

Rural Municipal Affairs

Conducted by John M. Pratt.

MUNICIPAL HOSPITALS

At the provincial convention of the Manitoba rural municipalities held in Winnipeg the latter part of November the matter of Municipal hospitals came in for considerable attention. Mr. McDonald, president of the Manitoba Union, made the statement that in one rural municipality in which an examination was made of the children in the public schools not one child was found to be normal. Defective hearing, or eyesight, skin diseases, poor teeth and enlarged tonsils contributed a fair share to the abnormalities—but the fact to bear in mind is that there was not one child but was in some way deficient. This is a matter-of-fact world and it is only natural that we accept the factors contributing to our environment without giving much thought to them. But think of 600 children beginning the task of developing an intellectuality that is to determine their status in life, all laboring under the handicap of ill health. In the case sighted by Mr. McDonald there were several cases of tuberculosis. Think of your child associating daily with a child affected with this most terrible disease. Think of a nation composed of men and women who have lived through an unhealthy and an abnormal childhood.

If the facts were known surely the people would demand a system of health inspection and medical service that would insure a reasonable degree of protection to their children. The law is on the statute books. It is entirely a matter of demanding action.

JUSTIFICATION

The correspondence that has been received by the editor of the municipal department of The Guide has at least justified our belief that in some districts a higher standard of efficiency might be attained. We have no way of ascertaining the standing of our correspondents, but there can be no question but that their letters were intelligent ones.

One man writes: "Farmers whose hair would turn grey if they missed waking the hired man at 4.30 a.m. and working him 16 hours a day will take \$5.00 from the councillor for five or six hours work." Another: "Our councillors are elected because they are 'good fellows' and none of them pretend to have any practical knowledge of road building, and our municipality is famous for its rough roads." Another: "I will wager that never a one of our councillors ever heard of a split log drag." Another: "We have no roads, no hospitals, no schools to speak of, nothing in fact but a debenture indebtedness of considerable size."

Are the councils to blame? They are not. The ratepayers are to blame. Good municipal government is entirely dependent upon the standard of public opinion that creates it. The quality of government will be determined by the demands of the ratepayers. A more general knowledge of the routine and a more active interest on the part of the public can only result in increased efficiency.

President Reynolds, of the Manitoba Agricultural College, in addressing the Union of Municipalities clearly defined the duties of a municipal council as regards increased production. The holding of meetings to awaken interest and drive home the necessity of good seed, good tillage and weed control were mentioned. The real wide awake council can render a service that will be invaluable to the nation.

ORGANIZATION ADDRESSES

Before the next issue of this department goes to press the councils elected in 1917 will have held their organization meetings. We have received the organization addresses of Reeve Dolt Now and Reeve Ido Declare, and we reproduce them for the benefit of our readers.

Reeve Dolt Now to his new council: "Boys, we must make a record this year and we must begin right now and make every lick count. During the next two months we want to plan to hold at least one meeting in every division of the municipality. I want you fellows to make arrangements for these meetings in your respective divisions and let me know dates and places of meetings and

I will attend every one of them. I think it would be a good plan to have an all day session. Get all of the people out and have a big dinner in the school house or some other place that is convenient.

"Now here is what we want to do. We want to finish grading that 10 miles of road into Aspire and put two good road drag operators on it. We want to open up the blind line a mile south of the town line in 34-7 and do the necessary dragging and repairing on the old roads. We want to complete the hospital and get a couple of good nurses. We want to pull off those two agricultural short courses between now and the 15th of March. We have got to perfect our automatic weed inspection scheme and pave the way for a big municipal fair and picnic the latter part of the summer. Boys, we must get every man in the

good and there was always a house alongside and he would drive in and say, "You are the councillor for division number so-and-so, are you not?" The fellow would say, "Yes, what can I do for you?" and Mr. D— would say, "You have done me already."

A Lively Annual Meeting

Well anyway this man saw several of the men in each part of the municipality, talked the matter over and made arrangements to have a big crowd out at the annual meeting. The annual meeting was held and the crowd was there about two hours before the meeting was supposed to be called to order. Mr. D— asked if they would let him say a few words—and they did. And he sure made some talk. When he finished, the crowd was almost ready to tar and feather every member of the council, but Mr. D—

NEW PRIZE OFFER

For the best article submitted on or before January 15, 1918, entitled, "What Our Council Has Accomplished," we will give a first prize of \$5.00, a second prize of \$3.00, and a third prize of \$2.00.

If your council has adopted a progressive policy and accomplished anything worth while tell us about it. Some councils are not doing what they might because they cannot realize what can be accomplished. If your council is doing nothing let us know. A little publicity may stimulate them into activity. You are not only competing for a prize, you are also rendering a distinct service to the public. An hour will do it. Remember this is the age of the woman.

Prizes: First, \$5.00; second, \$3.00; third, \$2.00.

community behind us and we will show some of the people what a real wide awake council can do if it tries and we must begin now. Let's get busy and provide a little amusement for the folks and at the same time let them know we are on the job and realize that there is a lot that can be done and that we want their help. Now, boys, I won't take up any more time. Let's get to work."

Address of Reeve Ido Declare: "Well, some of us got back all right. We sure put it over that South end bunch. Mebby they'll learn who's who after awhile. Ain't much to be done today. We'd better figger out how much Underpaid is worth, mebby—but we kin do that at the next meetin'. We've all earned this indemnity so let's go over and have a smoke."

FUNCTIONS OF A COUNCIL

We reproduce herewith the best article submitted, entitled "The True Functions of a Municipal Council." It is worthy of note that the best contribution was made by a woman.—Ed., Municipal Department.

