

CITIZENS DEMAND ECONOMY

Town Meeting at the City Hall Last Evening.

PLANS OF RETRENCHMENT DISCUSSED

Taxpayers Protest Against Unnecessary Expenditures by the City—Conference Between Owners and Council Arranged For.

In accordance with a request from a large number of heavy property owners and taxpayers, a meeting was held in the council chamber in the city hall last evening, to consider the matter of retrenchment in municipal affairs. There were present the following city officials: Mayor Breatch, City Attorney Connell, Chairman Munro of the Board of Public Works, Councilmen Thomas, Axford, Allan, Kmetz, Burmeister, Benawa, Mercer, Bingham, Taylor, Kennard, Burkley and Prince. The committee of citizens present within the council railing included Messrs. H. Kuntze, General C. F. Manderson, H. W. Yates, A. Millard, G. E. Barker, Ford Street, E. E. Lee, Judge Seydlitz, A. Meyer, C. J. Karbach, George W. Linniger, John Tush, W. F. Allen, E. Rosewater, S. Reichemberger, J. D. Creighton, L. Richardson, J. A. Horbach, W. V. Merce, G. W. Doane, Samuel Burns, Gustave Anderson, A. L. Reed, John Powers, J. S. Hassall and Charles Thomas. There were also present a number of prominent citizens, while a large number of prospective office holders were present to see what might be done with the various offices which they expect to draw the coming year.

President Saunders of the council called the meeting to order and announced that the council had formed a committee of citizens for the purpose of meeting a committee of citizens to discuss retrenchment, and he requested Mr. Kuntze to explain the wishes of the citizens' committee in the matter. Mr. Kuntze stated that the citizens' committee had no organization, but taxation had become burdensome and it had been suggested that a meeting be held with members of the council to see if retrenchment could be secured in city government. The expense were hard for the people to bear, considering the condition of affairs in the city and state, and unless radical retrenchment could be obtained it would be impossible for the people to meet their taxes. What was asked was that, after a thorough investigation, a very radical reduction be made. It was known to the taxpayers that many things were fixed by the charter in such a way that they could not be changed, but the reduction must be made in such a way that it would not be less than several hundred thousand. The speaker said that he was convinced that if the matter was thoroughly investigated some way could be found to reduce the city's expenses. Chairman Saunders expressed the hope that the gentlemen present would give the council all the light in their power.

Ex-Governor Saunders was called for, and said he had no complaint to make, but the expense of the present form of government were sufficient for a city of 500,000. He said he recognized that it would be necessary to amend the charter, and he did not expect that unnecessary officials would resign. He said he would not say that salaries were too large, but unnecessary employees would be cut off. The object of the plan should be to cut down the expenses of the city, county and school board to where the needs of the times require. He asked the council to do the best that could be done. City Attorney Connell said that he expressed the idea of all officials when he said that it was their desire to accomplish retrenchment in every possible way. He asked the citizens to suggest some practical way out of the difficulty. All recognized that the Board of Public Works and some other boards should be done away with, but this could only be done by the legislature, and this matter should be taken up in the proper manner. On the other hand, he said, it was possible to make certain changes. For instance, the cost of lighting could be greatly reduced if the citizens would stand by the mayor and council. All street lights and gas lights could be removed if public feeling would sustain such action.

The city attorney then went over the levies made during the preceding year, showing in detail the amounts levied. The totals were: 1893, 44; 1894, 44; 1895, 44. He then threw out the suggestion that the offices of the city should be consolidated. He thought there was no logical reason why this could not be done and he thought it should be done. Mr. Kuntze said he took exception to the statement of Mr. Connell that the valuation of property was too low. He thought the tax would be the same whether no matter what the valuation might be. Mr. Connell denied making such a statement. He said he was convinced that valuations should be better equalized and the burden more evenly distributed. Councilman Mercer called on Mr. Taylor, as chairman of the financial committee last year, to state how much money the council had jurisdiction over. Mr. Taylor stated that as near as he could remember the council had jurisdiction over \$1,000,000. He went on to say that he considered it a mistake to make the levy soon after the organization of the council, when the members were unfamiliar with the needs of municipal offices. It was not safe to take the tax levy as conclusive evidence. In 1892 the levy for the sinking fund was little or nothing and the sinking fund had consequently been on the wrong side of the ledger. It had been necessary to make subsequent levies higher in order to overcome this. Mr. Taylor also stated that the city was afflicted with many other boards with independent power.

GENERAL MANDERSON'S SUGGESTION. General Manderson was called for. He expressed ignorance of the movement, but was glad to co-operate. This city, as Mr. Connell had remarked, was not alone in this matter. The speaker expressed confidence in the council and thought it would profit by the errors of the past. He endorsed the remark of Mr. Connell calling for practical suggestions. He did not think it was advisable to do anything that would react upon the city. He doubted the advisability of leaving the city in darkness by removing the street light or the crippling of the city by removing all the officials. There was a happy medium which should be found. Honesty was wanted as well as economy. The way to secure this was to punish dishonesty. (Applause.) As one taxpayer, he was sorry to see a large defalcation and no attempt to punish the thief. He would support any action taken at once to punish this crime and compel honesty on the part of officials. He recommended a conference of the ex-officials, the present officials and citizens and that some plan of economy be devised and executed. Judge Doane was the next speaker. He referred to the fact that in private business it had been found necessary by nearly every business man to dispense with many things which had been thought necessary. In public affairs the same rule should apply. A careful examination would prove that many things could be changed which had been thought necessary. This could be done with fewer policemen; many things could be dispensed with; some of the boards provided for by the charter might be dropped out as the terms of the members expired. He thought there was no logical requirement making it necessary to keep these wards full.

