

COMMUNICATIONS

[This paper is not responsible for opinions expressed by correspondents. All communications must be accompanied by the name of the writer, not necessarily for publication, but so the publishers will know from whom they are received]

PROCEDURE AT COUNCIL MEETING

To the Editor of The Municipal World:

DEAR SIR,—Re your reply to No. 343 in June number, nearly all municipal clerks hold the same view on this question, viz., that if the minutes are correctly transcribed they must be signed, and in so far as the clerk's duty is concerned, that is correct; but is it good procedure on the part of a council to give its approval and confirmation to a motion, or recommendation, after they have learned that the minutes contain that which is *ultra vires* of the council? I hold it is not; that the first consideration is, has there been any error in the matter contained in the minutes? Our procedure by-law provides that if the minutes are approved they shall be signed, a much wider expression than "correctly transcribed." The head of our council asks: "Is it the pleasure of the council that the minutes be confirmed by my signature?"

"Must we approve and confirm that which is wrong before we can begin to do right?" "Is the thing done greater than he who does it?" "A unanimous council has entire control over their own procedure."—Speaker Brand in the English Commons. See Bourinot on "Procedure," page 314, grants this, Disraeli, and Speaker Blanchet; also the 32nd Rule of the House of Commons provides: A motion may be made by the unanimous consent of the House without notice.

Respectfully yours,

J. C.

[ED.—We are sorry we cannot agree with our correspondent's view of this matter. We are still of the opinion that the answer he refers to is correct. It is as follows:

"The minutes of a council meeting are simply a true record of what business was actually transacted at the meeting. If they have been correctly transcribed, they should be confirmed as read at a subsequent meeting. A motion to adopt or confirm the minutes should not embody or be supplemented by any original matter, for instance the alteration or expunging of any resolution passed or report adopted at the meeting, of which the minutes are under consideration. Matters of this kind should come up at a subsequent meeting in the way of a motion for the reconsideration of the resolution or clause in the report to which objection is taken."

The plan suggested by our correspondent, besides being in our opinion erroneous, would, if followed, in a great measure divest the minutes of a council meeting of their value as a true and complete record of its proceedings. The course outlined in the above letter may be shorter, easier, and more convenient than the procedure that should be followed, as stated in the reply given above. It must be remembered that labor-saving and celerity are not always consistent with accuracy and safety and that a departure from proper methods for the sake of convenience often proves to be a very expensive experiment.]

C. H. WRIGHT, clerk of the Township of Sophiasburg: "The councillors of this township have found your journal very valuable, and would not think of doing without it."

MOLASSES v. VINEGAR FOR CITY OFFICIALS

Highly to be commended is the practice followed by citizens' clubs of a number of the larger cities of publishing periodicals dealing solely with civic affairs; and the call for such papers is indicated by the private publication of them in certain of such cities where they are not issued by the local municipal league or civic club. Such papers can have their greatest value, and their only real reason for existence, however, when they are absolutely non-partisan and impartial, or as nearly so as human nature can make them. It should also be their aim to improve civic conditions in all directions. This much all admit, and many live up to. But the methods employed by many of them we consider open to criticism.

It was the fashion many years ago to produce once a week from behind the kitchen door a "tickler" which saw service in an interview in the woodshed between the head of the family and his younger male offspring, on the theory that the latter had in all probability done something, known or unknown, to merit its application, with the result that its effect as a correction was nil when most richly deserved. Acting on this principle, certain of these papers feel that it is their duty to assume that every man "in politics," or even holding a municipal office, has probably at the best done less than his duty, and so should be accorded only suspicion and discredit. As both the cause and the effect of this, citizens have come to feel that unless a paper assumes this attitude it is concealing some misdoings through friendship or less justifiable favor for the officials spared. Do not these same citizens know and practice in private life the advantages of suggestion? Commend a man for his upright bearing, and he will square his shoulders and endeavor to merit your praise; but call him a thief and treat him as such, and his moral vertebrae must be more than ordinarily rigid if he does not ultimately deserve the stigma. The great need of the day is for papers whose editors and managers are broad enough, impartial enough, and—most difficult of all—discerning and wise enough to ascribe where it is deserved both credit and blame to public officials and departments. We have learned that the best work in other fields is done, not under fear of the lash, but in the hope of praise, popularity or other forms of approval. It is also true that those establishments in which certain who are favorites can never be wrong, while others are never worthy of praise, cannot get the best results from their employees. Must it always be that we can retain as public employees only those whose epidermis is impervious to criticism, and who consequently cannot, on the other hand, be reached and inspired by the commendation of intelligent citizens?—*Municipal Journal*.

WILLIAM SUTHERLAND, who has been Treasurer of the Township of Ekfrid for the past 33 years, died recently in his 83rd year, and JOHN A. W. TAGGART has been appointed to fill his position.

The by-law to grant a loan of \$12,000 to the Wolverine Brass Goods Manufacturing Co., of Grand Rapids, Mich., was carried by the ratepayers of Chatham a few days ago by an overwhelming majority.

JNO. B. POWLES, clerk of the Township of Fenelon: "We believe that a careful study of the pages of your paper from year to year cannot but result in giving our municipal legislators a better understanding of the duties devolving upon them, and by putting this knowledge into practice THE MUNICIPAL WORLD and the municipalities will be the gainers. Wishing you continued success."