

Going It Blind?

To the Electors of *The* City of Stratford.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

Are you going to go it blind? The Board of Trade submits a Water Supply By-law, worse if possible, than that you overwhelmingly defeated about four years ago.

The Company claims to have expended since then a few thousand dollars. \$4,350 of this has gone into an intake pipe and filtration dam that have proved worthless as means of improving the water.

Some of this expense has gone into cheap extensions that need to be replaced or duplicated, and more into temporary work.

The additions of a permanent nature are far outweighed by the deteriorations that four years' use of such a plant produces.

The price asked then was too high. The price asked now is higher. The works are older. The fifty year franchise has four years less to run.

The pumps I then said were a wasteful kind. The promoters of these by-laws denied this. Mr. Chipman, an engineer of the highest standing and widest experience, has since then in his report to the City Council said:—"A modern high duty engine would cut the fuel account in half." The astounding confession of Mr. Jones, the hired advocate of the Board of Trade ought to silence them. He says in his report to them:

"The pumps and boilers are in fair condition. Owing to the low duty of the engines, the quantity of coal consumed is *more than double the amount that should be required* if a high duty engine were installed and the distribution system improved in the manner outlined below.

"The cost of installation of a high duty 3 million imperial gallon engine, I estimate to be \$22,000. *The saving in coal should be sufficient to provide interest and sinking fund to pay for this in fifteen years.*

"Two boilers providing for a pressure of not less than 90 lbs. would be required, but as boilers No. 1 and 2 have already been in service for *nineteen years, their renewal in any event, would be required shortly.*"

This is part of a report that tries to put the best face on the matter for the Water Supply Company, and yet its author is forced to make this confession, although he has the impudence to value the pumping plant and boilers at \$16,000, less reductions, and in the next sentence, *advise replacing them* by boilers and pump at a cost of \$22,000.00. There seems to be no reason for placing \$16,000 on such goods and making percentage reduction

therefrom, *unless to make you believe that what will become almost worthless in your hands and have to be replaced by a \$22,000 outfit, is good value when you are buying from a Water Supply Company.*

Read that report and my letter to the Council together for similar queer things found in this report.

That by-law you defeated provided for \$25,000 for extensions and improvements. This one provides nothing. That one was honest enough to take you into the confidence of its promoters to the extent of \$25,000. The promoters of this know that by their own hired man's report there is an *immediate necessity for an expenditure of \$49,000 beyond the amount you are asked to vote.* Why is this not put in the by-law? The reason is plain. Its promoters hope by talk of higher prices of labour and material to bamboozle you. They fear you won't swallow so much at one time. Is that course straight or crooked? If they succeed in that way to get your consent to the purchase they know very well, that under the law you never need be asked again to vote for additional expenditure. Once the purchase is made the law, as those men know but do not tell you, *gives the power to the City Council* with the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, to raise whatever money they want upon your credit for *extensions and improvements.* Is the Lieutenant Governor in Council to rule you? No; but the City Council. No; not even them. Who rules the City Council? The secret society known as the Council of the Board of Trade, of whose deliberations you and I know just as much as they choose to tell us. Can you trust them? Has their dealing with this matter been such as to justify your trusting them? Is this method of shirking the issue such as to lead you to trust them? If they treat you this way when half awake, what will they not do when you go to sleep.

One of the chief promoters, a tax exempted importation, had the audacity to say that it did not matter if the *value was \$20,000 or \$50,000.00 they had to be bought.* That is the spirit that animates the present movement. I leave you to search for and find the motive.

Some are grown insolent by success; some want free water.

The Grand Trunk Railway might ask for free water. Their taxes are reduced and fixed. Yours grow. Who ever heard of the Board of Trade protesting against this? Many of them enjoy tax exemptions. They would enjoy free water very well.

They held one open meeting on this water supply subject last May, and at that the \$50,000 man and his fellow extremists were beaten and had to be satisfied with a resolution passed to get the City Council to secure by joint Committee of Board of Trade and City Council expert as to present value of the plant and probable cost of extensions, &c. This has not been done. Why?

At that stage only a fraction of the Board of Trade were for going it blind. What has changed some of them?

At that meeting I pointed out how getting Mr. Chipman to report on the amount to tender the Company for the annual service had the effect of

making the Company accept at once, unconditionally, the terms of his report, although it gave them less than \$4000 a year for what they had asked \$6000 a year and could only be got before this report to reduce to \$5600 a year.

