

COUNCIL DEFEATS RESOLUTION FOR CHAIR INVESTIGATION

Ratepayers Crowded the Council Chamber Last Night--Debate Was Very Lengthy--Mr. W. C. Mikel, K.C., Stated Case For Mr. Tickell--Mayor Ketcheson's Reply to Insinuations--Ald. Robinson Interrogates Council as to Certain Matters--Tivani Steel Co. Situation.

Belleville City Council opened last night with an officer of the law on duty at the door of the chamber. This old fallen-into-disuse custom was revived for last evening's meeting at the request of the Mayor as a time was expected. The chair deal' loomed large, and after hours of discussion, Council decided that no investigation was necessary.

When the Mayor and aldermen took their seats, the citizens' gallery was jammed, and many ex-members of the council were forced to invade the sacred precincts of the civic body and find accommodations in the leather-seated chairs.

"To make the meeting of March 5 legal, I move that we proceed to the order of motions," said Ald. Woodley, Ald. Smith seconding.

Ald. Robinson—"I move, in amendment, that we proceed in the regular way. Why is this done, unless it is to cut off Mr. Tickell, who should be given an opportunity to speak?"

The motion carried, the yeas and nays being recorded as follows: Yeas—Deacon, St. Charles, Whelan, Marshall, Smith, Woodley. (6)

Nays—Parks, Platt, Robinson. (3)

Ald. Whelan moved, seconded by Ald. Smith, "That in the opinion of this Council, the appointment of Ald. Woodley to be acting Mayor in the absence of Mayor Ketcheson, made this Council on Mar. 1, 1917, at which committee meeting all the members of the Council were present, and none objecting, is regular and in order, and this Council approves, adopts and confirms all the business transacted as set forth in the minutes of the meeting of the City Council held on Mar. 5, 1917, Ald. Woodley acting as Mayor."

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Ald. Parks moved, in amendment, that the matter be referred back for further consideration to state the salary and time of employment.

Ald. Woodley moved, in amendment to the amendment, that tenders be called for. This was withdrawn.

The amendment of Ald. Parks lost 5 to 3, those in favor being Ald. Platt, Parks, Woodley and Robinson.

The motion passed, 6 to 3. Yeas—Deacon, Marshall, St. Charles, Smith, Whelan, Woodley. (6)

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and nays were called for by Ald. Robinson.

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Council returned to the first order of business. "Are there any objections to confirming the minutes?" asked the mayor.

Ald. Parks—"Yes, I still object." Ald. Robinson—"I object to it also. The whole thing is wrong. Our confirming the minutes does not make it legal."

The motion to confirm the minutes carried, 6 to 3, the yeas and nays being recorded on Ald. Robinson's request.

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Council decided to hear any deputations present among the large gathering of citizens.

"The opportunity is given now, which will not be repeated this evening," said the mayor.

Mr. W. R. McCreary asked for the opening of a drain on Geddes St. which the chairman of public works said it was under consideration.

The question of the securing of a stenographer for the City Hall was next up.

Ald. Parks thought it was time to pension some of the city officials. The more help they get the more they want.

Ald. Robinson said that he saw no need now for help. "How long is the stenographer to be employed?" Ald. Robinson—"For the time being."

Ald. Robinson—"The time being in this corporation seems never to end. This Council puts me in mind of the Dark Ages."

Ald. Deacon said the city offices paid out large amounts for help every year. "The city has been in a rotten condition for the last twenty years. We may save cents and five-cent pieces and lose dollars. We must do business in a businesslike way." Ald. Robinson and Ald. Parks moved to come into the offices and learn what is doing, but listen around the street corners to what the people are talking about. Because you have not had good help and records kept up, you are losing money."

Ald. Robinson—"How much are you going to pay?" Ald. Deacon—"The committee will report."

Ald. Robinson—"You want us to vote in the dark?" Ald. Deacon has been in charge of the waterworks for a year and yet it is in a terrible shape. He makes a mountain of a mole-hill when he talks of all the work done in city offices." (Applauded)

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The recommendations carried. The fire recommendations were referred back to the special fire committee.

Mr. Porter's fee and expenses were only \$47.00 for appearing in the city's interest at the hearing at Ottawa for further protection on the Bay Bridge Road. Mr. Porter charged only one-half fees.

The Bell Telephone Co. per Mr. H. B. Stork, local manager, thanked Council for its permission to use a room in the City Hall for a meeting.

A letter referring to the condition of the board sidewalk on Charlotte Street was signed by Mrs. Green. It was referred on Ald. Deacon's suggestion, to the committee.

