

CHRISTIAN WANTS INQUIRY INTO CITY'S EXPENDITURES

Seeks to Determine Whether or Not Richmond Can Live Within Its Income.

REFERS PAPER TO COMMITTEE

Salaries of City Employees to Be Paid Pending Adoption of Budget. Will Include General 10 Per Cent Increase Voted Last September.

After considerable debate, the Board of Aldermen last night referred to the Council Committee on Finance the resolution reported by the Committee on Ordinances providing for the appointment of a special committee to conduct an inquiry into the city's financial condition to determine whether an increased tax rate is necessary at this time.

As reported by the committee, the resolution, which was offered by Major T. C. Christian, provides for the appointment of a special committee of seven members. Four members are to be selected from the Board of Aldermen. The committee would be authorized to determine if an increased tax rate is necessary and upon what sources this increase should be levied.

It would also be the duty of the committee to conduct a thorough investigation of all departments of the city government, and to determine if there is a reduction of expenses, if such action is deemed to be in the public interest.

Major Christian said it would in no way usurp the powers of the Finance Committee, and would not prevent the passage of the budget and could cause no harm.

He said it is time the Council should be informed of the city's financial condition. Major Christian said that citizens are already paying taxes, and we should know whether or not an increase in local rates is absolutely necessary.

The appointment of this committee could do no harm. It would not prevent the passage of the budget. The committee might report in a few weeks, and again it might not report for six months. If it reports anything, the Council could act.

That the resolution was a remarkable paper was the opinion expressed by Alderman Powers, who thought the Finance Committee was fully informed on all matters relating to the financial condition of the city, and could inform the Council. He then moved that the resolution be referred to the Finance Committee, but Alderman Fuller offered to substitute the tabling of the paper.

Alderman Gilman thought the special committee unnecessary, while Alderman Mitchell also opposed the paper. The substitute to table was lost, the vote being 5 to 5. The motion to refer was adopted, 6 to 5.

PRESENT TAX RATE NOT CONSIDERED HIGH Richmond's present tax on real estate is not regarded as high. Comparison with other cities is difficult because of variations of State and county taxes on the same subjects, assessments at part of the value and the practice in many other cities of charging a large part of the cost of street paving to abutting owners.

Out of eight cities of approximately the same size, after making all due allowances, the Bureau of Municipal Research has ranked Richmond, Omaha, Worcester, Syracuse, New Haven.

In the matter of net per capita debt Richmond does not make so good a showing, the survey giving Richmond a net debt of \$23.07 per capita, while Atlanta has only a debt of \$22.55 per capita. However, Richmond owns municipal utilities which are privately owned, this city having more to show for the money it owes. These eight cities in the size of their per capita debt run from large to small, as follows: Omaha, \$24.81; Richmond, \$23.07; Worcester, \$22.55; Syracuse, \$22.55; New Haven and Atlanta.

On the basis of last year's appropriations, Richmond pays per capita for education \$4.02; for police, \$2.97; for fire, \$2.00; for public buildings, \$1.00; for other municipal purposes, \$1.00.

Under a suspension of the rules the Board concurred in the resolution directing the auditor and treasurer to pay the salaries of all city employees at the present rates until the 1918 budget ordinance has been approved and the funds provided by it made available.

City employees expressed some worry yesterday over this resolution. In certain quarters it was feared that salaries paid pending the approval of the appropriation ordinance would be minus the 10 per cent bonus voted last September and included in the proposed 1918 budget. The statement was made by Auditor Charles H. Weaver, that the 10 per cent bonus would be paid until the new appropriations are available.

The Board also suspended the rules and concurred in the resolution directing City Clerk Alfred H. McDowell to appoint an assistant at an annual salary of \$1,800, who will act as clerk of Council committees.

PROTEST AGAINST INSTITUTIONS The Virginia State Court of the Guardians of Liberty protested against appropriations to charitable organizations in the 1918 budget. The letter of protest, which was referred to the Finance Committee, objected to appropriations totaling \$1,000 to several well-known institutions.

Ordinances concurred in by the Board were as follows: Authorizing the acceptance by the Administrative Board from Welbourn and Kelley, contractors for the Chamberlayne Avenue viaduct, a first estate mortgage in lieu of a surety bond.

Appropriating \$375 for three months' salary of T. P. Howie, now on vacation because of ill health.

Fixing the part of the compensation of the Examiner of Records at \$1,464 annually.

Regulating fortune telling. Governing insular houses. Authorizing the Mayor to accept a deed from George Cole Scott and wife dedicating a small strip of land upon which a part of the Settling Basin is located.

Permitting D. M. Lea & Co. to enlarge a brick stable in rear of 1913 East Main Street.

Sheltering Arms Freed From Debt

Contributions of \$6,700 Are Made by Friends on Founders' Day.

The Sheltering Arms Hospital starts its new year free of debt and with \$1,790 in its treasury as the result of contributions received during Founders' Day exercises held yesterday. A single donation of \$5,000 was made by an interested friend, who refused to allow his or her name to be made public.

This contribution was designed to wipe out the entire debt of the institution. Seventeen hundred dollars was received in other donations. Dr. Robert C. Bryan, a member of the Red Cross mission to Roumania, and Rev. Fred Davis, pastor of the Union Station Methodist Church, delivered addresses during the exercises. Mr. Hubbard, tenor of the Second Baptist Church choir, and Miss Roberta Davis, of the Union Station Methodist Church, aided in the musical program.

