

Conversations With Casey

HE EXPLAINS THE GRAFT SYSTEM IN SAN FRANCISCO



HE WAS REGARDING THE CALL BUILDING WITH GRAVE APPROVAL WHEN HE SAW ME.



By Ben Blow

HE was standing on the corner at Third and Market one morning, regarding The Call building with grave approval, when he saw me.

"They work from th' top down an' from th' bot'm up," he said. "On th' outside av ut th' labrin' min make a noise like they w're busy an' on th' inside av ut, at th' thoord fure, th' scut rayporters do be havin' wan c'nin' round av injymnt wit th' latest devlopimnts in th' histry av graft.

"WAN HUNDRID AN' SIXTY-SIX NEW INDITEMINTS IXPICED AT ANNY MINUT!

"SIVINTEEN UNSUSPECTED MILYUN. AIRES PACKIN' THEIR SUIT CASES WIT' MONEY AN' PREPARIN' T' DUCK!

"MAY'R SCHMITZ WISHFUL T' TELL HOW UT WUZ THAT TH' OFISHL THROBONE-PLAYER AV TH' ADMINISTHRATION BLEW A BUM NOTE!

"It's a busy town, as I raymarked t' th' scut I told ye av whin last we met:

"I have work," he says t' me whin I rayminded him that he wuz in debt t' me t' th' ixint av wan dollar an' sivity-five cents.

"See that y' stick to ut," I says t' him. "Spind a little less than y' make, kape a rispict'f demayn'r t' y'r betters, remember that th' size av y'r pay liviup c'n be increased by good work an' thin y'll never need t' indulge in th' pernicious habit av graffin', which in th' ind washes y' high up on th' sands av public c'ntimpt."

"Now that y' minton ut," he says t' me, "what is graft?"

"Graft, I says t' m, 'is appindaycitus av th' municipality, an' ailmint prevalint an' fash'onable av late years. 'Tis a deep-seated an' obscure disayse,' I says t' m, 'having hold av many prominent citizins tot'ly unsuspected av ut t' th' prisint time."

"Is ut dangerous?" he says

"It is," I says. "From th' prisint outlook it is liable t' turn out fat'll'y fr quite a boonch."

"I sh'd judge," he says, "from th' papers, that Haynie has thim on th' run."

"He has thim worse than that," I says t' him. "He has thim by th' pants so they can't run. All they c'n do is t' stay an' squeal."

"Are y' familiar wit' ut?" he says t' me. "D' y' know th' histry av th' case?"

"I am not," I says, "an' I do not, but I c'd explain t' y' how ut wuz born an' how ut grew in thurly logical sayquince av y' invited me t' go some place an' set down an' have a drink."

"Wud y' condiscind t' relate ut?" he says, takin' me inty a quiet bit av a place, "an' wud y' condiscind t' name th' bevridge y'll consume?"

"What day is this?" I says t' m.

"Th' sivityteenth," he says. "Bless St. Patrick."

"Bein' which," I says, "the drink over which we'll gossip will be the crame de mint; not that I fancy ut upon ord'nary occasions, but th' color is appropit t' th' day."

"I'll take a chance on ut meself," he says. "Wearin' green in me buot'nhole I might as well be homogenus on th' inside."

"An' we drank, not only wanst, but svin seprate an' distinct times, him buyin' an' me thurly contint t' let m buy, an' thin I relayted ut to m, the sad, sad histry av th' lapsus linguae av May'r Eujayne Schmitz."

"Whin he layed down th' fiddle an' th' bow," I says t' m, "and ceased strippin' melojus sounds from the cat gut strings av his vi'lin at th' 'Columbia, the possibilities spread out befor him like a roseaynt dream. Viewin' th' future he saw th' acclaimin' multitudes wavin' th' loud cymb'ls befor th' posterity av Schmitz. Instid av wan day av turkey an' thin six days av hash, ut wuz a continint av tederline surrounded by little islands av mushrooms swimmin' in a sea av gravy av th' most luscious taste ivery day."

