

PRUNING REPORT ON ALDERMEN'S TABLE

Work of Retrenchment Committee Seems to Have Come to Naught.

MAJORITY OF BOARD AGAINST SALARY CUTS

Seeing Defeat Ahead, Committeemen Move to Table All Measures and Motion is Unanimously Carried—Trouble in the Air from the Start—Money for Schools.

All of the work of the council's joint retrenchment committee and all of the pow-wowing of the common council over the committee's recommendations seem to have been for naught. The report, or rather the draft of ordinances and resolutions adopted by the lower branch during the consideration of the report, now repose upon the table of the board of aldermen, and, unless there is a very decided change in the sentiment of the membership of that body, there it is likely to remain. Probably every one who attended the meeting of the aldermen last night left the hall convinced that there will be no retrenching in Newport News municipal circles during the coming fiscal year—as far as the salaries of officials and the police department are concerned, at least.

As the matter stands now, every part of the committee's report as amended and adopted by the council—and this takes in the whole of the report except the section referring to the police department—has been tabled by the aldermen. The lower branch has not yet acted upon the recommendation as to the police department, and the indications are that an agreement upon this matter is not likely to be reached any time in the immediate future. And furthermore, the attitude of at least half of the members of the board last night seemed to give warning that if an ordinance making any material reduction in the police appropriation is adopted by the lower branch, it will go to keep the rest of the report company on the table.

Law Requires Action.

The budget for the coming fiscal year must be adopted before the license tax and tax levy measures are passed, and the law requires that the latter shall be adopted before May 1. Thus it appears that both branches must agree on these matters sometime during the next seventeen days. It seems probable that the budget as originally reported by the finance committee will now be taken up and a finish fight made over this report.

Trouble was in the air when President Robinson called the board to order for its regular session shortly after 8 o'clock last night. Those present were Holt, Longan, Nelms, West, Weston and Robinson. Mr. Petzold entered the hall a few minutes later, carrying in a slim, his left arm, which was broken a few weeks ago by a fall from a donkey. Major Maryus Jones opened the proceedings with prayer.

Every member's nerves seemed to be at a high tension. There had been some arguments before the meeting was called to order, and every time a member spoke it almost seemed that sparks flew. It was apparent from the start that the members of the retrenchment committee, Messrs. West and Nelms and Dr. Longan would stand alone in an effort to sustain the recommendations of the committee. President Robinson and Messrs. Holt, Petzold and Weston apparently not only had no idea of sustaining the report, but did not propose to vote for the salary reductions agreed upon by the common council. And as it required the support of six of the seven members present to put through any one of the retrenchment

measures, the fate of the report was a foregone conclusion.

Moves to Lay on Table.

After all other business had been disposed of, the retrenchment measures were taken up. Mr. Holt moved that the board get concurred in the ordinance reducing the salary of the mayor from \$1,200 to \$600. Mr. Nelms moved as a substitute that all of the retrenchment measures be laid on the table.

Mr. West seconded this motion, saying that there seemed to be a disposition not to adopt the report; that as far as he was concerned he did not propose to see the reduction in the police department fall through, because he wanted that department to suffer along with the rest. Mr. West went on to say, that the board had unanimously asked for this retrenchment and that to try to kill the whole business now was inconsistent. He declared that he would never submit to seeing certain men picked out and their salaries cut and the money given to other men who already are getting excessive salaries.

Not to Cut Salaries.

Mr. Petzold rose to say that he did not object so much to the salary cutting, but that he thought all should be cut alike.

Mr. Holt spoke very emphatically against the proposal to reduce salaries. "When I voted for retrenchment," he said, "I did not vote to reduce salaries." He went on to say that if the city could not afford to pay living salaries it ought to abolish offices, but that the men retained in the service of the city should be given decent living salaries.

Mr. West called for a question upon his motion to lay on the table. Mr. Holt moved as a substitute "that it be thrown into the waste basket." This was seconded by Mr. Petzold, but the president proceeded to put Mr. Nelms' motion to vote. It was unanimously carried. And none of the various ordinances, except the one concerning the mayor's salary, had been read.

Money for Schools.

An ordinance appropriating \$10,000 out of the general fund to cover a deficit in the school fund, was adopted unanimously. A motion to adopt was lost at first, but when it had been explained that the appropriation would come out of this year's funds and had nothing to do with the new budget, the action was reconsidered and the appropriation made. This resolution had been held up for two months at the request of Chairman West, of the finance committee, but as the board was compelled to borrow money from the banks to meet the payroll for March, it was decided that action should not be delayed longer. The measure already had passed the lower branch.

Mayor's Financial Statement.