A letter from the city clerk of Peterboro suggesting a \$10 tax on single men not tenants or tax-payers, in addition to the present tax, was read.

Ald. Parks—"Was it Ald. Smith's intention to charge \$1.50 each for chairs for the City Hall when he knew they cost 90c?"

Ald. Smith—"That order was placed through the Thompson K. K. K. whatever price they charged, I have nothing to do with."

"That's not so," said Ald. Parks, who asked Mr. J. L. Tickell to give a letter. The alderman read that the order was placed by the Dominion Bedding Co.

Ald. Smith said he had a few documents he would produce at the proper time.

Ald. Robinson Interrogates Ald. Robinson—"I wish to inquire if there is any minute on the committee book regarding the order of the chairs." City Clerk—"I don't think there is." Ald. Robinson—"Was this contract laid before the executive committee?" Ald. Woodley—"No. It was before the Market and City Property Committee."

Ald. Robinson—"No contract involving an expenditure is legal until approved by the executive. Why was it not legally done?" Mayor Ketcheson said all the coal for the gas department was purchased, and only came before the executive when the bills came in. Ald. Robinson—"The gas is a department." Ald. Smith—"Was there any record on the minutes for an increased expenditure of \$100 on the City Hall? Did it ever come before the executive?"

Ex-alderman Duckworth said Ald. Parks without any authority took upon himself to go with oil painting which meant an extra expenditure of \$100, making the cost \$400, instead of \$300 for City Hall repairs.

Ald. Parks replied, stating his authority for building a movable scaffold which saved much money. The contractors agreed to reduce their tender \$50 if the City built the scaffold, which cost only \$27.50. An alderman wanted water, colors and the alderman, should then welcome an investigation. Mr. Tickell, to leave no chance to allow shirking of the matter, offered to go good the costs. "Why not clean up this matter and let the Council keep its record name if it has one." (Laughter)

Ald. Parks as second, outlined his stand in the matter and the events leading up to the purchase of the chairs. Just before a Council he suggested to the mayor that a meeting of a committee was necessary to consider chairs. The mayor shoved him aside as if he were a dog and said there was no time for that. Later a committee meeting was held. "I did not stay. They met." They sent the janitor to get tenders. Mr. Ed. H. Tickell put in a clear tender which the mayor says he cannot read at all. Why did not Ald. Duckworth advise for tenders, instead of spending evening after evening in an alderman's store? The North American Bent Chair Co. says Ald. Smith ordered the chairs. The chairs, with discount, cost 90c. The account for the chairs was peddled up and down street and it landed in the Thompson K. K. K. Co.

This condition of affairs had run on for years. Last year he stood alone. Any man who votes against an investigation must be guilty of something.

Mr. Mikel Presents Request. Mr. J. L. Tickell said he had had no satisfactory answer. Mr. W. C. Mikel, K. C., had been chosen to present the request for an investigation.

The courtesy was extended to Mr. Mikel to present Mr. Tickell's request. The motion was a simple one after all, he said. Little now could be given on the matter. It is idle to discuss any facts that might come before an investigation. No one is accused, but a charge has been made. The section is made use of by municipalities.

Mayor Ketcheson—"If Mr. Tickell or any other citizen is ready to make a charge in writing that some member of this council profited illegally, I am ready to grant an investigation."

Mr. Mikel continued: "Investigations go farther than that. They cover mistakes, irregularities, and mismanagement, in which no one can be said to be charged with an illegal act. It is not necessary to charge anyone. There is no chance that any alderman will be hardly dealt with. An investigation cannot be forced on the Council. The aldermen are in possession of all the facts, but the public does not know them. It would be more satisfactory to the public to have all brought out. The matter could be cleared up in a day as there are no outside witnesses. If a day's investigation can clarify the air, would feel better to know the result. Mr. Tickell is not pursuing the matter for a conviction. "If you turn down the request, you leave it to the public who may think other than you do."

Ex-alderman Jas. Duckworth Speaks. Ex-alderman Duckworth criticized Ald. Parks for persistently following the Market and City Committee, and for doing nothing but talk for two years of a heating plant. Ex-alderman Duckworth reviewed the City Hall repairs situation, stating that Ald. Parks had so talked over the contractors that they would not listen to the speaker (Ald. Duckworth.) Ald. Parks, he thought had been as contrary as man could be. If Ald. Parks had done any constructive work and could show it, he (Ex-alderman Duckworth) would take off his hat to him. (Laughter)

Referring to the chair purchase, Ex-alderman Duckworth said after the last Council meeting last year, he told Ald. Parks he had a tender for chairs. Ald. Parks said he knew there was going to be something done and went home. Ex-alderman Duckworth said the tender was opened by himself with the aldermen around the mayor's table. He recollected reading that the tender called for \$1.35, \$1.65, \$1.85, and \$2.00. He explained how he quoted \$1.70 for the second chair in a letter to the press.

