

CORRESPONDENCE.

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Clerks' Salaries.

To the Editor of THE MUNICIPAL WORLD:

DEAR SIR,—“Another Clerk” seems to think of no one but those who officiate in the capacity of clerk and are not paid enough. He does not admit that there are some in all public offices whose salaries are too small. The word “all” which occurred in my last letter, did not mean every office, which a fair thinking man could see at a glance. I think it would be very presumptuous on the part of the legislature to fix the clerk's remuneration. Members of municipal councils should be, and undoubtedly are well posted in the greater part of clerk's duties. I have not admitted that the legislature should fix all of the clerk's duties, as this would be impossible. As C. E. says, “Clerks duties are various.” I say again that despotism and British fair play are in order. That there are too many reeves is a fact. They are at present nothing more or less than working machines for the legislature, and whilst we are in the programme, I might also say the same to noisy and grumbling clerks. Yours, etc.,

REEVE.

To the Editor of THE MUNICIPAL WORLD:

DEAR SIR,—I notice in your October number C. E. thinks C. P. is not a clerk on account of the latter saying twenty-five cents per head for every name ought to be enough, of course I meant the perquisites as well, such as registering births, marriages and deaths, selecting jurors, voters' lists, etc., now at twenty-five cents per head, according to the assessment roll in my possession, my salary would increase \$42.

I am free to admit I am only an apology for a clerk, but \$42 would be quite a help.

I think we should organize at once before the next Ontario legislature meets, and see if we cannot receive some remuneration for the services we render the bureau of industries alone, which causes quite a deal of work.

C. E. agrees with Reeve, that the legislature have no jurisdiction over clerks' salaries.

Now, I think they have a perfect right to make compensation for the extra work they put upon us, for the council will only tell you that you are very good natured to do so much work for nothing.

Yours truly, C. P.

To the Editor of THE MUNICIPAL WORLD:

SIR,—I have read with interest the various letters published in your valuable paper respecting clerks' salaries. I admit that very few members of councils are aware of the amount of work required of clerks, that is, outside of council meetings. That is one reason, probably, why they do not receive more remuneration for their work. It frequently occurs, and particularly in case the council is composed of almost entirely new members, that an experienced clerk is a valuable acquisition to the board in performing his own duties correctly, and also advising the council, so far as municipal law is concerned. I have been clerk for several years, and receive a salary of about fifteen cents per name for each and every name on the roll, and just as soon as I find I cannot make it pay at that rate I will very quickly throw it up and allow some other person to have the position. I have no desire for legislation in this matter, as I consider it to be no less than tyranny to compel any body of men or individuals to pay any certain wage for any certain amount of work, when they could get it done more cheaply. Clerks' salaries are, and must be regulated in a similar manner as the price of our wheat or other produce is regulated, *i. e.*, according to supply and demand. Why is it that wheat is worth only sixty-six cents per bushel? Simply because there is an over supply. We all admit it is too cheap

and does not pay the expense of production, yet such is the price, and we cannot help it; we must take the price that is paid for it. So it is with clerks' salaries, and just as soon as a clerk is dissatisfied with his salary and gives up the position (in fact, frequently before he gives it up) there are a dozen applications or more for the position, yet I think but few council boards would discharge an efficient clerk for the sake of a rise in salary, and run the risk of engaging an untried man, who might prove incompetent for the work. C. P., in the September number, says twenty-five cents per head for every name ought to be enough. C. E., in October, says that C. P. surely is not clerk, or he would not go in for starvation prices. In the case of C. P. it would seem as though twenty-five cents per head would increase his salary, while in the case of C. E., his salary would be reduced, or at least not increased, so that according to these two men's statements the number of names on the roll would not form a proper basis for salary. “Deputy Reeve,” in October number, says that some clerks make exorbitant charges for extras. I do not know what he has reference to by “extras.” If he refers to selecting jurors, returning officer, or registration of births, etc., the council regulates the fees for the two former and statutes the latter. If he refers to work required by different individuals outside of council work, I would say, and I speak from experience, that I find more trouble and inconvenience in doing such work than all the council work, as they seem to think that the clerk should devote his time in doing their writing (of course, there are exceptions) simply for nothing, and, as a rule, if he charges one-half the amount he should charge, it is considered exorbitant. I might say, in conclusion, that I have been clerk for eight years and if I were to hold the position for eight more I do not want any legislation, so far as salary is concerned, any more than I want legislation, providing how much I must pay my farm hands. Thank-you, Mr. Editor, for your valuable space, I remain, yours truly.

