

The Municipal World.

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ST. THOMAS, NOVEMBER 1, 1893.

The extract from the *Ottawa Free Press* published in the September number of THE WORLD referring to decision of privy council in Geldert vs. Pictou was very misleading as far as its application to Ontario is concerned. The provincial press, generally, welcomed the decision and municipal councillors, no doubt, anticipated freedom from vexatious actions for damages in the future. A reference to the legal department of this issue will show the correct ruling of the decision.

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The bill, entitled an act to amend the Assessment Act, sent out by the government to municipal councils, public officers, etc., with a view to the expression of opinion thereon of others interested in the subject, or familiar therewith, before the next session of the legislature, appears to be very carefully worded, and if passed, will make the act more easily understood by assessors and others. No changes of importance are suggested, except that in section 5 of the bill, which provides that no personal property of any kind whatsoever shall be hereafter assessed for the purpose of levying rates thereon, except interest, income and dividends, which are fully specified in a proposed amendment of sub-section 10, of section 2, of the Consolidated Assessment Act, 1892. It is proposed to repeal the business tax, section 31 a of the Act of 1892. This has been a little above the comprehension of the ordinary municipal councillor and its removal, will no doubt be welcomed by those who have endeavored to put it in force.

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The fees allowed to bailiffs appointed by the judge under the authority of the Voters' Lists Act, 1889, for the services of notices, etc., in the case of appeals against the list, appear to be excessive, where the number of appeals is large. The persons requiring to be served are always within the limits of the municipality, and a fee of ten cents per mile is allowed for each service. The mileage is calculated on each notice generally, from the clerk's office to residence of per-

son served. An instance recently came under our notice where a large number of complaints were made against persons who lived in one village, thirteen miles from the clerk's office. The bailiff had no difficulty in serving them in one day, and his fees at the rate mentioned were over forty dollars, we hardly think it is the intention of the act, that municipalities should be required to pay these fees, which are only excessive in an instance, such as that mentioned, and would recommend that councillors interested petition the legislature to amend section 24, of the Voters List Act, of 1889, by striking out sub-section B, and providing for the payment of \$1 50 per day to bailiff, and ten cents for each mile necessarily travelled to effect the service of all the notices.

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The oblivion in which such questions as "the reduction of the number of members of county councils," and "a provincial municipal officers' association," have rested during this year, leads us to ask, is any one in a position to give good, substantial reasons why the number of county councillors should be reduced. Would not the injustice of non-representation, in most schemes proposed, be a greater evil than the payment of a small amount for the assembling of additional wisdom at the county board. On the other hand, a provincial municipal officers' association, composed of clerks, treasurers and delegates from municipal councils, should be called for by the legislature and meet at least, every three years. Intelligent discussion would suggest many desirable improvements in our municipal acts. The necessity for commissions of inquiry would, to a certain extent, be removed and a more intelligent and uniform administration of our municipal laws result. The trustees and teachers of our schools have associations organized by the department, why not have a municipal association composed of delegates from every county in the province as an auxiliary to a municipal bureau which should be established in connection with one of the departments of the provincial government.

The Civic Church,

THE SPIRITUAL COUNTERPART OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

The English editor of the *Review of Reviews*, in the last issue of that publication outlines a new movement known as the "Civic Church," which he says is making steady progress in the Old Country. The work of the Civic Church is to establish a kingdom of Heaven here among men. Its electoral duties refer to Municipal Reform, and in this respect, we believe, the movement will be welcomed in the larger cities. The article reads:

The Civic Church is the spiritual counterpart of the town council, representing the collective and corporate responsibility

of all the citizens for the spiritual, moral, and social welfare of the poorest, most neglected district within its borders. It is an attempt to organize the conscience of the community so as to bring the collective moral sentiment of the whole community to bear upon the problems which can only be solved by collective action. The work which lies before such a federative centre is vast and varied. Vast and varied though it be it is surprising how much of it is beyond dispute. Men may differ about original sin, they agree about the necessity of supplying pure water; they quarrel over apostolic succession, but they are as one as to the need for cleansing cess pools and flushing sewers. It is in the fruitful works of righteousness in the practical realization of humanitarian ideals that the reunion of Christendom and not of Christendom only is to be brought about.

"There is little doubt that in any English, or American cities, the good people could rule if they would take as much trouble to organize, and work for the victory of justice, honesty, purity and righteousness as the bad people take to secure the rule of the rum seller, and the dust contractor. But where are they to find their organizing central point? They can only find it in the civic church, the establishment of which in every community is indispensable; if the forces which make for righteousness and progress are to have their rightful ascendancy in the governance of our cities.

The civic church would, of necessity, become an electoral centre, what may be described as a moral caucus created for purpose of making conscience supreme in the government of the affairs of the town. First and foremost the civic church would, wherever it was powerful, render absolutely impossible the nomination of candidates notoriously dishonest and immoral.

Secondly, the civic church on the eve of every election could, and would stir up all the affiliated churches to appeal to the best citizens, to regard the service of the municipality as a duty which they owe to God and man and to all citizens to prepare for the ballot with a due sense of the religious responsibility of the exercise of citizenship. The civic church could also bring almost irresistible pressure to bear to prevent the coercion, the corruption and the lying which are at present so often regarded as excusable if not legitimate methods of influencing elections.

Thirdly, there are always in all elections certain great moral issues upon which all good men agree of whatever party they may be. But, as these issues seldom effect, except adversely, the pockets of wealthy and powerful interests they are ignored. The civic church would bring them to the front and keep them there. All that is needed is that the professedly religious men should be as resolute to pull the wires for the Kingdom of Heaven as irreligious men are to roll logs for the benefit of the gaming hell or the gin shop."