What is the secret of a man of such standing and experience, who had rendered such signal service to the City for a moderate fee, being passed by for a much inferior man? The one has been engaged in, I believe, nearly every important arbitration as to water works purchases in Ontario and been consulted in more valuation of water works and superintended building of more such works than any other man, and the other has no recognized standing as an expert of the kind needed.

Was the pliable man got and the expert shunned lest the works would be condemned and the sacred 8% Water Company suffer?

The City Council should, if acting, have moved independently of the Board of Trade Council, got the report of the ablest expert, on present value of the works, what they need to improve them and what new works would cost, and submitted to the Company an offer in accordance with such report. Then if the Company should refuse it or arbitration, go ahead and build new work, if time opportune, and you say so.

Do you believe the Company that came down \$1600 a year or thirty per cent on their demands when faced with such a report would hold out for an exorbitant price if faced thus? Thirty per cent off present demands probably would be near right.

Where are you going to get the water? Wouldn't it be worth while to think of it before you place in the hands of these men the power to plunge you into untold debt? Since last by-law voted on, taxes have risen from at least twenty-two mills to twenty-four mills and bid fair to go higher.

The Company after a long struggle must now pay on value of works assessed for this year at \$50,000 with pending appeal that may raise it to \$75,000 and if held to their Jones-Preston valuation might be put at \$100,000.

Every ratepayer must help by his direct taxes to supply this loss of revenue of \$1,200, \$1,800 or \$2,400, as the case may be, on our 24 mills on the dollar rate. Yet you are told you won't lose a cent if not consuming water.

It may be nothing to the non-taxable free water fellows who tell you this. Nay more, your property as in some places may be taxed for water whether you take it or not. Windsor is one of these and hence cheap water. And you won't get free water for fire purposes or street or sewer uses either.

The places owning such plants charge themselves or their water commissioners do so, *hydrant rental*.

In the case of Berlin that is now (over and above special rates

for streets, parks, &c.).....	\$ 5,615 00
St. Thomas now.....	5,314 00
Brantford in 1898 (last report not available).....	12,611 00

Belleville, now	\$ 6,575 00
Galt, now	5,000 00
Brockville, now	4,950 00
St. Catharines in 1898	9,360 00
Chatham in 1898	5,165 00
Woodstock (now including \$514.42 for free water to some manufacturers)	6,734 42
Thanks to Mr. Monteith's committee and Mr. Chipman's report, Stratford is now about	4,000 00

This on a basis of such other places as Berlin, would be put up to at least \$6,500 and add to that excess of say \$2,500, loss of say \$1,800 of taxes and you will find where the taxation comes in. You would increase your load by \$4,300 a year, yet you are not to be taxed? It is quite clear testing this matter another way, that these hidden rates make the ownership a heavy load. Stratford's expenses for 1900 for Lighting, Water Supply and Fire Protection was only \$13,729. Every other Ontario city owns its water supply. Every one of them for these services far exceeds this. Most of them double. St. Thomas the model, \$26,182, just about double. Brantford, the other model \$45,811, more than treble.

If, it is said, this grows with number of hydrants, so much the worse. The taxes are increased thereby and for outsiders there is nothing in return. Even now it is for those beyond fire protection an iniquitous tax. This increases it. But most places take the high rate of \$50.00 per hydrant as basis. Ours is less than \$40.00 on an average.

The VanBuskirk report condemned the Huron and part of Erie street mains. Jones' report condemns 1,217 feet more. Chipman still more. A mile and a half of main charged for in by-law price must be dug up and replaced or one eighth of entire length. Yet you are asked to pay for this, as useless as the pumps and boilers, full value with increase for inflated values. Is it fair? Is it right to pay that and 10% in addition for engineering of such work?

Why have business men selected this inflated time to force this issue? They wouldn't think of making a *permanent investment* in say real estate or stocks when the market was at its highest point and sure to decline in a year or two as everyone with a business head recognizes prices of iron and labor will.

We can wait till the scrap iron is valued by a trustworthy guide, on its return to normal values.

If we pay \$30,000 more than we ought for this, how much more will these men lead you to give away to the Gas Co?

The Municipal Act, Sec. 550, Sub. Sec. 6, enables the Council to close the wells and force water on you willing or not, whether good or bad, without Board of Health.

Yours respectfully,
JOHN IDINGTON.

Stratford, February 27, 1903.