The following communication from Mayor Jones was read and filed:

April 5, 1910.
Honorable Board of Aldermen and Common Council of the city of Newport News, Va.
Gentlemen:

The 58th section of the charter provides as follows:

"It shall be his (the mayor's) duty to communicate to the council at the end of each fiscal month a general statement of the condition of the city in relation to its government, finances and improvements, with such recommendations as he may deem proper," and although this is not the end of a fiscal month, yet, as you are considering the budget, I have deemed it proper at this time, to lay before you the facts concerning the financial situation of the city.

Accompanying this communication, you will find estimates made by the city auditor, which I respectfully suggest shall be read herewith. You will observe that the total ordinary receipts for the year ending June 30, 1909, are \$179,290.48.

That in addition thereto, there has been received from the Hampton Roads Traction Company (franchise), \$5,795.40, making a total of \$185,085.88.

You will further observe that the ordinary expenditures for the year ending June 30, 1909, for the support of the city government are \$180,745.76.

You will also see from the communication of the city auditor, that the estimated balance to be brought forward to the year beginning July 1, 1910, is \$33,811.14.

The estimated receipts for that year are \$185,000.00, making a total of the estimated receipts for the year 1910-11, 218,811.14.

The taxable real estate values for the year beginning July 1, 1910, amount to \$9,468,800.00. The assessed personal property for the year 1909 amounts to \$881,209.00, aggregating the sum of \$10,250,000.

However, the personal property will be re-assessed in time to include the taxes for the year 1910, and that item is subject to change, though the commissioner of the revenue has informed me that he does not think the change will be material one way or the other.

The bonded indebtedness of the city

(Continued on Fourth Page.)

Just Try G. H. S. Special.

CONFEDERATE VETERANS RE-UNION,
Mobile, Ala., April 25-28.
Fare \$19.25 From Newport News Via C. & O. Railway.

Tickets will be on sale April 23rd. to 25th, good returning until May 2nd. Correspondingly low rates from other stations. 3-10-13, 17-20.
Carriages—Call W. E. Rouse.
Fireman's Bazaar, April 30 to May 7.

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CAN'T SHORTEN SESSION

Mr. Massie Advises Teachers' Contracts are Binding.

BOARD HAS LIVELY MEETING

Report of Committee of Six on Janitor Situation Rejected, Only Four Members Voting for It—Authority Transferred.

With every member present and voting, the board of school trustees last night by a vote of five to four rejected the unanimous report of the committee of six, which was appointed at the last meeting of the board to hear the charges preferred by Superintendent of Schools Willis A. Jenkins against Janitor-in-Chief J. C. Briley and to curtail the expenses of the board for the remainder of the session. This report set forth that the charges against Briley had been sustained and recommended that he be severely reprimanded and also recommended that two of the janitors be dropped and that a woman be employed in the place of one of them.

J. P. Harrison was the only member of the committee of six to stand by the report, President Puckett and Messrs. Bivins, Lenz, Christie and Sutton voting against it. That feature of the report relating to the charges against Briley was not considered at any time, the fight on the entire report being centered on the recommendation that the janitors be dropped. Chairman Sutton, of the committee on buildings and grounds led the fight against the report and was backed by the other members of his committee and President Puckett and Chairman Bivins, of the finance committee.

Trustees Are Arraigned.

While the report was under consideration, O. D. Batchelor scathingly arraigned the board on the janitor matter. He declared that the board is throwing away \$2,000 of the city's money every year. "There isn't a man here who would not whack this \$4,400 cost in half if this was his private business. Unless we cut this janitor service we are derelict in our duty. We can't consistently go before the council and ask for large sums of money when we do not whack this janitor cost in half," continued Mr. Batchelor.

Mr. Harrison said that this report merely covered for the remainder of the session and that it was his intention to call for a complete retrenchment before the janitor service is taken up at the regular meeting next month.

Chairman Sutton, of the committee on buildings and grounds, reported that, acting under instructions from the retrenchment committee, he had dismissed the janitors named in the report, but that the janitors had employed counsel and that he had been compelled to take them back again. He did not think that it was right for the board to dismiss the janitors without giving them some warning.

Notice to Amend Rules.

In connection with the janitor matter, the committee on rules and regulations gave notice that at the next meeting of the board the committee will move to amend rule 67 by making it read as follows:

"Janitors are responsible to the principals of the various schools, subject to the authority of the superintendent under rule 80.

"Each principal shall fix the hours of service and prescribe the duties of the janitors under him or her, and, with the concurrence in writing of the superintendent, may discharge any such janitor. Janitors may also be discharged by the committee on buildings and grounds or by the board. In case of a vacancy from any cause, the building and grounds committee shall fill the same pending the action of the board."

Break Up Present System.

