

Committee of Fifty

Important Meeting of the Citizens' Parliament at the City Hall.

The Revenue and Taxation and Mint Committees Submit Their Reports.

The Meeting Endorses the Amendments Sought by the City Council.

The question of reducing the quorum of the Committee of Fifty was one of the important matters considered at the meeting of that body last night. Though the attendance was fair and in every sense representative, it seemed to be the opinion of the chairman that a body of the present business could be legally conducted. The discussion which followed showed that there has been no decision reported on the secretary's report, and H. A. Murray pointed out that in the legislature, and indeed in almost every parliamentary body, the quorum was fixed at less than a third of the membership. The sense of the meeting seemed to be that a sharp rule should be enforced in this particular. The chairman, however, thought differently, and an attempt will be made at a future meeting to fix fifteen as a legal quorum.

The mayor occupied the chair and G. H. Barnard, the secretary, acted in that capacity.

A letter was first read from the Mayor (Mr. Langley) expressing his regret that the committee would continue their labors. Received and filed.

The clerk forwarded the amendments sought by the council from the legislature. The item in regard to taxation of real property was the first proposed amendment discussed. Mr. Renouf thought that in consideration of the fact that the committee had no power to pass on the subject and approved of the principle.

The next amendment, making provision for taking of an appeal to the Full Court at its "next sitting" instead of within a certain specified time, was explained by the chairman as an effort to overcome the "disability" under which the council had sometimes found themselves by the fact that the Full Court did not sit within the time prescribed by law for the appeal to be taken. The clause was passed.

The provision for avoiding unnecessary expenses by giving the council discretion as to the powers so that it could discriminate between routine by-laws and those which actually required advertisement also passed without discussion.

The committee also approved of the clause of giving the council power to tax bicycles.

Mr. Renouf wanted to know why bicycles had been singled out for taxation, and was told that it was at the Wheelwright's request. Mr. Renouf shook his head incredulously.

Mr. McCandless, while approving of the tax, said it should include the power to tax every kind of vehicle. He owned a horse and carriage, and he thought no one who was able to afford these should object to paying \$5 a year tax on them.

C. E. Renouf thought one vehicle and horse would do more damage to the streets than a tax on the city. It was unfair that a family in which there were four wheels should pay a multiple tax, while their neighbor with several horses and a carriage paid no tax on them.

Mr. Seabrooke pointed out the hardship which would be worked in the case of bicycle cyclists.

S. J. Pitts thought it absurd that bicycles should be taxed to avoid such a tax. W. H. Langley wanted coupled with the proposed amendment that the proceeds of such tax should be devoted to the construction of bicycle paths. If such a provision was not coupled with the proposal of a tax, a council might levy a tax and devote the revenue to other purposes. Ald. Humphrey concurred in this view.

Upon motion of Messrs. Langley and Pitts, a motion was made that the committee be authorized to employ a man to maintain bicycle paths throughout the city" were added. Ald. Brydon moved that he thought the council might be trusted to employ the money for that purpose without a motion being made binding them to do so.

The council to be given power to spend money to inquire into any harbor scheme which was next considered and passed without discussion.

Mr. Renouf thought some other source for the extra amount should be employed without further burdening real estate.

Mr. G. McCandless said that while he supported the clause at the time it was agreed upon, he had changed his mind since that time, as a result of the \$2,000,000 worth of property, the value of which derived no benefit whatever from the schools. Under the present system, some men who had large estates going to school escaped from paying for their education simply because they were not real estate owners.

Mr. Renouf recalled the time when the school revenue tax was turned over to the council, when it was called a school tax. He believed it was designed for the three mills were for school purposes.

Mr. Pitts still thought the personal property tax should be made more remunerative than at present. He found no fault with the school, but a more business-like method should be employed in collecting.

similar to that followed in collecting water rates, and the collector in the case of Mr. Seabrooke complained of the extravagance of the school board, and said when a child reached a certain age he should pay his own way.

