

LOOKING AT THE MUNICIPAL FIELD

While we are of the candid opinion that Dr. Leonhardt, who has been acting mayor for several weeks, is inclined to be obstinate to the point of bullheadedness, we are also of the opinion that he has had to deal with a lot of councilmen who dearly love to act like a flock of school children. Dr. Leonhardt is extremely "sot" in his views—which same can not be said of a majority of the councilmen. The councilmen are about as shifty as the sands of the desert. With most of the councilmen the duties devolving upon them as officials are given very perfunctory attention. Of course this is natural, considering the fact that we ask them to transact a couple of million dollars' worth of business a year on a paltry salary of \$25 per month each. But Dr. Leonhardt takes his job very seriously. He digs and delves, and when he takes a position it is generally after he has well fortified himself.

In the matter of ordering the Commercial Club to take down its canvas signs from across the sidewalks, the acting mayor was absolutely right under all the circumstances. The Commercial Club has no more right to violate the ordinances than the Typographical Union, or The Retail Grocers' Association or the Methodist church. To say that the Commercial Club's signs were for the convenience of the people is to beg the question. A beer sign in a similar position would be a convenience for a lot of people, as would a restaurant sign, or any other sign. The whole trouble lies in the fact that there is altogether too much of this "City Beautiful" rot being inflicted upon us. Perhaps we love the good, the beautiful and the true about as much as the average man, but to date we have managed to suppress our feeling to the extent that we do not allow that love of the beautiful to be evidenced by our making a condemned Jerusalem pony of us.

We are of those who believe that art may find expression in a sign as well as in a statue. And so far as offending the aesthetic taste of the community or its visitors is concerned, there is one sign on O street—properly placed—that is vastly more unsightly and ungainly than any sign we have yet seen displayed across the sidewalk space. Not being desirous of dealing in personalities we refrain from specifying the sign mentioned; but will show what it is, merely substituting a fictitious name:

MRS. CODSON'S MILLINERY

That sign on the main street of Lincoln, the home of the state university, the seat of western culture, the center of

civic refinement and beauty! As Artemas Ward would have said, "This is tu Mutch!"

We had a sample of this "city beautiful" tommyrot in the case of the First National bank. That institution, about to engage in expending \$300,000 in building improvements, had a fight on its hands when it asked permission to hang a temporary sign across the sidewalk. In the name of commonsense, what harm does a sign across the sidewalk, far above the heads of passersby, do to the city or to the people? They discommode no one, and do benefit many. The Commercial Club should have been allowed to maintain its temporary sign. So, too, should all other permanent and reputable institutions have been allowed to maintain overhead signs, temporarily at least.

For a sample of municipal mismanagement, to say nothing of an exhibit of incompetency on the part of officials, we have but to look at the so-called ornamental street lighting system. Even little Fremont outclasses us in respect to the ornamental lights, as well as in having commonsense enough to put all the wires underground while putting in the street lights. We still have the unsightly and dangerous overhead wires, and we put the electric wires for the street lights in iron pipes just inside the curb cutting the pavement to pieces to get the conduits in. What we should have done was to lay tile conduits in the streets, then force the public service corporations to put their wires therein, paying the city a minimum rental therefore. That would have been a "city beautiful" stunt worth while. But our councilmen are so infernally busy playing like children and quarreling with each other that they overlooked the opportunity.

Another beautiful sample of the handicap imposed upon Lincoln by an incompetent lot of officials is the grading on East O street, east of Thirty-third. The first engineer set grading stakes and the property holders on the north side immediately came down to the proper level. A little later some more grading was done, necessitating another change of the sidewalk level—this time at the expense of the municipality. Now the third change of level is being made at public expense, and this time the city must put in a retaining wall. If another change at public expense is made within the next year or two no one need be surprised.

The whole trouble is that we have a dozen or fifteen men managing city affairs when they haven't any business of their own to attend to. When private business demands attention the city's business may go hang. There isn't a mercan-

tile or manufacturing institution in Lincoln that wouldn't go broke in six months if it were managed as Lincoln's vast municipal business is handled. The volume of Lincoln's municipal business amounts to upwards of a million dollars a year. It is managed by a dozen or fifteen men who give it attention only when their own business does not interfere. Under the circumstances is it any wonder that things are continually in a snarl? That business is bungled? That progress is retarded?

A few days ago a couple of reputable gentlemen appeared at the police station to complain against an automobilist. They offered to put up a cash forfeit that they would appear to prosecute, but instead of being accorded proper treatment they were answered curtly and given little consideration. Of course we may not expect Chesterfields for policemen at the ridiculous wages we pay our peace officers, but certainly there is no reason why a citizen should not be treated with ordinary courtesy, nor should the mere fact that a man arrested is garbed as a workman and perhaps slightly under the influence of liquor prevent him from being accorded just a bit of courtesy. Last Saturday night a couple of mechanics, slightly intoxicated, had a little scrap in a doorway. They were arrested and hauled to the station. Either or both of them could have secured cash or personal bond inside of ten minutes had they been allowed to use the telephone. But this was refused them. Why? Had they been well dressed and aristocratic, and arrested for violating the speed limit, the police officials doubtless would have allowed them to use the telephone to the limit, or permitted the offenders to put up a cash bond. Is a well dressed violator of the speed limit entitled to any more consideration than the violator of the ordinance against intoxication?

Is the municipal water department run for the benefit of the community, or is it run as a source of profit? Was it ever contemplated that a municipally owned plant should pay a profit in cash dividends? Is it not true that it is the function of a municipal plant to render the best possible service at the least possible cost to the patrons? If it is, the municipal water department of Lincoln is lacking a great deal of measuring up to the standard. In the first place the service is not nearly so cheap as appears on the surface. In the second place the service is now such as would bring down upon the heads of a privately owned system the anathemas of the people. And while the service is absolutely rotten and the water not good, the city council is wrangling like a lot of kids about what kind