"I have immersed," he says t' mself, "from obscurity an' wandered into th' cheerfil glow av th' spot. Me name," he says, "will dignify lab'r an' show

that the people av San Franchisky honor thim that work wit' their hands."

"An' in my opinion," I says, "he meant ut, ivery word av ut an' wuz filled wit' high raysolve."

"But th' Timpter come: "Eugene," he says, "wud y' be wishful t' cut a pie wit' me?" An' then he proceeded t' explain.

"With us workin' in harmonys juxt'position," he says, "there's money t' be made. There are many public improvemints needed by th' people which certain friends av mine ar willin' an' anxious t' supply. Th' town," he says, "is throtled by wan tilphone compny which is a grapplin' an' soulless m'opoly, maintainin' bum service fr an extraodin'ry price. Av thine wuz comyption," he says, "th' public wud binifit thereby."

"Instead av havin' t' ring fr y'r number until y' disciddid t' cuss words t' set forth y'r frame av mind it'd be a melojus answer y' got an' prompt response instid av th' what-d-y-want-an-who-in-th-hell-are-y' method av th' prisint time."

"An' besides," he says, "th' friends I minton have offered t' strip some fat notes off av their roll t' prisint y' in tok'n of appreciation av th' way y' protect th' public interests c'nfided t' y'r care."

"Manny is th' bum note I have stripped from me fiddle," says th' May'r, "in the old days. Are y' sure the notes are good?"

"They have never been spint," says th' Timpter. "They are not marked. Y' kin take thim or lave thim, but while cogitatin' over the matter remember that what people don't know don't hurt thim an' the subject under discussion is betwane you an' me."

"But av we shud get found out," says th' Mayor, "what thim?"

"We won't get found out," says th' Timpter. "Nothin' thim."

"I'll do ut," says th' Mayor. "Th' people av this city have had a bum tilphone service till th' morris av th' c'munity is apt t' be c'ruted wit' profane langwidge, an' that I cannot stand, besides which I need th' money, so proceed an' cut th' pie."

"An' then," I says to m, "wan pie bred th' taste fr another, an' pie bred th' taste fr cookies an' doughnuts an' animal cakes an' th' ivintuality av ut wuz that there was no money too small t' be acceptable an' th' business av protectin' th' public grew so onrus that the partnership av two wuz compelled to expand an' multiply into th' aspect av a large an' flourishin' corporation wit' dayvious channels av activity an' good eyesight fr the long green, an' thin wan day th' Timpter, I says, 'approached 'im wit' rispictful demaynor an' a mystherious air."

"Eujayne," he says, "I have a fruit cake t' cut wit' y' alongside av which anny pie that wuz ever cut is a banty rooster. It is a lollapalooosa. It has plums an' raisins an' citron on th' inside till th' mere look av ut 'd give y' th' indigention fr six weeks. Some friends av mine," he says, "lovin' th' public wit' solicitude have observed," he says, "that many av thim are compelled t' walk blocks an' blocks to find a street car t' c'nvey thim t' work. Th' lab'r av th' city," he says, "is intitled t' arrive at th' place where ut works wit'out tired calves to its legs, male an' female. Shall we or shall we not stand by an' view thim subjected t' opprission or shall we cut th' cake?"

"Pies," said th' Mayor, "I have cut in plinty. I have even disciddid t' split a peanut upon occasion, but th' dayscription av th' cake y' mention leads me t' fear that ut might be th' subject av undesirable attintion from thim that are prone t' pry."

"Y' need have no fear," says th' Timpter. "What y' do y' do for th' public good. Th' people are wit' y'," he says. "They have confidence in y'." They raylise th' binifits av th' supayrior administration y' have c'nferred upon thim an' y' c'n do no wrong."

"Av th' drag I have is that strong," says th' Mayor; "let us proceed an' investigate th' cake," which they did wit' much rejoicin' amidst the melojus poppin' av fat-bottomed corks, an' thin when they were in th' hey-day av their hay-makin' th' public priss begun t' smell a fat an' sassy rat."

