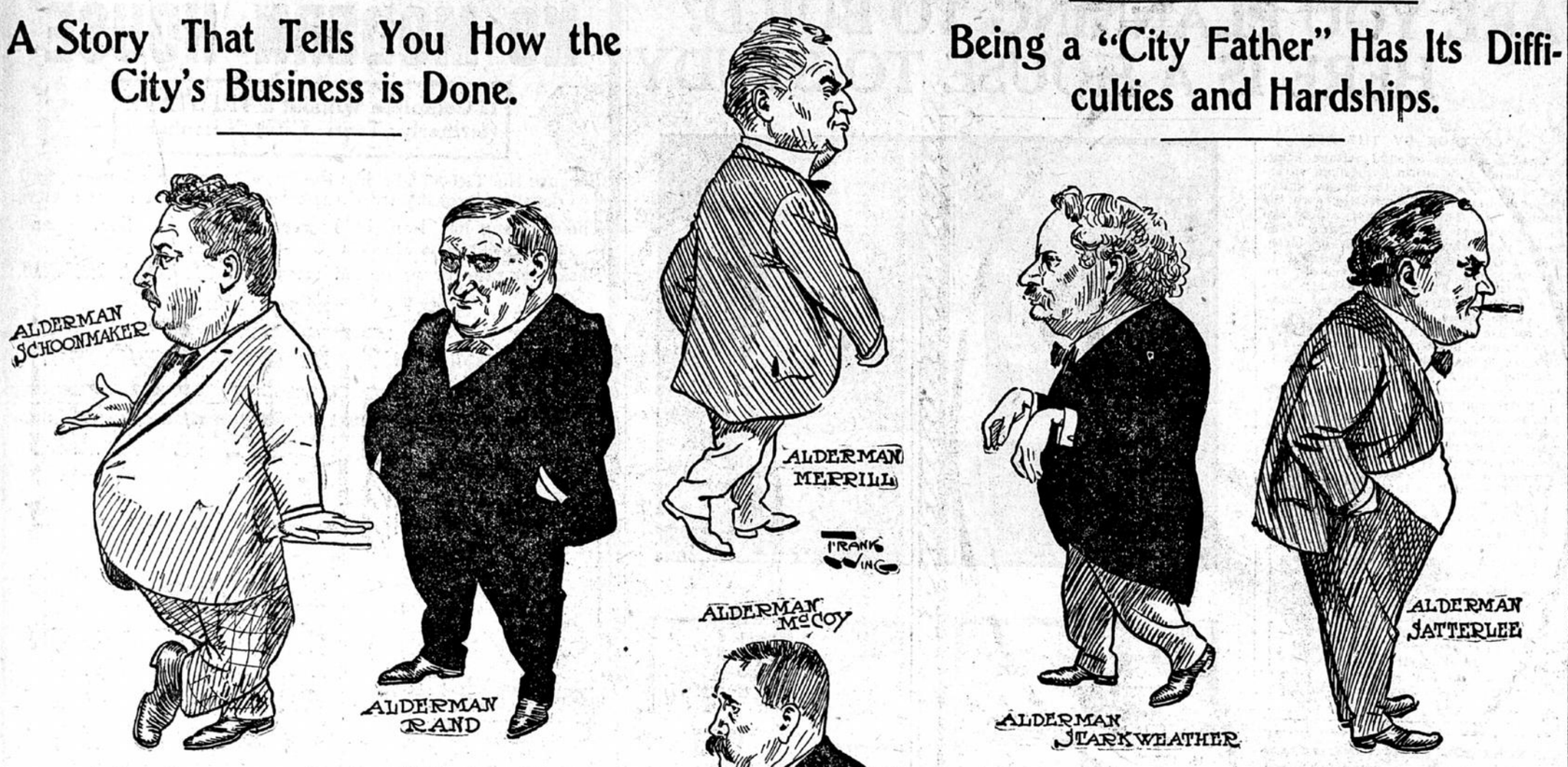
DOES A MINNEAPOLIS ALDERMAN EARN HIS SALARY?---YOU BET HE DOES!

A Story That Tells You How the City's Business is Done.

Being a "City Father" Has Its Difficulties and Hardships.



By James Gray.

"GERB — Ryan — Chatful —Nye Mumm — Murl — mmmmmm — Sweth — rrr — Schonnest — quor'm present."

The city council is open for the transaction of business in its highly ornate chamber with the dangerous-looking galleries impending from either side. On the long platform sits the president, flanked on either side by the city clerk, who has just spoken as above, and the city attorney, while away to the left of the clerk sits the third estate, the press, languidly taking notes of motions, petitions and sitting up to take notice when a member rises to oppose the passage of a committee report.