Miss Frances H. Scott spoke of the history of the institution and its work during the past year. Special thanks were tendered the King's Daughters of Charles City County, who maintain a convalescent home for Sheltering Arms patients in Charles City County during the summer.

Miss Scott's report showed that the total expenses of the institution for the year were a little over \$16,000. Of this sum, the city gave \$4,000. Interests from the endowment fund yielded \$3,500. Private donations amounted to about \$4,000 more, leaving the \$5,000 deficit which was covered by the donation yesterday.

During the year 622 patients were treated. Only a few of the fifty-three beds are now unoccupied. Officers of the institution stated last night that they did not want their friends to believe that the present good financial condition of the institution meant that it would not need as much help as usual. They fear that greater demands than ever will be made upon it during the coming year, and that the need for donations will be proportionately greater.

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OPENING OF WESTERN CAMPAIGN IN SIGHT

Signing of Peace Pact Releases Million and a Half Prisoners in Russia.

MAJORITY ARE MERE WRECKS With Scarcity of Food Prevailing Throughout Nation, Russians Did Not Feed Men to Have Them Physically Fit to Enter Hun Army.

WASHINGTON, February 12.—With the opening of the great campaign of 1918 on the western front apparently within sight, military men here examined to-day with profound interest the situation created by the signing of a peace pact between the central powers and the new Ukraine republic, and the decision of the Bolshevik Russian government to stop fighting and demobilize the army.

Their conclusions were not discouraging. These events on their face would appear to set free enormous German forces for the impending battle in the west, and also to furnish new sources of food supplies for the Teutonic allies, but many factors appear to detract from the advantages the central powers may derive.

One of the threats against the western front dealt upon in public discussions is the fact that presumably 1,500,000 prisoners of war held in Russia would be released to strengthen the German army.

The fact is said to be, however, that the great majority of the soldiers captured by the Russians are Austrians, not available for western front operations by present indications.

Many of the others are civilian or camp followers of one kind or another, as so far as known, only a small number of German troops were captured on that front. Any men from the prison camps are regarded as of doubtful military value for some time to come, as the Russians, unable to feed their own soldiers, hardly have improved the health of captives.

There is doubt here, also, as to the extent to which the agricultural resources of the Ukraine or of Russia can be brought to the aid of the German people in the near future. Failure of the Russian transportation systems worked in Germany's interest in undermining the fighting power of the Russian armies. The same agency now, necessarily, works against the central powers in their desire to get out food supplies. Moreover, the best wheat regions which may be opened up to the Germans are in a remote section of the Ukraine and in such poor condition that the agricultural system may have to be made over, a difficult process with the confusion that prevails throughout the region.

NEW GERMAN SYNDICATE Concern Organized to Distribute Imports of Ukrainian Iron Ore and Other Products.

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DEFENDS HEAVY EXPENSES AT HOG ISLAND YARD

Chairman of Corporation Claims He Was Forced to Pay Higher Prices to Build Plant.

WASHINGTON, February 12.—Heavy expenditures of government money in the construction of the Hog Island shipyards at Philadelphia were defended before the Senate investigating committee to-day by George J. Baldwin, chairman of the board of the American International Shipbuilding Corporation, on the ground that the corporation was confronted either with delaying ship construction or paying high costs in building the plant.

Baldwin said the corporation's action was justified because the nation needs fifty-two of them before the end of this year. He added that the corporation will launch six of the 120 ships contracted for on time, unless there is delay incident to transportation or other difficulties. One keel was laid to-day, he said, and fifty will be down in February and March.

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PRESIDENT LINCOLN FIRES PATRIOTISM OF AMERICANS

Thomas Power O'Connor, Irish Member of Parliament, Speaks at Springfield, Ill.

SPRINGFIELD, Ill., February 12.—Thomas Power O'Connor, an Irish nationalist leader in Parliament, speaking at a Lincoln Day celebration here to-night, said the name of the martyred President, whose last resting place was in Springfield, had become a "flaming torch" that fires the patriotism of every American, whether at home or facing death on Europe's battle fields.

"What American can be cowardly when Lincoln's courage so inspires?" demanded the speaker. "What American can be selfish when his unselfishness is recorded on every page of history? What American can prefer the claims of ambition or party in the face of his forgetfulness of all personal and partisan feeling before an imperiled nation? What American can entertain or even tolerate the thought of a divided allegiance in the face of a passionate patriotism and of the irreparable resolution with which he fought for a united nation?"

By Associated Press. WASHINGTON, February 12.—Steps toward greater utilization of navigable rivers, canals and other inland waterways to relieve railroads of a big freight burden were taken to-day by Director-General McAdoo in appointment of a committee to study water transportation, as it may be coordinated with rail hauling, and make early recommendations so that some definite measures may be taken this summer.

Mr. McAdoo is strongly in favor of government building or subsidy of barges and canal boats, and it is understood to be his intention to send large quantities of heavy freight over the country's inland waterways within a few months, or as soon as boats are available. This applies particularly to the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio rivers, the Erie, Chesapeake and Ohio canals, and the Atlantic coastwise canals.

There is doubt here, also, as to the extent to which the agricultural resources of the Ukraine or of Russia can be brought to the aid of the German people in the near future. Failure of the Russian transportation systems worked in Germany's interest in undermining the fighting power of the Russian armies. The same agency now, necessarily, works against the central powers in their desire to get out food supplies. Moreover, the best wheat regions which may be opened up to the Germans are in a remote section of the Ukraine and in such poor condition that the agricultural system may have to be made over, a difficult process with the confusion that prevails throughout the region.

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