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## THE BOARD'S PLAIN DUTY.

Kansas City Editor Outlines Plan For Redeeming Waterworks.

The board of public works has an urgent duty to perform in regard to the city water department, and at the same time an opportunity is afforded to distinguish itself from all its predecessors by adopting a systematic businesslike policy in the management of the plant.

Although it seems useless to expect the same degree of efficiency under municipal ownership as obtains in private corporation ownership, the members of the board owe it alike to themselves and to the city to approximate the methods of a business corporation as closely as possible in the management of the waterworks.

If the members find it incompatible with the exigencies of their private business affairs to give their personal attention to the work they should at least see to it that the heads of the department are competent business men who will give their whole time to their duties and, above all, that politics shall be entirely eliminated from the water department.

The insubordination, incompetency, jealousies and recriminations which have been shown to exist among the employees, from highest to lowest, present a situation hardly less dangerous and disgraceful than the recent disclosures in regard to the unsafe and inefficient condition of the plant.

The plain duty of the board is first to weed out the incompetents and those who are playing politics and next to reorganize at least the mechanical branches of the department on a strict, nonpartisan, business basis.

The people of this community are tired of the everlasting squabbles and alarms in regard to the water supply that have come to light with each new administration as well as of the constant demands for money to do things which should have been done and were represented falsely to have been done years ago.—Kansas City (Mo.) Journal.

## CITIES QUIT BUSINESS.

Municipal Lighting Plants Prove Expensive Luxuries.

The city electric plant of Laurens, S. C., was installed in 1897 at a cost of \$30,000. The generating plant has now been shut down, a contract for current having been made with a private company.

In 1905 Pontotoc, Miss., purchased the local electric plant for \$8,000. Two years later it sold it for \$5,000 because, as the mayor writes, "it didn't pay expenses." Another citizen writes that the sale was due to "dissatisfaction with municipal management."

Portland, Ind., installed an electric plant in 1892 at a cost of \$42,000. Six years later the generating plant was shut down, and a contract for current was made with a private company.

The village electric plant of Lockport, Ill., installed at a cost of \$20,000, was leased about a year ago to the sanitary district of Chicago for a nominal consideration, as the plant was a failure.

The electric light and water plant of Hickman, Ky., installed by the city at a cost of \$30,000, was leased in 1900 to the Hickman Ice and Coal company for a term of twenty years. The mayor assigns as the reason that "the plant was not self sustaining."

## Private Companies Better.

All this talk of municipal ownership which has been going the rounds here of late is ill advised, in my opinion. It isn't practical, and every city has found to its cost that poorer service has been derived from municipally owned plants than from the corporations owned and run on business principles by private capitalists.

Statistics bear me out in this. You can take 100 towns that have municipally owned lighting plants and you will find all sorts of schedules prevailing—moonlight schedules, dark night schedules and, in fact, everything but a clear schedule for light every night at a stated price, no matter what weather conditions prevail. You can't tell anything about the cost of these plants, and you get poorer service.

The temptation to inject politics into the management of these municipal plants is too strong for the average man to resist, and in most every municipally owned plant you will find it run to the benefit of the ruling party and not to the benefit of the citizens.

The tendency is to employ friends of the management, and all this talk of divorcing business of the city from politics is hush. As long as human nature remains the same it will not be done, no matter who gets the office.—Hon. W. R. Burnett, Mayor of Springfield, O.

## Careless Management.

The auditing department of Elyria, O., has just made a full report of its investigation of the municipal water works. Among the points of interest in this report are the following: Deficit for 1907, \$8,005.79; at least 25 per cent of the water pumped not accounted for; important meters allowed to remain out of order for periods varying from one month to two years. The department recommends a 33 per cent increase in the rates and adds the following suggestive paragraph:

"We believe that the board of public service should keep in closer touch with the affairs and financial condition of the water department from month to month and require monthly reports from the waterworks superintendent as to amount of water pumped, supplies which probably will be needed during the coming month and statement of supplies on hand, etc."

Listowel, Ont., has voted down a proposition to install a municipal electric plant.

## Another Plant For Sale.

A recent newspaper item dated at Festus, Mo., reads thus: "The city council of Festus has offered to sell the city electric light plant to a St. Louis syndicate for \$10,000, and it is believed the proposition will be accepted by the syndicate."

At a mass meeting recently held in Fort Branch, Ind., to consider the purchase by the town of the local electric plant the proposition was rejected almost unanimously.

## THE GRANGE

Conducted by J. W. DARROW, Chatham, N. Y. Press Correspondent New York State Grange

## GRANGE CO-OPERATION.

The Foundation Needed For Success and a Few Illustrations.

The grange will do well to give considerable time to the discussion of co-operation in one form or another. This is practical work and something that is needed to be developed in nearly every section of the state. It is one of the most important duties of the state to teach how to buy and sell farm products. A writer in the American Agriculturist of a recent date suggested that the grange in starting in co-operative buying and selling must expect to meet with difficulties.

"But a manager who is honest, shrewd and impartial, who can manage the business in a practical, conservative manner, can pilot the venture over many obstacles that may mean success instead of failure. And then he must have the united support of the members, who must have confidence in each other as well as in the manager."