W. H. Langley testified to the zeal of the collector in his (the speaker's) own case. He also criticized the education system, and said that in examining answers to advertisements for clerks he found a lamentable lack of proficiency in penmanship and spelling.

Mr. McCandless wished the committee would go around to the schools and examine their workings. They would find that they were being run cheaper than any on the coast. (Hear, hear.)

The policy of the board was to erect a High school, improve the public school curriculum, and make those who patronized the High school pay for it. (Hear, hear.)

C. E. Renouf reminded the chairman that the board was distinct understanding at the time the change was made that the tax in question was for school purposes. Mr. McKay entertained the same view.

S. J. Pitts moved that the clause be struck out, and that the committee are of the opinion that sufficient revenue can be collected from other sources.

The Mayor reminded the meeting that a quorum was not present, and any motion passed would be merely an expression of opinion. This raised a question, those present evidently feeling, as Mr. Pitts said, that any objection to action, taken by those who were not present, would come with a very bad grace. (Hear, hear.)

The secretary wanted to know who would object? He thought that the committee was an informal one and it was useless to trammel them with any absurd rule of order. (Applause.)

The Mayor still objected, but Mr. Pitts said it was quibbling over trifles. Mr. Seabrooke said if all the fifty were present their resolutions could carry no weight, and Mr. Renouf thought it was a difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Mr. Pitts's motion carried.

Mr. Renouf moved that in the opinion of the committee the proposed amendment of the council from the \$3 revenue tax shall be applied by the council for school purposes only. The motion was ruled out of order.

The local improvement clause was amended by the vote of the council.

"To amend the sub-section by giving the council power to borrow the city's share of the cost of any improvements upon the security of the property benefited, or upon the credit of the municipality or upon the property benefited, and to repay the same by annual instalments."

The next section, to put Broad street on the same footing, was passed.

A clause was moved by the council to remove laundries, was approved.

The clause giving the council power to regulate the construction of all fences and to remove those which are eyesores also passed. Mr. Renouf expressing the opinion that it would not stand law.

Ald. Humphrey objected to the next clause, which makes it obligatory upon females desiring to exercise the franchise to pay \$5 to the city revenue, except in the case of those who properly advertise the fact throughout the gold producing districts of the north in time for the output of the season of 1898-9.

Mr. Renouf thought the provision shut off a good many women who were better qualified to vote than some of the men who could vote under it.

The chairman said that he knew many women who voted last year who were not entitled to do so. The motion carried.

The clause restoring the old personnel of the board of health, namely, the Mayor and council, having already been accepted, passed without comment.

The Sunday closing by-law amendment, granting the council power to close everything but milk, drugs, or vegetables, was approved. The proposal to give the council power to expend annually \$2,000 instead of \$1,200 on the library was endorsed amid general tokens of approval.

The final clause, providing that when a candidate is nominated he must submit a certificate of qualification from the registrar-general, also met with no opposition.

A communication from J. Lawson, the reading of which created roars of laughter, was received and filed. The letter will be found in another column.

The subject of the resolution submitted their report, which was laid on the table. It was as follows:

Victoria, B. C., Dec. 22, 1898.

To the Citizens' General Committee of Fifty:

Gentlemen: Your committee on revenues and taxation have, in reply to their enquiries, been favored with correspondence and much valuable information from Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Hamilton, Montreal, and other cities, and we expect shortly to receive further information from various British municipalities, which will be gladly placed at your disposal. We have had a number of deliberations and we beg to report as follows (Mr. Jno. Taylor being dissenting):

(1) That a license be taken to obtain from the provincial government the collection of personal property taxes, and that taxes to become part and parcel of the city revenue.

(2) That an increased revenue could be advantageously obtained by the readjustment of liquor licenses now in force.

(3) That various theatres and music halls pay a license of \$500 per annum in place of \$100, as at present.

(4) That gas companies and electric light companies pay a license of \$1,000 per annum in place of \$100, as at present.

(5) That telephone companies pay an annual license of \$250 per annum, when installed, used or rented within the city limits.

(6) That marine, life and guarantee insurance companies should pay annual license.