"Can a man wit' a big income, such as th' Mayor," th' papers inquired sadly, "indulge in champagne water antics wit'out bein' immorl in his financial affairs?"

"Are eighty thousand-dollar houses bred up by passes av th' hands or is Eujayne sufferin' from th' sticky mitt?"

"An' wan paper flung wan stone, an' another paper thrun another stone until there wuz a sizeable pile."

"Have no fear," says th' Timpter. "They may bark, but in order t' bite it is necessary t' have an' t' be willin' t' part wit' large bundles av th' mazoom. They have ut, but th' demands av th' business rayquire that they c'nserve ut fr the rainy day."

"And then," I says, "San Franchisky had a chill. She shuck up an' she shuck down, an' she shuck side-

ways t' make y' seasick t' th' bottom av y'r boots, an' th' steeples fell an' th' chimbleys fell, but th' May'r rose up an' stood proud among th' ruins that wuz wanst th' City Hall. "Behold," he says, "I have imerged from bein' a detail av th' perspective. Here an' now begins th' Histry av a Man."

"But th' Timpter wuz not shaken so that anny wan c'd notice it wit' th' nakid eye."

"Eujayne," he says, "th' people are sore struck an' hard hit. We kin binifit them," he says, "an' at the same time we kin binifit our frinds; in th' mane-time th' bake shop is full o' new kinds o' pie wishful t' be cut."

"Th' papers," he says, "are so full o' th' timbler that they have no time t' give t' minor c'nvulsions, an' we are safe."

"An' fr the time 'twuz so," I says. "Slowly th' city came back. Th' hammer an' th' saw an' th' pile driver began t' sing on ivery side, an' San Franchisky sat up gamely an' winked her good eye at th' world. An' then wan man stepped in where many other min had stepped out. "From th' lay av th' land," he says, "there is something rotten in Denmark. I have money," he says, "an' whin the good name av me native city is bein' dragged in th' mud I can part wit' ut," he says, "wit'out th' intervintion av chloroform." An' he interests wan Haynie in th' case."

"He's a thurly dispicable character," says th' Timpter t' Eujayne, "this man Haynie is. He is th' subject av contemptuous ixication by some av th' foremost citizins av Oregon which at the prisnt are sojourin' in th' jail becaz av his ofshus intermeddlin' in things which c'ncerned him none. But y' need have no fear av him," he says, "I know him thurly well. He's two pounds lighter than a July rabbit, an' if y' waz t' thrun him out av th' windy he'd float up an' rest on th' roof. Th' pies we have cut are et. There are no crumbs left t' trace thim, so y' need have no fear."

"But fr wanst," I says, "th' dope failed. Havin' a trace av th' Mick in him or in his ancestry, Haynie dug an' delved an' clinched his teet' an' held on. Back av him wuz th' man wit' money, to say nothin' av th' respectable citizin which is largely raysponsible fr th' c'nditions which exist becaz he don't vote at th' right time."

"But thred by thred, an' bit by bit, an' step by step, backed as he was by the people an' th' press, Haynie made a diagnosis av th' case. An' from th' devlopimnts that show up clearer ivery day th' situation narrows down."

"San Franchisky," I says, "is sufferin' from municipal appindicaytus; the vermiform appindix in the case is, wit'out doubt, a man name Ruef. He shud be eliminated wit' all speed, but wit' th' utmost regard fr the highest professional ithics av th' case, an' imm'lated in th' Skookum at San Quat."

"An' poor Eujayne," I says, "I wonder will they permit him his fiddle when he lands in jail?"

BUT THE TIMPTER COME: "EUIJAYNE HE SAYS, WUD Y' BE WISHFUL T' CUT A PIE WIT ME? AN THEN HE PROCEEDED TO IXPAIN."



"HAYNIE HAS THIM ON TH' RUN."



"THE TILPHONE COMPANY IS MAINTAININ' A BUM SERVICE."