He would like anyone to show where he had done anything wrong in his term of service. He made enemies he knew because of trying to save the city money.

He had never been approached by anyone on a shady deal. He paid upwards of \$300 taxes annually and it would not be up to him to let irregularity go on.

Ald. Parks reiterated that he knew of no committee meeting being held for the chair purchase.

Mayor Ketcheson's Reply. Mayor Ketcheson's reply to the allegations of irregularity was not a lengthy one. He asked who was telling the truth, Mr. Tickell, Ald. Parks or Ald. Robinson when they spoke at the last meeting concerning his absence or in reference to the matter of the introduction of the resolution for an investigation. He recalled the evening after a council meeting last year when Ald. Duckworth asked for a short committee meeting saying he had a tender for chairs. Not an alderman had left the chamber when this was said.

Ald. Parks interrupted saying he was not at the meeting, nor did he hear it mentioned.

The Mayor went on. "The faithful watch dog, appointed to guard the hen roost ran away because he felt the roost was going to be robbed and he found out (as he alleges) that the hen roost was robbed and not a feather remained." (Laughter)

He disclaimed having seen the tender until after the New Year. Because he got it from the city clerk to get a copy of it, Mr. Tickell made capital of this in the press. The chairs had been ordered after consultation with the committee. No one could really make head or tail out of Mr. Tickell's offer with all the references to rungs and rings. As far as the Mayor knew, no one in the council made a cent out of the purchase. If Mr. Tickell or any other responsible citizen would sign his name to a charge that any one in the council or in the city's employ profited illegally by the transaction, the matter would be investigated and would not cost the city a cent. He did not know whether Ex-alderman Duckworth made a mistake or not in reading the tender. That was for Mr. Duckworth to state.

In a conversation with Mr. J. L. Tickell on Bridge street, the mayor mentioned the names of Alderman Duckworth and Ald. Smith, said Mr. Tickell a pair of crooks with their heads together all the time, a disloyal bunch and you're with them! The mayor declared that he wanted Mr. Tickell to know that his name was Ketcheson and that to say that the Ketchesons were disloyal was a slander when sixty of the family are either buried in France or are in the trenches. Mr. Tickell said he was surprised to find the Mayor with such companions. In such a

bad lot and you're the head of them—a disloyal bunch." The Mayor thought the name Ketcheson would compare favorably with the name Tickell in the city of Belleville.

Until there is a definite charge, the council has no right to expend money to the extent of \$100, \$200 or may be \$500 and "I propose to carry the matter no further."

Ald. Robinson—"It has not yet been cleared up how the purchase took such a zigzag course and finally landed with the Thompson Kanuck Co. and they are not in the chair business. There is nothing that has roused the city as this same chair deal. We are representing the people and for their satisfaction an investigation should take place."

The mayor said he was a shareholder in the "T.K.K.K. Co." and at least a dozen other local concerns. "Probably I'm one of the biggest taxpayers and I have just as much interest as any other man in preserving the moneys of the city." Last year's council made savings that will aggregate \$18,000. A great saving resulted in prompt collection of taxes.

One of the first acts of Ald. Robinson this year was to go into the tax collector's office and try to get back into the old rut. What had Ald. Robinson done during all his years in the council?

Ald. Robinson gave the mayor credit for his investment in local concerns, but it was not becoming him to throw a lot of dirt on the speaker. What he told the tax collector was this: "I hope you're not going to be too hard on the poor people of this town. Some are very hard up and they ought to be dealt with leniently. And I say so yet."

What had he done? He had saved the city over \$25,000 by changing the time of assessment. "I'm worthy of some little credit. It does not become the mayor to endeavor to blacken my character. A man supposed to grace the mayor's chair, should not attempt to blacken the character of a man who has done his best by the city. I saved the city council \$50 the other night and I would do more if I had the support."

Mayor "I did not say anything against your character."

Ald. Robinson, "My character as an alderman. It is different from my personal character."

Mayor "I did not say anything against your aldermanic character. You were asking a lot of questions, what had others done, and I wanted to find out what you had accomplished."

Ald. Robinson "I'm surprised to hear the mayor get up and try to traduce the character of a member of the council."