(7) That private banks—that is, institutions of companies receiving money on deposit and allowing interest thereon—pay a license.

(8) That private clubs, where liquor is dispensed, pay a license.

(9) That a license be imposed on each of the following professions: Doctors, lawyers, dentists, engineers and architects.

(10) That a license of \$2 per annum be charged for each bicycle owned and used within the city limits, and that license be expended in the construction and maintenance of bicycle paths within the city.

ed by any tramway or other company, in or on the streets within the city, and said tax to be determined and calculated in proportion to the net earnings of said company.

(14) That a more practical system should be adopted by the collector in the present revenue and road dog taxes; i.e., each person liable to pay such taxes should be duly served with notice demanding payment on or before a given date. In default of summary steps should be promptly taken.

(15) That in taking the provincial voters' list for the year 1898, a provision be inserted in the act that more than one-half of the taxes due to the city from these sources shall be annually allocated to the benefit of the city.

(16) That we strongly recommend the city to take early steps to borrow sufficient funds necessary to seriously prosecute the permanent improvement of the principal streets of this city under the Local Improvement By-Law the funds to be borrowed on the credit of the city as a whole.

(17) That the board be authorized to erect a High school, improve the public school curriculum, and make those who patronized the High school pay for it. (Hear, hear.)

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The Golden Northland.

Budget of Late News of the North—Bloody Fight For a Toll Gate.

Pay Dust Found Near Wrangle—Wolves Attack Miners on Dawson Trail.

Rich Coal Beds Found Near Dawson—More Finds in the Atlin Country.

News comes from Skagway that there has been a bloody fight over the toll gate on the Brackett wagon road at Camp 9, just above Henry station, on the White Pass trail. The gate has been the scene of numerous fights ever since it was established, the packers and other travelers insisting that it was an outrage to collect toll; but before the trouble in question there has never been any serious difficulty.

The row was caused by J. H. Brooks and his party of five packers who, when passed for their toll through the gate, refused to pay it, and when force was attempted to be used to prevent their passing through there ensued a fierce encounter.

According to the story of Gas Holmquist, the toll collector, Brooks had with him a party, consisting of Brooks, James F. Emmett, Jack Farr, James Barnes, Merritt Barnes and another man, who appeared at the gate, and when they were refused passage, Farr commenced to chop down the obstruction. Kane, an assistant toll collector, who was Holmquist's only assistant, was the man who planted the first shot, there began a fight between him and Farr, in which the ax accidentally dropped on Kane's head, cutting a bad gash.

Another of the packers chopped down the gate, one of his associates at the time was a revolver preventing Holmquist taking any part, and the party proceeded on their way.

Two days later there was another chopping-down of the gate by a party of five packers, led by Brooks. All the parties to the row will be arrested on warrants sworn out by the officials of the wagon road company.

A suit growing out of previous troubles over this gate, in which the United States was the plaintiff against the Brackett Wagon Road Company, on the charge that the defendant was obstructing the highway by erecting the gate, was decided by Judge Schibrede.

The decision in favor of the company was based on the contention that his court had no power to overrule the action of Secretary Bliss.

Placers Near Wrangle. From Wrangle comes news that paying placer ground has been discovered eight miles to the interior from Fort Wrangle. Colorado capitalists are said to have bought a number of the claims, and which are located in a basin, for \$75,000, paying \$10,000 cash. This particular basin contains twenty-four claims, and it is believed there are twenty-five or thirty other basins of similar size and varying richness in the vicinity of Wrangle, within a radius of twenty-five miles of Fort Wrangle. The discovery created a good deal of excitement in the town, and many of the business men are dispatching prospectors to the new district.

Wolves Attack Miners. In addition to the other troubles of getting into the Klondike since the bringing of the trails and ready to attack the nearest party to them when they become hungry. F. H. Browning, of Seattle, who has just returned from the North, brings the details of a terrible fight a party had below Five-Finger rapid several days ago.