Messrs. Hassall, Kennard and Connell took issue with Judge Doane on this point, but the speaker stood his ground and said the object might be accomplished indirectly if not otherwise. Judge Doane then recommended the appointment of a committee of citizens and officials to take the matter of retrenchment under consideration and outline some definite plan. He said the expenses of government must be reduced to accord with the means of the people. This sentiment was warmly applauded.

Mr. Taylor stated that in 1891 the gas-light bill of the city amounted to \$5,000; in 1892 it was \$14,000, and in 1894, \$18,000. He suggested that this might be reduced to the old figures. On request of Mr. Taylor, General Manderson read the charter list of officials and their salaries. He thought the list contained all the officials necessary, but Mr. Connell said there were many more provided for by ordinance. Mr. Manderson

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CALLING FOR REPORTS. The finance committee recommended the approval of the annual report of the county clerk, submitted last week, and the recommendation of the committee was adopted. This furnished the last of a series of reports by the county officials which were capable of doing the work of the office. He thought the police and fire departments should be maintained, but retrenchment could be effected in other departments and the levy reduced to 36 mills. Mr. Stenberg was glad this meeting had been called. He said the city was afflicted with a government by boards. All the power had been taken away from the mayor and the legislature. The plan could only be changed by the legislature. The work of the Board of Public Works should all be done by the members themselves and not by substitutes. The fire department should be reduced, but if it was desired to reduce the police force the citizens should appeal to the fire and police board. Many of the fixed charges were under contracts and few changes could be made.

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RETRENCHMENT GOES GLIMMERING.

Benawa's Ordinance Increasing Salaries of City Employees Introduced.

IS WAITING FOR THE EXPERTS

City Attorney Not Yet Ready to Proceed Against Holl's Bondsmen.

MUST HAVE EXACT FIGURES FIRST

Criminal Prosecution of Defaulting City Treasurer Left with the County Attorney—Hoodsmen Will Make a Fight. City Attorney Connell says that until the experts have finished their investigation and filed their exhibits he will take no action on Kmetz's resolution directing the legal department to take immediate steps to obtain the amount of Henry Holl's defalcation from his bondsmen. Then a meeting of the bondsmen, he says, will probably be called and they will endeavor to reach an understanding. Mr. Connell takes the position that it would be useless to go into court until the experts have determined what part of the total defalcation is to be charged to Holl's respective terms of office. The opinion is general around the city hall that the bondsmen intend to fight the case in the courts. They have been advised by their attorneys that the failure of Comptroller Olsen to properly check up the treasurer's office will be a good defense, and it is generally believed that the courts will have to be eventually resorted to. So far as any criminal proceedings against Henry Holl are concerned it is the intention of the administration to leave that to the bondsmen. The declaration is frequently made that it is not fair that Jerome Coulter should lie in jail while his principal is allowed to go free. This is recognized by the members of the council, but they say their dealings with the bondsmen. They simply intend to get back the money they belonged to the city, and if the bondsmen do not want to prosecute Holl the city has no business to take such action. City Attorney Connell says that a criminal prosecution is not in his line. It is his duty to see that the financial interests of the city are taken care of, but this duty of inaugurating criminal proceedings lies with the county attorney. It is still considered doubtful whether the experts will succeed in establishing the balance of defalcation between the first and second terms. This is the material point which the attorneys say would be essential to a civil action against the bondsmen and it is positively stated that no such balance has yet been struck. The experts have been working in that direction for weeks, and it is said that they have reached an approximate conclusion, but a definite statement is still as far away as it was six months ago.

MARRIAGE LICENSES. The following marriage licenses were issued yesterday: Name and Address. Age. Louis H. Hughes, Omaha. 19. Kate Plummer, Omaha. 19. Charles O. Vance, South Omaha. 23. Leah Close, South Omaha. 19. Peter M. Norgard, Omaha. 25. Sarah Jane Otto, Omaha. 26. Patrick M. Tobin, Omaha. 26. Catherine M. Moran, Omaha. 24. John L. Lynch, Omaha. 24. John Lynch, Humboldt. 25. Austin W. Reed, Omaha. 43. Mrs. Marie Le Smith, Omaha. 41. Robert E. Wilsey, Houston, Tex. 30. Bertina V. Stuart, Omaha. 35. Charles Gillingham, Omaha. 35. Julia M. Davis, Omaha. 35. Louis W. Douglas, Omaha. 33. Mary Kuen, Omaha. 32. Frank P. Perryman, Omaha. 32. Mrs. Kate Koran, Omaha. 21.

HOOD'S IS WONDERFUL. No less than wonderful are the cures accomplished by Hood's Sarsaparilla, even after preparatory and physicians' prescriptions have failed. The reason is so simple. When the blood is enriched and purified, disease disappears and good health returns, and Hood's Sarsaparilla is the true blood purifier. Hood's Pills are prompt and efficient and do not purge, pain or gripe. 25c.