the work of rebuilding and administering the city was handed over to a commission. The plan worked so well and with so many manifest improvements and economies that it was decided

to continue the plan as a scheme of government, and the city is well governed, and exceedingly well governed, by its commission of five.

The success of Galveston led other cities to adopt the same plan, and at the present time there are over 600 cities and towns in the United States and Canada governed by commission.

Generally speaking, municipal government by commission has been a decided improvement on the old form. The commissioners were generally elected for longer terms than aldermen had been and were commonly more capable men.

But the system had many of the same defects and weaknesses of the system it superseded. There was the same lack of co-ordination in the different departments and the commissioners were no more specialists than the aldermen had been. In St. John, N.B., and a number of cities in the States the system is not regarded as a success.

Government, like business, is an evolution. The commission form of government has given rise to a newer and better plan that has given immense satisfaction wherever adopted. Where once a city has tried it, there has been no reversion to the old system. We refer to what is known as the Manager Plan of city government.

The Manager Plan is simplicity itself. A city council or commission, usually of five members, is elected in the regular way. One of the members is called the mayor and the others commissioners. The five commissioners hire a manager, whose business it is to administer and manage the various departments of the city's affairs. The council or commission frames and lays down general policies. It is the duty of the manager to carry out the policies. The council is the legislative organization; the manager is the administrator.

The manager can be hired or fired at any time. He is merely a hired man, but should be a specialist in his work.

Thus we have complete democratic government in the elective commission, and business government in having governmental policies carried out in an economical, efficient and business-like way by the manager.

We already have the manager system in our public and high schools. We elect a board of trustees and the trustees hire a school principal to administer their policies, and carry out the technical work of instruction. The public school is by no means a perfect organization. But it is the best thing that Anglo-Saxon nations have done for themselves yet in the way of public services.

The business affairs of a school, as conducted by the board of trustees, do not illustrate the manager system. But the board of trustees in their relation to the teacher give us a perfect illustration.

Modern business corporations are also exact illustrations of the manager plan of government. The board of directors of banks, railroads, manufacturing concerns and other great business enterprises invariably engage general managers with the required technical skill, breadth of mind and good judgment to carry out the general policies the directors enunciate.

The manager plan gives to our cities the same business government as makes our business corporations prosperous and effective. At the same time the principle of democratic government is not in the least surrendered.

We would like to see some member of the Council give notice of motion, at the next session, that he will introduce a bylaw to give the people the chance of voting upon the question at the January election. We fancy the proposal to have a manager would be endorsed by the electors by an overwhelming majority.

There would not need to be an elaborate change in our system of election, requiring special legislative enactment.

It would be best to reduce the Council to five members—a mayor and four aldermen. Otherwise no further change would need to be made.

The mistakes that have been made on Murney's hill and elsewhere in our city have been honestly made. They are the mistakes due to a bad system. But mistakes are expensive. Putting down a costly pavement, and then ripping it up a few months later, means a great waste of public money.

The effort of the city manager plan is to get away from this wasteful use of public funds because of lack of planning for years ahead and of continuity in policy, and to get away from the expensive mistakes of amateurs and to place the administration in the hands of those who have made it their business in life to study all the departments of city government.

Municipal government should not be the only activity on earth perpetually in the hands of amateurs. Let us put the government of our city on a business basis.

OUT OF THE ASHES

Written for the Ontario by Chas. M. Bice, Lawyer, Denver, Colorado.

Out of the ashes of the European conflagration Poland, according to all indications, will arise reborn. To lovers of liberty the prospect of a return to nationality and greatness on the part of the land of Sobieski and Kosciuszko will be hailed with gratification and thanksgiving. One of the unhappiest of nations, the battleground of conflicting creeds, creeds and racial civilizations for a thousand years, Poland has suffered martyrdom seldom equalled in history. Too much of it has been self-inflicted, we concede, but it has been none the less tragic. Unless the Russian menace is not lulled however, and the present negotiations with the League regime a false foundation of peace, it is reasonable to believe that Poland, with something of her old boundaries restored, will at last recover her ancient glory and take her place among the strong nations of the world.

The territorial dimensions of Poland so far as the prophecies with Soviet Russia at Riga reveal, will be practically double those under Russian domination before the war. The size attained at the peak of her medieval greatness, when the junction with Lithuania was effected, will not be reached, as Lithuania is now a distinct republic. Nor will all the area formerly held in what is now East Prussia be Poland's, nor that across the Carpathians in the domain of the former Hapsburg Empire, with the recovery of an extensive tract of approximately 100,000 square miles to the east of her old boundaries and the acquisition of German holdings, which include the cities of Thorn, Posen, Tarnobrzeg and others, Poland will have the physical basis on which to build her future prosperity.

Love of liberty has ever characterized the history of the Poles from the earliest date. America has had graphic evidence of this national attribute in the heroic and important service rendered the Revolutionary cause by Kosciuszko, who with Lafayette distinguished himself in the successful struggle to overthrow English rule in her American colonies. Not only was he honored by high office in the continental army, serving as Chief of General Nathaniel Green's engineering staff, but it was he who under direct commission, laid out West Point, the site of America's famous military academy.

Historians ascribe the checkered career of Poland, with its alternating periods of magnificence and misery, to natural defects, as well as national virtues. Most of the lifetime of a people whom all the great powers of Europe could not wholly crush, in spite of oppression and rapine, has been spent in warfare. Protracted seasons of peace have been almost unknown in this buffer state, which has not only been subjected to the continuous conflict on the part of neighboring nations, but has at various times felt the heel of the Mongolian and Turkish invaders.

