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Byman Levinson
C. J. Lehmann

Editor and Publisher
Mgr., Printing Dept.

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Editorials

Taking The Easy Way

Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, when some improvement or reform in government is suggested, it is frowned on as being "too general," or "not specific enough." But the reform in Oakland County governmental affairs, particularly expenditures, now being attempted by the Board of Supervisors may possess the unusual characteristic of being just the opposite—too specific, not general enough, in a sense of the word.

The Supervisors, in response to County-wide clamor for less extravagance and more economy at the County seat, propose to answer that demand by the method that first suggests itself, a quick and easy way—having the Board of Auditors draw up a list of salaries of County officials and then slashing those salaries wherever it appears expedient. The supervisors may then go home, with a comfortable feeling that they have done their duty and have appeased the people—even though they may be met back home with an embarrassing question now and then regarding their refusal to cut their own salaries.

This, as has been said, is the easy way, but it is not by such means that any far-reaching economy or improvement in County government is to be attained. In the first place, those salaries which may logically be reduced are not the most important, or even one of the most important items of expense. The savings which may result from even a drastic cutting of salaries is not likely to loom up very large in the way of reductions in our tax-bills. And in the second place, it may very well be that the Supervisors, stampeded by the demand for "an end to reckless spending," would be slashing right and left without having the time to acquire either very thorough knowledge or to exercise calm, mature judgment. Some very valuable public servants, not easily replaced and worth every cent of their moderate salaries, may suffer a severe slicing of their wages, while other officials, looming larger politically perhaps, but of less actual worth to the County (and not at all hard to duplicate), may escape with lesser cuts.

Yet, far more important and serious than the matter of mistakes which might be made in this way, is the fact that the Supervisors, if they regard cutting of salaries as completing the job, will have run off the main track onto a side-switch. We need more of this obvious, easily-applied reform. Most pressing for attention are leaks and inefficiencies, waste and incompetence which, it is freely charged, appear here and there throughout the entire fabric of our County government. It is the elimination of these, the bringing into the entire conduct of County affairs the general viewpoint of business efficiency, that the County needs most of all.

This is not an easy task. It means that every supervisor, or at least a majority of them, must be business-men of and for the County. It means that the supervisors must study and know more about the affairs of the County than ever before. To keep the County business operating properly now means just what every private business-man knows it means in his own business—a lot of hard, continuous work. It means twice as much work to get the same result as before. But it means, also, more than just work. It demands the application of sound business principles and the utilizing of sound business experience. In the case of the supervisors, it requires also the courage to make decisions that may be unpleasant personally and unpopular publicly, if need be.

Granting that our supervisors, or the most of them, have the qualifications of business experience and good judgment, have they also the zeal for public welfare that will impel them to think, study, work and act incessantly, with the single aim that Oakland County may be lifted out of her present distressing position of debt and discord? Or will they be content merely to follow the lead of some opportunists who, realizing that the people of the County are watching as they have not in 30 or 40 years, will grasp the opportunity to gain a lot of favorable publicity as champions of the people?

The proposed wholesale slashing of pay-checks may not only result in mistakes and injustices, but it may be a positive detriment to the County eventually, in that it may delay, by a deeper, more serious effect, the day when that remedy may be applied to the County's ills. The immediate effect would be like that of taking an aspirin tablet for an aching tooth. The immediate pain may be soothed, but if the soothing-tablet is mistaken for the cure, the condition only becomes worse by its continuance.

Oakland County needs men who will dig down deep into the roots of our governmental problems, equipped with the tools of experience, judgment and common sense, and with an unshakable determination to locate unhealthy conditions and extract them. If our supervisors can do this, or see that it is done, natural factors will provide the cure, just as Nature does the healing after a source of infection is removed.

Once upon a time a Detroit-bound automobile driver obeyed the order to "Stop before turning" at Grand River and Farmington roads—but nobody caught him at it.

Times are hard and money is scarce. But the only depression that seems to be felt at the World's Series and at intercollegiate football games, is the one that comes when the other team makes a score.

Clipped From Other Newspapers

'Nie Wieder Krieg'

(C. E. Preston, Chester County, Pennsylvania, in Capper's Farmer)

It is carnival night in the home town and chief of attractions is the big parade of 20 Legion posts. All honor to the Legionnaires! Smartly tailored uniforms in bright and varied colors, shining helmets, music, rhythm, action—all these fascinate young and old and the small boy on the sidewalk links up the idea with war and decides he will be in on the next one.

Twenty miles south of the home town is a huge government hospital where are quartered veterans to whom the gods of war have been less kind; veterans some of whom may never again walk, others who may never again see and still others who may never again think with clear minds. This is the other side of the picture, sight of which unfortunately escapes the small boy on the sidewalk.

This war business is getting a lot of attention nowadays and rightly so. Since the dawn of history war has been regarded as inevitable but the last conflict was so much more of a war than anything in the past that men and nations have been jolted out of their complacency and are now looking for a better way to compose international differences in the future.