There are two reasons for my making this attempt in journalism. The first is that I believe our council here has assumed the right kind of an attitude and accomplished several things which if generally known might be of benefit to other districts that are having some difficulties to overcome. The second reason is that the \$10.00 prize would be very acceptable to me at the present time as our crop was injured by the dry weather.

For four or five years there was not very much interest taken in the council. Everybody was too busy and had too many debts to look after to leave much time to give to anything else, but there was one man in our district, Mr. D—, that was paying quite an amount each year for taxes. He got an idea into his head that he wasn't getting very much return for the \$200 that he was paying annually to the council. This man had an automobile and one day (he said just for the sake of his curiosity) he started out to see where and how the road money (?) was being spent. He was not very familiar with the municipality, but he drove one whole day and called at the house of each one of the councillors. He knew where only one of the councillors lived, but stated positively that he did not make a single inquiry but was able to tell where each councillor lived by the condition of the roads.

He claimed he would drive six or seven miles over roads that were practically impassable and then he would come to a stretch of a few miles that was pretty

said, "Now look here, boys (this was before, the women were voting), you can't blame the councillors. They simply did the natural thing. Most of us would have done the same thing. It's our fault. I am of the opinion that the thing for us to do is to talk this matter over right now and find out what we want done and give these men another chance."

The meeting took the matter up at once and my husband said it was the best meeting he ever attended. Men who had never given any attention to anything before but their own business were mad enough to fight. There was some difference of opinion, but they finally got nearly every one lined up on what they called a progressive policy and elected every one of the old council by acclamation. That meeting was held in 1913 and at the first meeting in January there were about 20 of the ratepayers present and they went to work.

The first thing they did was to get an expert judge of land to make the first valuation for the assessment and there were only three complaints at the court of revision. This assessment won the confidence of the entire community and our council started in on what we called the new "progressive policy."

There was a man in our district who has been a big road contractor in Iowa. After some persuasion they succeeded in getting this man to agree to look after the road work for the entire district and map out a system of road work and upkeep to cover a period of five years.

This was four years ago and now we have about 38 miles of graded roads that are dragged each year and every man in the district has a good road leading into his market town over which he can haul a full load of grain. Of course these roads do not pass the door of every man, but have been so arranged that each man has a good road for the longest part of the haul.

Instead of a weed inspector that fiddled away most of his time we have a man who has organized institute meetings, agricultural short courses and a municipal school fair. He has been invaluable to the district for he gives advice (and it is good advice) to all of the farmers who are wondering about the best method of doing this or that. He has organized beef rings, breeding circles and a co-operative association that has saved our ratepayers thousands of dollars. We have one of the best hospitals to be found anywhere with a capable doctor and two nurses.

A Council's True Functions

My idea of the true functions of a municipal council are:—

1—The just arrangement of assessments.

2—Vigorous collection of a tax as high as the general financial condition of the district will make possible.

3—The building and maintenance of a system of roads. (Note the word system. Patchwork roadbuilding is practically valueless).

4—Making provisions for the best of medical attention and in a general way looking after the health of the ratepayers.

5—Providing of educational and social advantages that will make life in the rural district bearable at least.

6—Providing the necessities to the worthy destitute and labor for the professional sponge.

7—The employment of only the most competent of officers that through their interest, sympathy and advice will bring the entire district to the point of maximum productiveness and profit.

(Name withheld by request).

MUNICIPAL QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Q.—Can a rural municipality enforce the payment of taxes levied against an unpatented pre-emption?

C.F.J.S., Sask.

A.—Under the provincial statute of Saskatchewan taxes levied against an unpatented pre-emption can be collected by distraint 30 days after the date of the posting of the tax notice.

Q.—My land was sold for arrears of taxes this fall. Is there any advantage in my paying this amount before January 1, 1918?

J.B., Sask.

A.—Any land sold in 1917 could only be sold for arrears of taxes or taxes levied prior to 1917. If payment of the amount of the purchase price is made to the secretary-treasurer prior to the forwarding of return to the registrar, you could save the amount of the redemption certificate, 25 cents and the cost of redemption, \$2.00. If the return has been made to the registrar there is no advantage in making payment of the original amount as there is a penalty of 10 per cent. that attaches immediately. However the tax sale purchaser has the right to protect this land as against further tax sale proceedings and can pay the taxes levied for 1917 and upon doing so is entitled to a 10 per cent. penalty upon the amount so paid.

If your tax sale was held on October 30, you can pay the amount on October 29, 1918, without any additional charges. By paying the amount of the 1917 assessment prior to January 1, 1918, you will save the eight per cent. that is added on that date and a possible penalty in the amount of 10 per cent. that would immediately attach in case the assessment was paid by the tax sale purchaser, or a little better than 18 per cent. on the amount of 1917 assessment.

Q.—If I purchase unpatented land from a railway company in Alberta and do not bring this land under cultivation at once will it be liable to the "wild land" tax?

J.R., Man.

A.—No. Under the provisions of the Alberta Statute the "wild land" tax attaches only to land for which patent has been issued. If you obtain title to this land and do not improve it, it will be liable to the "wild land" assessment.

Q.—I was assessed for Hail Insurance this year and then afterward I received notice that there was an additional amount that would have to be paid. I have never received any benefit from this tax. Can the municipality make me pay the additional amount?

R.D., Alberta.

A.—Yes.

Q.—I have paid hail insurance taxes since 1913. Last year my crop was completely destroyed by hail, and I only received \$2.00 per acre. Can they make me pay hail taxes this year?

A.—Yes. Figure it up you will probably find that you have secured cheap insurance with the \$2.00 indemnity that was paid.

Q.—I have had four men working for me that were supposed to pay a poll tax—can the municipality hold me responsible for the payment of the amount?

B.R.P., Sask.

A.—No.