Ald. Smith "I think Ald. Robinson has acted quite gentlemanly in this matter. I first said I would have nothing to do with the chairs. Then I was instructed by the chairman of market and city property to get them and the deal went through the Kanuck Co."

Mayor "Did you get any remuneration?"

"Not a cent."

"Did you make any profit?"

"I made no profit at all."

Ald. St. Charles said Ald. Robinson had after the last council admitted the investigation could not be held for \$100.

Ald. Deacon "We ought to move a vote of thanks to Ald. Robinson and Ald. Parks for arousing such public interest in municipal affairs. Ald. Robinson has been very gentlemanly in the matter." Ald. Parks has accused everybody of graft. Every act he is suspicious of. That is why he had no following last year. Ald. Smith was authorized to place the order for the chairs. When the chairs arrived at the station of the G.T.R. there was a telegram waiting "Deliver to City Hall."

"Sometimes you can quote quite cheap when you think you are not going to get a sale. I think the city got value for its money."

"This is simply a fishing expedition. That is the only way certain aldermen can get in the limelight. If they would only use their energies in bringing industries to the town, it would be better. They know there is nothing in the purchase. Ald. Robinson knows it will go no further. In voting against the resolution, I feel I am justified. Mr. Tickell would have made about \$60.50 if he had got the sale. Perhaps in the purchase through the Kanuck Company there was too much profit. I cannot make such large profits. But it was said the \$83 was all graft. Would any one do business without profit?"

Ald. Robinson "It is not the little \$22.50, but the principle. We want to find out the methods adopted. In dealing with those chairs. We want to know why the sale went to a higher figure. As for bringing up the matter two weeks ago, I don't think the business of the council should be delayed because the mayor is away on a pleasure trip."

The motion was then put and was defeated by 6 to 3, the yeas and

perhaps \$75 or \$100?"

Mayor Ketcheson—"I would like to say that my name is Ketcheson. I have done no wrong. If you or Mr. Tickell will make a charge over your own signature, I'll give you all the investigation you want and it won't cost the city a cent."

Mayor—"I don't take any insinuation from a duck like Ald. Parks."

Ald. Parks—"I'm no duck."

Ald. Platt said that the city loaned the Tivani Steel Co. \$1,500 some years ago. In 1914 they paid \$150. They have skipped 1915, 1916 and 1917. The company owes the city a total of \$171.60 today, besides \$900 balance. This is pretty loose financing. "I don't think the company is giving the city fair treatment."

Mayor Ketcheson said he knew very little of this arrangement. He knew the company had been struggling hard. Last year they had spent \$20,000 in Belleville. They are gradually getting on their feet. The mayor saw a letter from Mr. Wallace offering payment as soon as possible. The indebtedness is secured by a city mortgage on the buildings and plant of the Tivani Steel Co. Motion for Investigation Taken up.

Ald. Robinson's motion on the chair deal was taken up. The mayor said: "I want the citizens and aldermen to understand that this is not going to be a debating society. No one outside of this council has a right to speak when the Council's discussion begins. We don't want to hush anything up. Two aldermen and one not a member of the Council attacked me viciously last meeting night, and I am going to have something to say to them tonight."

Ald. Robinson—"Name them."

Mayor Ketcheson—"I'm looking right at them."

Ald. Robinson said Acting Mayor Woodley allowed everybody to chip in. He did not think the censure deserved. Ald. Woodley had said he wanted to see the entire matter settled two weeks ago.

Ald. Woodley did not recollect wanting the matter settled then. Ald. Robinson read his motion: "That charges have been made in the Belleville newspapers, that the tender for chairs for the City Hall received unfair treatment, therefore that His Honor Judge Willis be requested to investigate the same under the provisions of section 248, chapter 192, R. S. O., 1914, of the municipal act, providing that the cost of said investigation be not more than \$100."

Ald. Robinson said he had not yet said a word against the mayor. He had not said two weeks ago anyone was guilty of wrong doing. All he wanted was an investigation. He proceeded to read a verbatim account of his speech at the meeting of Mar. 5 to show that he made no derogatory remarks of the mayor or any alderman.

The answers to inquiries two weeks ago were not satisfactory. Mr. Tickell is not asking for any profits. He is acting simply on principle. He thinks he is unfairly treated. His firm really deserved the order as his price was less than what the city paid.

The terms used to the mayor were gentlemanly ones. The mayor who says there was no wrong doing, and the aldermen, should then welcome an investigation. Mr. Tickell, to leave no chance to allow shirking of the matter, offered to go good the costs. "Why not clean up this matter and let the Council keep its record name if it has one." (Laughter)

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