The city council is not only the legislative body of the city, but it wields directly or indirectly most of the executive power of the city. Thru its appointing power it has a hold upon the health officer, the city engineer, the fire department, the assessor and nearly all the other departments, except the police and the board of charities and corrections. The city attorney is its appointee and legal adviser. He sits on the throne as a sort of prime minister and at every meeting steers the council in the paths of parliamentary practice.

One might expect under the circumstances that a great deal of attention would be paid to the proceedings of the council. But such is seldom the case. If there is an ordinance coming up in which a number of people are interested, there may be a gathering of citizens at the meeting, but generally the spectators are persons interested in contracts, and as fast as their matters are settled they fade out, leaving the council to do as it pleases.

The negligence of the council proceedings is explainable on the one ground that its actual work is done in committee. When a matter has been threshed out in committee it is pretty certain how it will go in the council. This is particularly so since the practice has arisen of referring important matters to a committee with an alderman from each ward added. This makes practically a committee of the whole council.

They Earn Their Salaries.

The aldermen number twenty-six, two from each of the thirteen wards. They are elected for a term of four years and are eligible to re-election indefinitely. They draw a salary of $800 a year each. Do they earn it?

From the viewpoint merely of time expended the alderman fully earns his pay. He is expected to attend two council meetings a month and to look out for all his committee work in addition. On top of this the alderman must see to the street work in his ward, and this in the outlying wards takes a great deal of time and some very diplomatic skating between expectant citizens when the demand for improvements far outruns the supply of money in the till.

Committee work takes practically all of the week preceding a council meeting. Some of the committees are very important. The waterworks committee, for example, amounts practically to a water commission, whose members in other cities draw handsome salaries and do nothing else. The water committee has frequent meetings and is responsible not only for the character of the drinking water, but for the supply for fire purposes.

The water department is Minneapolis' most distinctive experiment in municipal ownership. The city owns the plant thruout and collects the water rents, takes care of the extensions and does everything except one—it has never segregated its debt from the general debt of the city nor paid the interest on its bonds from its own funds. But it has paid for numerous extensions, and out of its large net revenues has kept the plant in a growing condition. Such a plant in the hands of aldermen coming and going thru politics is necessarily subject to political influences in the appointment department. Many of the appointments are made thru favoritism, but not more so than in other branches of the city government. The water committee has always resisted violent changes in the service and aimed to keep the office, field and engineering forces free from such entanglements.

The present chairman of the water committee is Alderman Schoonmaker of the thirteenth ward, a practical business man, not intensely partizan. His predecessor was Mayor Jones, then an alderman from the fifth ward. These two men began and have carried forward a system of putting in water meters which has saved the city considerable money. As soon as the meters began to go in a drop was noticed in the amount of water pumped and consequently of the fuel consumed.

The Fire Department.

Another very important committee is that on the fire department. This has control of the department, since thru it only can supplies be purchased. The council has the right to pass upon the list of firemen reported by the chief, and as he has to be re-elected every spring, it may be conceded that he does not get very far away from them in making his appointments. The system has been adopted of putting men on probation, which aids to reduce the absurdity of political firemen. The applicant must pass a pretty rigid physical examination and show adaptability to the work, even if he is recommended by an alderman. It is a modified form of civil service, which fairly well protects the department when it is administered by a chief with courage and aggressiveness.

Guarding the City's Cash.

A committee on which is thrown a vast amount of detail work is that on claims. It is required to audit every bill which is rendered against the city, which needs a vote of the council. The committee on claims gives one or two afternoons to its work previous to each council meeting, and when it reports the bills are usually paid without a division. Each alderman has, however, the parliamentary right to except to any bill and have it withdrawn. Either at that meeting or a subsequent one he states his objections to the bill and demands a roll call on its passage.

This is not the only safeguard thrown about bills, however, as money can be drawn only on vouchers signed by the mayor and countersigned by the controller. Either one can hold up an improper account by refusing to sign it.

Police in Mayor's Hands.

The committee on police, which in other cities is one of great power and importance, is in Minneapolis almost on a plane with that on cancellation because the police power is entirely in the hands of the mayor. But the committee on licenses, which ordinarily would be the running mate of the police committee, is an important one under our system. This committee has the duty to block improper applications for liquor licenses. Under the present chairman, Alderman Clark of the eighth ward, it has done considerable to clean up unsavory conditions in the saloon district.

Another busy committee is that on gas. To this committee is practically turned over the lighting of the streets, the making of contracts, the placing of lamps and the experimenting with new methods of lighting, which is going on constantly. Alderman Hertig of the fifth ward is the chairman of this committee, and it was thru him and the mayor that the determined fight on the Patterson contract, which resulted in a new construction of the charter, was made last spring. Alderman Hertig fought the contract on the broad ground that it was against the interests of the city, that the rate was too high. The contention over how the contract should be passed, whether by motion or resolution, was incidental, but it served to bring the issue more acutely before the council, since to override the mayor's veto required a two-thirds vote.