CLERK.

Dated 14th October, 1892.

To the Editor of THE MUNICIPAL WORLD:

There appears to be a good deal in your excellent paper of late issues about clerk's salaries, and it is no secret that the salaries are shamefully low in nine cases out of ten, probably ninety-nine out of a hundred. In your last issue “Deputy Reeve” seems to get greatly excited over a matter which he evidently, does not understand. He seems to think that the council lays out the work to be done by the clerk, and therefore, the council should say what the salary should be. The fact is, nearly all the work to be done by the clerk, is laid out by the local legislature, and if “Deputy Reeve's” contention is all right then the local legislature should fix the clerk's salary. If “Deputy Reeve” knows anything about his business, he must know that he or the council have but very little to say as to what the clerk's duties shall be. He must also know that he himself is only a creature of the local legislature and only jumps when and how they direct him to jump, and even the council of which no doubt he is a shining light, and of great importance, in his own estimation at least, can do nothing except as authorized by the legislature. A little petty authority or position given to some men make them think themselves of so much importance to mankind that even the whole world would collapse, if their mighty highness should not be present to direct affairs.

“Deputy Reeve” also thinks it is an outrage upon the intelligence of such fair-minded men, as no doubt, he considers himself to be, that the legislature should presume to forbid the council to put up its offices to be tendered for. I would advise Mr. Mowat hereafter to consult this wise deputy reeve on all municipal matters, and not to presume to do anything without first getting his advice and permission. I also advise Mr. Mowat not to encourage this deputy reeve to seek a seat in legislature, otherwise he might lose his own position as premier, and this deputy reeve, of such transcendent ability should oust him and secure the

throne to himself. Were I to form an opinion from the writings of “Deputy Reeve,” I should suppose him to be one who liked to lord it over any one who was the least beholding to him, either privately or publicly. Men of this stamp are unfortunately found sometimes in petty positions where their self importance and overbearing propensities come easily to the surface. The position of any municipal clerk or other municipal employee under such a man, no doubt is a very pleasant one.

It is no great wonder that municipal clerks are held in such low estimation as is generally the case, because they submit to be snubbed on every hand by any member of the council who sees fit to order them around, and one reason for this tame submission on the part of clerks may be found in the fact that they are liable to dismissal without cause, by any council who may think proper to do so. He need have no charge made against him, he is not permitted in law to meet his accusers face to face, as British fair play demands, and which is accorded to the greatest criminal in the land, but may be dismissed in the dark and never know the cause of his dismissal. If there is any justice in this will some one kindly point out where it comes in.

Now, if clerks or other municipal officers wish to retain any independence or manhood, they should take steps at once to form county associations and a provincial association, and secure a good paper, such as THE WORLD is, in which to discuss all municipal matters relating to themselves and the duties to be performed by them, and to meet frequently for the discussion of all these matters. I would also recommend that they seek incorporation similar to that of the provincial surveyors. If this is done it will not be long before they will be respected by the community in which they labor, but any man or class of men who are willing to submit to unfair treatment may expect to get plenty of it, and serve them right too; respect yourself and then others will respect you.

I do not intend to discuss the basis upon which the salaries of clerks or other municipal officers should be considered, but risking the ire of “Deputy Reeve,” I express it as my opinion that the legislature should fix a basis for that very thing, below which no council should have power to go.

My proposal now is to establish county associations and a provincial association at once, and would like to see immediate action taken for this purpose. The time to act has come, who will start the ball in motion? Yours,

FAIR PLAY.

(Continued from page 140.)

ties to be voted on. Or, by extending the provisions of section 97, sub-sec. A. and B., of the Municipal Act to counties divided into districts, the election should be held at the same time as elections for local councils. The districts should have three representatives elected for each, for a term of three years, to retire in rotation same as school trustees. This would place the local and county councils in somewhat the same position to each other as county councils and the legislative assembly are now. The benefits that would accrue to counties by having the members of district councils elected for three years can only be estimated by those who are in a position to point out the many important matters that new and inexperienced members overlook. So much can be said in favor of this system that we recommend it to those desirous of promoting a reform as the best and only equitable plan of reducing the number of members of county councils.