All civilization owes a debt to the brilliant and devoted Sobieski who raised the siege of Vienna in 1683 and rolled back the Moslem hordes from the eastern gate of Europe at a moment when Austria lay supine before the Turks and Europe was saved only by Polish intervention. The ingratitude on the part of Austria, both directly following this rescue of Christendom and in the later centuries, when she violently assisted in tearing Poland asunder, is characteristic of the wretched fate which has dogged Poland constantly, and consistently.

For the most part, Poland has had but two classes, the aristocracy and the peasants. The war of liberty produced an oligarchy which rendered the nobility proud, selfish and arrogant and the peasantry little better than slaves. So great indeed became the power of the nobles that they stripped the King of all semblance of power, and rendered him but a gold-incrusted appendage to the state. To the jealousy, and even to the treachery of these ever-ready, historical students, attribute the downfall of the nation.

Betrays of the most base nature in times of crisis marked the conduct of the Polish aristocracy and left the nation to conquest and partition.

Today Poland stands on the threshold of a new era. The structural design of the new states government is modeled after that of the American republic. In retrospect the history of the nation offers an object lesson which should enable the enlightened statesmanship of today to steer clear of the errors of the past. Western peoples have watched her career since the great war with unusual interest, recognizing the compelling force with which

OBITUARY

MRS. M. A. WILBEE

Elizabeth Frances Wilbee, wife of Mr. Matthew A. Wilbee, passed away at her home at 355 Bleecker Ave., after an illness of two weeks' duration. She was born in London 57 years ago and was a daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. Richard Rine. For ten years she had lived in Belleville. Mrs. Wilbee was a member of the Tabernacle Methodist Church. Surviving besides her husband are one brother, Frank Rine, of Calgary, and one sister, Mrs. Emily Johnson of Toronto.

MRS. DICKSON

Mrs. Amelia Jane Dickson, who died at Mountain View was the widow of Thomas Dickson and was born at Whitby 72 years ago. She was a daughter of the late Samuel Fraser and had been a resident of Mountain View for twenty-five years. Mrs. Dickson was a Methodist. Her illness lasted for six weeks. Surviving are six sons—George, of Verona, N. Y.; Sandy, of Chico, California; Sanford of Oriskany Falls, N. Y.; Colvin F., of Watertown, N. Y.; Harold, of Watertown, and four daughters—Mrs. John Nelson, of Brownville, N. Y.; Mrs. William Norfolk, of Watertown, N. Y.; Mrs. John McCarthy, of Belleville and Mrs. George Morris of Mountain View.

CHARLES T. H. HODGES

The remains of the late Charles T. H. Hodges arrived in this city yesterday afternoon from Brockville, accompanied by his brother, Mr. A. H. Hodges, of Brockville, and were taken to the family residence, 319 Albert street. Deceased was the eldest son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Chas. W. Hodges and had lived in Belleville for eight years. Death was due to Bright's disease. Surviving are his widow and six children, four daughters and two sons.

Talk of the Town And of the Country

WILD FRUIT STILL GROWING
 On the farm of Mr. John Robbs, of Keelerville, is a big cherry tree which is still bearing fruit, despite the lateness of the season. The tree is dotted with white blossoms. On the same hill with the tree is an abundance of wild raspberries.

INAUGURATED SLEEPING CAR
 The G.T.R. have inaugurated a new sleeping car service between Trenton and Montreal. The train which reaches Fort Hope at 1.15 from the west will have pullmans attached at Trenton for Kingston and Montreal. The sleeping cars are of the most modern standard type.

OLD DISTILLERY IS SOLD
 The Wiser distillery at Prescott, one of the oldest in the province, has passed into the hands of Montreal interests, who have increased its capital to \$3,000,000.

ADVICE FROM HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
 A Horticultural Society in Ontario gives the following advice in regard to leaves which are at present rapidly falling. Put them on your flower beds or garden. They make excellent fertilizer. Do not however leave them on your lawn as they would likely kill the grass. If you cannot obtain rich fertilizer for your tulip beds—gather your leaves now and when the frost comes, spread them about 3 inches deep over your tulips—as soon as ever frost is out of ground, take leaves off.

WILL ADDRESS CLUB
 The Women's Canadian Club expect General Sir Archibald MacDonnell, Commandant of the Royal Military College, Kingston, who commanded the first Canadian division in France to lecture to them at an early date. Midam Pantazzi is also expected to address the club shortly.

SOCIAL EVENING
 The members of the Belleville Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star, and their friends enjoyed a social dance at the Johnstone's Academy last night.

SERENADED BANDSMAN
 Mr. William Wessnacet, who recently joined the ranks of the benedictines was given a surprise at his home, corner of Meira and Boswell

Relief in Newsprint Situation Promised to United States

NEW YORK, Oct. 27.—Relief in the newsprint situation in the United States was promised by Hjalmar Gronvik, managing director of the Finnish Cellulose Association, on their arrival here from Finland aboard the steamship Stockholm. The paper mills of Finland, they said, turn out 210,000 tons of paper each year, of which 45 per cent, is newsprint, and it was their intention to open up a larger market in the United States. Eventually Finland's entire paper output would be placed on the United States market ready to meet all competition in prices, they asserted.

German Breweries Are Facing Ruin

BERLIN, Oct. 27.—Economic experts report that many German breweries are facing ruin as a result of the falling off of the consumption of near beer. To prevent this the Imperial Council has adopted an ordinance which will permit German breweries to thicken brews by an increase of malt content.