Health and hospitals is a committee which combines executive with legislative powers. It is the board of health and makes the rules under which the health officer works. It controls, also, considerable patronage and membership upon it is sought by the aldermen.

The committees on public grounds and buildings and street grades and additions acquire some attractiveness from the fact that their chairmen are ex-officio members of the park board, and the park board is a rather nice body to belong to. It meets in a sort of Jerusalem chamber, frescoed to beat the band, and carries on its weighty cogitations around a big mahogany table, much finer than many of the members have at home.

Now, as to the Politics.

The politics of the council is not always rampant. It has been solidly republican for twenty years. In all that time the democrats have never elected the president of the council nor had much to say about the patronage. Biennially the republicans have caucused and taken the whole of the pie. But politics have not always governed in the selection of heads of departments. The city has had democrats as city engineer, as chief of the fire department and in other bureaus, even under republican councils. Nevertheless the caucus system prevails and there is seldom an open vote on the floor of the council to fill an executive position.

The idea that republican or democratic politics should cut any figure in a vote in the city council is dying out to some extent. But it cannot be entirely eradicated. If one should canvass all the candidates for the council at any election and ask them what was their real platform, nine out of ten would say that he was for a business administration of the city's affairs. How many of them know what a business administration means or would have the courage to stand for it if they had the chance? To be a business alderman means to conduct the affairs of the city with the same regard to the financial results that a man would bestow on a private enterprise in which he held the majority of the stock. A business man will not willingly give away his money unless he sees that it will come back with a profit. The alderman will sometimes vote away the city's money because it will help him politically or it will aid him to get thru something in which he is specially interested. The committees on fire department, claims, gas, health, waterworks and others are considerably besieged with applications which mean here or there a small loss to the treasury.

The business alderman, to justify his platform, to be consistent, must turn all these things down. But aldermen are human. It takes a steady nerve to be always saying "No" when "Yes" would come easier. The tendency is to logroll, to play off one vote for another, for every alderman has some pet scheme on which he hopes to make his record. The more publicity there is of the acts of an alderman the more the straight alderman will be justified by public opinion.

As a School of Citizenship.

The council is capable of becoming a magnificent school of citizenship. It is not a body which demands a long apprenticeship as does the congress of the United States. The new man in a few months is practically on a level with the old hand, and he has the advantage of bringing in new ideas and new methods. Changes in the council are not bad for the city. They are advantages if they are made judiciously. But unfortunately it is too often the fellow who plays to the galleries who survives and it is the business alderman who loses his constituency.

"BACK TO THE ROAD"

LAST week was a busy one among the U. C. T. boys. State fair week is always a busy one, for displays at the fair take a pile of work, and there is a lot of entertaining of customers to do as well. Many salesmen never attempt to see the trade on the regular trips, depending instead on meeting customers here and between trips to the fair and other attractions to work in sales of goods.

Incidentally, one of the attractions of the wee, and a mighty big one, was the U. C. T. show at the Auditorium. Many of the visiting merchants never guessed that the genial salesmen were such versatile artists.

J. T. Plank, one of the old-time travelers and one of the early members of "63," representing the National Biscuit company, was in Minneapolis last week, and took in the state fair. "J. T." is not only a cracker jack salesman, but had the good sense several years ago to buy a farm, and he is as good a farmer as salesman.

Genial Jack Marshall, the "63" salesman who can make the piano talk, was a welcome visitor to the tent last week.

R. E. Ringrose of Valley City, N. D., a "63" member, and representing Weinott, Howard & Co., St. Paul, took in the state fair last week and secured his holiday samples, leaving last night for the west.

Ole Hagen, the shoe man, and the man whose retail store front at Fergus Falls has the names of many an old-time salesman, carved in its granite face, was a delighted spectator Friday night at the big minstrel show.

George S. Koffend, with Tibbs, Hutchins & Co., St. Paul, laid by the cares of business for a week and visited all the attractions. He says the greatest show of all was the U. C. T. minstrels, and that it ought to be made an annual affair.

H. L. Webber, the Milwaukee clothing man, was seen Friday night at the Auditorium minstrel show. When his old friend Lennon sang "I Wish I Were a Little Bird," Webb almost had convulsions, and laughed so long and loud that fears were expressed that lockjaw would ensue.

W. A. Morse, one of the old-time clothing salesmen, was at the minstrel show and enjoyed it to the limit, if laughter and tears were any indication.

Frank B. Stoner, another "63" boy, did the honors for the Parry Manufacturing company. As a buggy teaser Frank equals his skill as a billiard player. You can't beat him.

That veteran salesman and all-round good fellow, W. S. Thompson, was at the old stand where for so many years he has exhibited the products of the Northwestern Manufacturing company. You can always count on him and his exhibit as one of the certain attractions at the big show.