Judged by any standard war is a failure. When a dispute arises between two countries it is futile to take up arms if right be the objective sought. War will establish the fact that one nation has a bigger and better army or more food or more money but the one sure thing it will not do is establish right. There are several aspects of war which have our downright disapproval. One of these is the system whereby one set of men creates the war and another lot is sent out to fight the war. In no man's land the boy from South Dakota meets the boy from Saxony. Back home there is much they have in common; a mother, perhaps a sweetheart, friends, work, play and the right to live. Yet here they are, face to face with fixed bayonets, boys between whom there could be no natural quarrel or enmity and yet one will presently kill the other "in defense of the fatherland" or to "make the world safe for democracy" as the case may be. Monstrous scheme at best!

The last war was said to be a war to end war and the claim may not prove empty when one considers the progressive movements of the last decade such as the world court, the Kellogg pact and repeated attempts at naval limitation. But Mars having reigned long and supreme will die hard and his destruction remains a big job. In Germany a large society hinges its activities around the slogan, "nie wieder krieg" which translated literally is "never again war." This society has a fruitful field for work and like Abou Ben Adhem, and in all lands, may their tribe increase.

The Farmer Owns The Apples

(Detroit News)

Along with the annual crop of nuts and apples comes the perennial question: Who owns the fruits of roadside trees? With negligible variation this argument is repeated daily, and many be heard many times on any sunny Sunday afternoon.

"Here, you folks mustn't pick up those apples," shouts the farmer.

"How come; they are in the road. Do you own the road?"

"No, but I own that apple tree and the apples that grow on it." "We'll see. We are on the public highway and you can't order us off."

"No, but I can order you not to steal my property."

The misunderstanding grows out of the common belief that the highways are state property and the democratic conception that what belongs to the state belongs to everybody. The farmers side of the dispute grows out of the farmer's knowledge that his deed to his farm gives him ownership to the middle of the road.

The farmer is right. The state gives to the public merely the privilege of free passage along the highways without disorder or detriment.

Hoarded Dollars And Dull Business

(Kansas City Labor News)

The only way to keep business good is to keep money circulating rapidly. It is not so much the amount of money in the country that helps business — it is the speed of turnover that counts. The great difference between good and dull business conditions is the rate at which money changes hands. One dollar spent twice develops the same amount of business as two dollars spent once. There is as much money in this country today as in the most flourishing business periods of this country, but it is hidden away — hoarded where it does no one the least bit of good. To relieve the business stagnation the hidden treasures should be brought to light, spent where it will do the most good and not be allowed to rust when men and women are in search for work and business is at a standstill.

We must admit that business depression and the unemployment problem are serious things. Yet, these problems can easily be solved. There is not a problem under the heavenly skies that cannot be solved. Hoarding of money causes unemployment; unemployment causes business depression, and business depression causes hard times. The change of the moon or the close proximity of Saturn or Jupiter or any other planet do not have anything to do with hard times. Hard times are the makings of our own, and sometimes they are more imaginary than anything else. Sometimes, in fact quite often, we let our minds dwell about something awful that is going to happen, and hard times follow. We sometimes fret about how to meet our monthly bills, we worry about how the milk man is to be paid when we have not the necessary \$3.20, or how we are going to stay on the job when rumors have it that the shop is going to close. We don't feel inclined to extend credit to Harry Brown or Bill Smith because we have heard that perhaps he will not be able to pay his bill when due. And so it goes all the way down the line. Hard times, business depression and mental agony becomes a set fixture in our mind and so naturally we have those inconvenient things on our hands. If we were a little more optimistic, a little more sympathetic with our fellow men, a little more confident in our own ability to meet circumstances as they arrive, and a little more interested in what we are going to do today than about what is going to happen if the Sonsnew construction company fails to put up the Casey Peland tower or that the Oklahoma bank, where we have a few dollars on deposit, may fail, or that the Germans may not pay their war debts, we would not have business depression, farm relief or the unemployment question to be worried about. Get your money out of cold storage, put it in circulation, and see how soon you will stimulate business.

The First Concern

(Redford Record)

In Senator Couzens the people of Michigan have a genuine political asset, not a demagogue. Fortified with enough cash to scorn money, old enough to see much of the insincerity and foolish activities of men, industrial leaders included, we have in this aggressive and outspoken man a true friend of the average family.

Now that the heat of primaries is past, we wish to republish his remarks on the first concern of government—the need of stabilizing labor conditions. He said:

"With four or five million men out of work, some ten to fifteen million persons are deprived of their means of support. They are unable to purchase, and the whole economic structure is disturbed. The first thing that either the state or the national government should do is to enact legislation which will as nearly as possible stabilize the work of the workers at least the income of the workers, so they may live on a proper, American basis."

That's what we commonly term horse sense.

Now that the debunkers have had a long inning; it is time that they should be debunked.

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