Mr. Browning left Dawson on January 8, in company with Dr. H. E. Frazer, John H. Esolom, Near the rapids they overtook Joe Fedloff, John J. Abbott, R. W. Smith, Dr. Max and others, who told of a terrible battle they had with a drove of the bloodthirsty animals. The men were following the trail to the upper lakes, when they saw approaching them from the rear half a dozen beasts that they thought at first were Alaskan dogs.

Dr. Max was a short distance behind the others of the party, and was made at by the leader of the wolves, an animal that he excitedly explained "later weighed 250 pounds. There ensued a running fight with the wolves, and it was several minutes before the men beat off their assailants with clubs. They killed one of the animals.

Mr. Browning reports that there are three hundred people in the hospitals at Dawson. Col. Davis, chairman of the relief committee, notified him that the movement of sending outside for relief had been abandoned. The Salvation Army was doing good work in relieving the distressed. The party met Dick Butler at the lower end of Lake Bennett. Good discoveries are reported in the bench claims along Hunker creek, on French hill and elsewhere in that vicinity.

Rich Coal Near Dawson. William Joel, a mining engineer from London, formerly of Johannesburg, while prospecting, discovered a rich bed of bituminous coal nine miles from Dawson. He has secured a preliminary grant to 240 acres of the land, and also grants for five miles of dredging and three miles of hydraulic sluicing.

Mr. Joel has reached Skagway and will probably arrive by the next downward steamer on his way to Ottawa to secure his title.

The city of Skagway is threatened with a water famine which may descend upon it at any time. Cold weather decreases the flow of water in the mountain streams which feed the water works

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A Military Entrepot.

Five Thousand Men Will Shortly Be Stationed at Work Point.

Esquimalt To Be Made an Intense Depot For Military Station.

A large garrison, consisting of 4,000 or 5,000 men, and representing every arm of the service, excepting that of the cavalry—a system of fortification, submarine mines, and other engineering works sufficient to make Esquimalt one of the very strongest posts in the world-wide system of British military stations—and a depot of supplies in every way equal to the strenuous demands upon it which a war in Eastern waters and Oriental lands would involve—these are among the developments which those in a position to prognosticate predict will be the result within three or four years of arrangements now being perfected in the war office at London.

Fire crews ago an arrangement was made with the Admiralty by the war office whereby they provided for the garrison at Work Point a detachment of the Royal Marine Artillery. That arrangement expires on March 31, about six weeks hence, and as the Admiralty are understood to be opposed to a renewal of the arrangement other dispositions will have to be made for the proper manning of the forts by the authorities at home, and there seems little reason to doubt that a regular detachment of marine artillery will shortly be on the way to supply the place vacated by the Marine Artillery, who shortly return to England.

This large force will not at once be dispatched here, and it is unlikely that when the transfer is made in March that a larger detachment than one or two officers and a handful of men will march into quarters at Work Point. But if the opinions of military men are to be relied upon, the force will be steadily augmented until the station assumes the proportions of a great naval depot, with arms and munitions of war sufficient to equip the forces, which may have to be supplied from here.

One reason why the contemplated change will not take place at once is because the accommodation at the Point is at present so extremely limited that a larger force than the present one cannot be quartered there. But the principal reason, perhaps, is that England is now paying particular attention to her foreign relations in that quarter only, and is concentrating her energies upon making that point equal in strength to those of her other Asiatic military stations. But the forbidding aspect of her foreign relations in that quarter only emphasizes the importance of Esquimalt as a tactical basis, and as a depot of supplies for the fleet and land forces which it may be found necessary to employ in that quarter.

In addition to the Engineers and Garrison Artillery, it is considered probable that a battalion of infantry as well, in two or three years, contribute part of the garrison here. Such a step would involve the construction of a small town of barracks rooms, hospitals, store rooms, etc., and would make things exceedingly lively then.

Work is being steadily prosecuted at the Point, and quick-firing batteries are now in course of construction on both sides of the harbor. These will be mounted as soon as the guns arrive from the ordnance department at headquarters.

Whatever course may be adopted at present by the home authorities the impression is well defined among the force here that this point will shortly be placed on the same footing as Halifax, and will be manned and equipped in a

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