One of the really good things at the fair to those who knew the personnel of the principals was C. C. Shonor's attempt to sell a Stanhope and a surrey to Aaron Poupeny. It was a battle of the giants, two of "63" salesmen pitted against each other as buyer and seller. The seductive wiles and graceful curves of Shanor were parried by unconvinced and doubting Poupeny, Shanor showing the salient selling points of his rigs and daring Aaron to find such attractions in other makes. Poupeny admitting some, but criticising others, exhibited his profound wisdom and knowledge regarding the make of vehicles. (He ought to know—he's a jeweler). And so it went, give and take, till Mrs. Poupeny settled all the talk by saying she'd "take both rigs." Shanor expressed his high opinion of her decision and Aaron drew his check.

E. J. Browne of Rice Lake, Wis., and member of Eau Claire council, visited the U. C. T. tent at the fair grounds and sampled the ice water during the sizzling heat of last Friday.

Lou Loucks and Frank Pool proved themselves as efficient as U. C. T. hosts as they are baseball players. Both were on deck at the tent and dispensed 63 and 141 hospitality with the grace and sangfroid of veteran entertainers.

Donald A. McIntosh, the "braw Scot," also known as "Kitty," was another of the boys who made sunshine for all who visited the state fair U. C. T. home.

J. K. Tisdale forgot all about the candy business and took a day off last Friday to visit the attractions at the fair. He was seen under the grateful shade of the U. C. T. bungalow with a red fan in one hand and a hokey-pokey cornucopia of ice cream in the other, enjoying life to the utmost.

Ed Eardley dropped the pipe-wrench and valve business for a week and took a vacation at home to get acquainted with his family. By way of entertainment he was seen at the minstrel show in the evenings and at the fair during the day.

C. J. Morawitz, another of the 63's, was a visitor at the fair grounds, and not only took in the whole show, but took the most of it away with him. He's a great kodak fiend.

Walter Nealy, the old grocery veteran of Deer Creek, known by every man, woman and child in northern and western Minnesota, was seen contentedly enjoying the shade and smoking a campaign rope in the hospitable tent of Candidate Cole at the state fair last Friday. Walter says that the Ottertail, Becker, Douglas counties' lake shores beat the state fair grounds for comfort on a day like last Friday.

On Saturday, Sept. 1, the Minneapolis No. 63 baseball boys went to St. Paul to attempt another walloping for the No. 50 bunch. But two innings were played when the game was called on account of rain. Thusly was No. 50 saved the humiliation of another defeat. Altho there might have been a chance for an argument, for in the two innings played the score stood 0 to 0.

W. J. Browne, who was laid up so long from accidents, is again on deck and good as new. He is putting in extra licks for his firm in South Dakota to make up for lost time.

Jolly Ben Klaus whose rural home is at Maple Lake, and who wears a 63 button, assisted by E. McCauley, another 63 booster, held down and showed up the International Harvester exhibit at the fair. Both of these worthies are past masters in extolling the virtues of the I. H. C. line.

W. A. Haviland, one of 63's best ones, raised his cheerful voice over the state fair ozone, extolling the merits of the Fuller and Johnson line. W. A. says a seven days' stunt of this kind uses up more gray matter than six months' seductive talk thru the country.

W. H. Vespers, who has lately made himself a benedict, and lives in our beautiful sister city, Eau Claire, was at the fair in charge of a feed mill exhibit. He didn't say whether it was baby, or stock food he ground.

Paul H. Grattan, the sentinel of Watertown, S. D., council was a visitor at "The Tent." Grattan had charge of the Deere & Webber exhibit.

John W. Thomas, a member of Aberdeen council, had charge of the cream separator exhibit for the Deere-Webber company. Thomas like all the South Dakota salesmen is a hustler.

C. S. Howard of 63 is another man who has missed his calling. He ought to have been an opera singer instead of a salesman. As he sang, many a man and woman stepped to the Buck Stove and Range company's exhibit and he made many a sale thru the seductiveness of his siren voice.

Billy Schoepf and his running mate and side partner, Ed O. Hanlon, made a whole lot of competitors stand up and take notice, while they speiled for the J. L. Clark Buggy company's exhibit.

Our two fat, genial brothers, T. D. and M. S. Mullen, with their lean running mate, W. S. Cox, were where they have been for years, the great attraction at the Van Brunt Seeder exhibit. Their voices raised tenor, barytone and bass, in sweet harmony and accord they sang, "For each and every farmer's ills, You'll have to use the Van Brunt drills."

A big man! A strong man! and a good man! never has a chance to do anything but work and our herculean friend C. A. Hass fills the bill. He presided over the exhibit of the Jaynesville Machine company, and gave the glad hand to every one who come withing reaching distance—which with him is ten feet.

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