"As an illustration of co-operation we will take Washingtonville grange of Orange county, N. Y. The village is situated in the heart of the county and is one of the largest milk producing sections of the state. The farms are large and very fertile and occupied by owners who take great pride in their occupation. This grange has a membership of 154. It was incorporated in 1906, with a board of directors of seven members. The present officers are Charles Tuthill, president; George M. Hallock, secretary and treasurer; Roswell Shons, Charles Nicoll, Jesse Mabee, William J. Hudson and J. T. Gerow; capital stock \$5,000, divided into shares of \$25 each. Goods handled are groceries, hardware, dry goods, feeds, flour, harness, all kinds of farm machinery, rubber goods of all kinds, horse blankets, lap robes, shoes, boots, fertilizers—everything and anything that a farmer wants. Payments are cash and thirty days. Goods are sold to anybody and everybody who has the money, stockholders a certain percentage off, 2 per cent off regular price."

"About 98 per cent of the grange members patronize the store. Five per cent paid for all capital stock and \$8,700 worth of goods accumulated from \$5,000. The business pays about 20 per cent as well as a reduced cost of goods to the consumer. Three or four men are required to run the store. The manager receives a good salary. Last year's business amounted to \$87,650. This year they started a blacksmith shop. So far it is very successful, a saving in first cost of shoeing, and it looks as if it would be a good dividend earning plant."

"The patrons of the town have learned to co-operate in a \$25,000 national bank. They walked right up and subscribed in ninety days and now have \$70,000 on deposit, and everybody is pleased. The town has 800 inhabitants. If farmers only could realize how much they could do by co-operation they would lose no time in joining together, thereby creating a financial incentive that would make their occupation more desirable and enhance the value of their homes; also aid them in the disposition of their products."

Another writer in the same paper says: "Until a start is made we shall not know what we have got in our midst, how many hundreds of men the grange has developed into leaders and speakers of marked ability and how many business enterprises there are today that are paying good returns which perhaps for years never paid a dollar in dividends. We cannot hope to jump into a big business at once, nor would it be advisable if we could, but if the farmers of one grange or of one Pomona grange will get down from generalities to specific action, appoint a ways and means committee that shall thoroughly work out a workable plan and follow it through, learning from actual experience the dangers and pitfalls to be avoided and with a united body back of them, throwing out encouragement rather than slurs and sarcasm, then we shall have taken a long step toward the solution of the greatest problem the farmer has to face."

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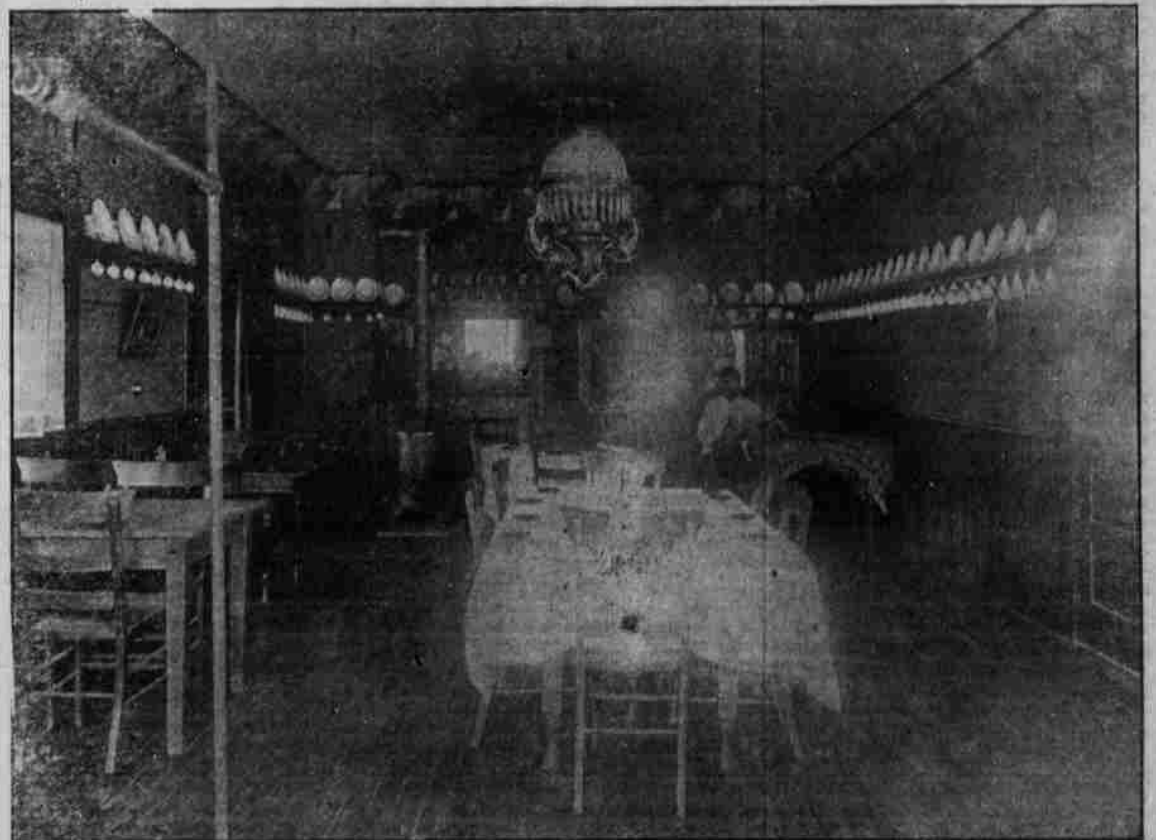
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