

The Municipal World

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In the interests of every department of the Municipal Institutions of Ontario.

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THE MUNICIPAL WORLD,

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ST. THOMAS, FEBRUARY 1, 1898.

The ratepayers of Chatham at the municipal elections decided to abolish the ward system of representation in the city council. Sub-section 3 of section 2 of the Municipal Amendment Act in this issue shows how the council will be elected in the future.

The Municipal Amendment Act published in this issue makes an important change in the constitution of town councils by reducing the number and abolishing the ward system. This was a much needed reform which can be still further improved by electing the councillors for two years, one-half to retire each year.

Owing to the large and increasing demands on the Question Department of this paper the Legal Editor has made arrangements for such assistance as may be necessary to enable him in the future to answer all mail questions promptly and also to give more attention to the drafting of by-laws and other work entrusted to us by councils.

A circular issued by a so-called municipal printing company, offering to do all the printing, etc., of a municipality for a lump sum, irrespective of requirements, leads us to suggest that local printing offices are entitled to all the work of the municipalities in their district, and should be supported by the council to that extent. The first cost of assessment and collector's rolls, election supplies and other forms used in limited quantities is greater than the demand on local offices will warrant and to supply these, municipal publishers are necessary. The supply department of this paper is receiving an encouraging support, and the publishers are thereby enabled to give the municipal officers the benefit of a paper that will assist them in a practical way in the discharge of their duties.

Two-Year Terms.

A NECESSARY REFORM.

When the bill relating to the constitution of town councils was before the Municipal Committee, an interesting discussion took place in reference to councils generally. Mr. Pattullo, the member for North Oxford stated that:

When town and county councils were dealt with as they should be by the Government he thought that two things should be borne in mind. The ward system had done a great deal to promote sectionalism and petty jealousy in municipalities and to prevent good men from entering municipal life, and in the distribution of public money for public improvements it had resulted in waste and inefficiency.

The basis of a reformed municipal system should include the abolition of wards. Where, however, public opinion strongly favored the ward system, it might be allowed to express itself after trial by returning to it on a decisive vote of the qualified ratepayers. But the most important reform which he would urge would be a two years term for township and town councillors.

TWO YEARS' TERMS.

Every municipal councillor should sit for two years, instead of for one as at present, and half the councillors in each municipality should be elected each year. Thus there would be an election each year, while municipal representatives would have a longer tenure of office than at present. He contended that this would result in better men, better work and increased experience and efficiency in the transaction of municipal affairs. If the principle of a two years' term were sound for school boards and county councils, it ought to be good enough for township and town councils. This he felt was more important than the reforms which had been suggested in the discussion of the present bill.

It was not desirable that municipal councils should be either too small or too large; but there should be a longer tenure of office than one year. An election over the whole municipality would, according to all past municipal experience, improve the character and the efficiency of municipal bodies.

ENDORSED BY THE OPPOSITION.

Mr. Whitney, leader of the Opposition, discussed the subject briefly. He said that of all the members who had spoken on Mr. Caven's bill the member for North Oxford had most nearly expressed his own views. He thoroughly agreed with what had been said in reference to the ward system and was disposed to think that a term of two years would be an improvement. He was also of opinion that the Government should itself deal with the question rather than a private member, and urged them to bring in a measure to this effect during the present session.

Premier Hardy pointed out the difficulties in securing an agreement among members of the House on such a subject. This had been illustrated last session. Everybody had theories and a plan of his own and it seemed almost impossible to frame a bill that would please all or express the consensus of opinion in the House. He did not hold out much hope of the present bill going through this year, or indicate any intention on the part of the Government of re-introducing such a measure as he had proposed last session, but which was defeated in the municipal committee.

A Correction.

In Dr. Bryce's paper published in the January issue, the years 1894 and 1896 in the second paragraph should read 1884, 1886.

The Assessment Amendment Act, 1898.

1. Sub-section 2 of section 74 of the Assessment Act, is amended by striking out all the words thereof down to and including the word "survey" in the tenth line thereof, and by inserting in lieu thereof the following words: "Whenever it shall be shown to the satisfaction of the court that taxes are or have become due and owing upon a parcel of land assessed in one block but which block has subsequently been sub-divided, the said court upon an application of or on behalf of any person claiming to be the owner of one or more lots or one or more parcels of such divided land"; also by inserting the words "or parcels" after the word "lots" in the twelfth line, and the words "or parcel" after the word "lot" in the fifteenth line.

2. Section 147 of the said act amended by adding the following proviso at the end thereof:

"Provided that the provision requiring the collector to furnish a duplicate of such return to the clerk of the municipality and that the clerk shall mail a notice to each person appearing on the roll with respect to whose land taxes appear to be in arrear for that year, shall not apply to a city, but in lieu thereof, the treasurer shall give the notice hereinbefore directed to be given by the clerk."

3. Section 174 of the said act is amended by substituting the words "lands for" for the word "non-resident" in the third and fourth lines of the said section.

4. Section 177 of the said act is amended by adding thereto the following sub-section:

(3) In cities, instead of advertising as in this section is provided, the treasurer may have the advertisement published in the *Ontario Gazette* as hereinbefore provided, and then publish in at least two newspapers published in such city a notice announcing that the list of lands for sale in the municipality for taxes has been prepared, and copies thereof may be had in his office, and that the said advertisement embracing such list is being published in the *Ontario Gazette* (inserting the dates of such publication), and that in default of payment of the taxes, as shown in the said list, on or before the date fixed for the sale, the lands set out in the said list will be sold for taxes at such date.

5. Sub-section 3 of section 184 of the said act is amended by striking out the word "three" in the tenth line thereof and substituting therefor the word "seven".

Brockville Fire Department.

The energetic chairman of the Brockville Fire and Water Committee, Mr. F.G. McCrady, is determined to keep up the efficiency of the Fire Department. That his determination is a wise one is shown by the following report, recently presented to the council by the fire chief:

During the year 1897 there were twenty-five alarms of fire, being the lowest number in several years, and with the exception of the fire at the foundry of the Cossitt Bros. Co. (Limited) the year would have been a "record-breaker" for the small insurance loss. Cossitt Bros. loss, insurance, was \$2,052; for the other twenty-four fires the loss was only \$64.75, or total loss by fire for the year ending December 31, 1897, \$2,116.75.

The chief takes this opportunity of stating that with the additional six men which have been added to the Fire Department for night duty he is sure to hold up the present rating of the town and give good satisfaction to the citizens generally.

The delay in connection with the publication of the Revised Statutes is owing to the rush of business connected with the session of the Legislature. The Queen's printer informs us that he now expects to have them ready by the end of February.