Mr. Batchelor explained that the idea of the proposed amendment is to break up the present system of janitors and place the authority over the janitors in the hands of the superintendent and the principals instead of the janitor-in-chief.

Can't Shorten Session.

No action was taken by the board relative to closing the schools on May 21 instead of June 1, as recommended by the finance committee. However, the clerk read a letter from City Attorney Massie in which the city attorney stated that the board could not legally terminate the contracts with the teachers except for some cause furnished by the teachers themselves. The opinion was filed and the matter was passed over without discussion of any kind.

Pupils Transferred.

The committee on rules and regulations reported that the schools in the new school building in the second ward have been rearranged and, by a transfer of some of the pupils to the Twenty-eighth street and Twenty-second street schools, the committee has been able to save a teacher. Miss Bennett being sent to the North End school to fill a vacancy created by the resignation of Miss Nannie Turner.

Report on Finances.

Chairman Bivins, of the finance committee, reported that the State school fund allotted the board has been exhausted and that the city fund has been overdrawn \$2,500. The chairman reported that Schmelz

Brothers had advanced the money to the board to pay the teachers on April 12.

Accompanying the report of the finance committee was a letter from Schmelz Brothers requesting the board to relieve them of paying four per cent on the daily balance of the board. The bankers explained that they were called upon to advance large sums to the board and that in view of this they did not think that the board should hold them to the four per cent. On motion of Col. Huffman the board adopted a resolution relieving the bank from paying the interest and thanking Schmelz Brothers for the various favors in advancing funds to the board.

Resignation Accepted.

By a unanimous vote, the board accepted the resignation of Miss Nannie Turner as a teacher in the North End school, the resignation being effective since April 1. Miss Annie H. Conway was elected a substitute teacher.

The committee on buildings and grounds, through Chairman Sutton, reported that the total cost of completing the four extra rooms in the Second ward school was \$1,070.06. The lowest bid on this work was \$1,800 and the board ordered Janitor-in-Chief Briley to complete the rooms.

Return Costly Clock.

On motion of Col. Huffman, the buildings and grounds committee was instructed to return the electric secondary clocks which were ordered for the new school buildings, at a cost of \$105. The board decided that in view of the present conditions of the finances of the board, the clocks are a little too fancy for the board.

Night School Closed.

Supt. Jenkins reported that Prof. Taylor, teacher of the night school, had given up that work and that the school had been closed for the remainder of the session.

New Building Cost \$15,000.

Clerk Tabb reported to the board that, with the bills outstanding, the fund borrowed from the State literary fund for the construction of the new Second ward school is exhausted. The board borrowed \$15,000 from the literary fund to supplement the \$10,000 appropriated by the council for the construction of a new building. As it now stands, the new building represents a cost of \$15,000.

Offer of Janitor Service.

An offer from the firm of Jones & Blanton to furnish the school board a janitor service for all of the schools at \$3,000 per annum was deferred until the next meeting, when teachers and janitors for the next session are to be elected. The janitor service at present costs the board about \$4,400 per year.

Amend New Regulations.

In pursuance with notice given at the last meeting of the board, Col. Huffman, chairman of the committee on rules and regulations, offered several amendments to the new regulations governing the grading of teachers on a merit system. The first amendment was to the section covering the manner of the grading. As originally drafted, the regulations provided that the grading of the teachers of the white schools should be done by a majority vote of the grading board, which is composed of the superintendent, principals and special teachers. Col. Huffman's amendment provided that this grading should be subject to the approval of the committee on rules and regulations and the school board.

Some Opposition Develops.

There was some opposition to this amendment, Mr. Batchelor contending that it would upset the entire system. Supt. Jenkins also opposed the amendment, taking the same view as that advanced by Mr. Batchelor. After quite a lengthy discussion, the board adopted the amendment by a vote of seven to two, Messrs. Batchelor and Harrison voting against it.

The second amendment provides that no information relative to the grading shall be made public until the school board has acted on the report of the grading board. This amendment was adopted without opposition.

Report to Committee.

The third amendment require that instead of reporting to the school board, the grading board shall report to the committee on rules and regulations. The fourth change was that the grading board shall make its report to the committee on May 1 instead of June 1.

On motion of Mr. Batchelor, the new rules were amended so as to make the pay of the substitute teachers pro rata to the pay received by the regular teachers for whom they substitute.

Retain Domestic Science.

President Puckett announced that he would withdraw the resolution offered at the last meeting of the board abolishing the department of domestic science.

Mr. Puckett said that he was convinced that the abolishing of departments was not the proper method of retrenching. He thought that the board should start at the top "of the tree" and "prune" off as it went down and not "in" the tree at the bottom of the tree and thereby destroy it.

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