

TWO-PLATOON BILL BAD IN MANY WAYS

Adverse Reports Made by Engineers of National Board of Fire Underwriters.

SERIOUS DEFECTS SHOWN

Authority of Chief Impaired by System, Fire Prevention Work Wiped Out and Increased Cost, Says Report.

WHAT TWO-PLATOON MEASURE MEANS TO CITIZENS OF PORTLAND TOLD IN FEW WORDS.

Only argument for two-platoon bill is that firemen will have fewer hours on duty without losing any of their present privileges, including present salaries, days off and vacations.

Measure as proposed is attempt to legislate without making proper provision for the proposed changed conditions.

No definite provision made for maintaining even the present strength of fire companies, which is much below what is required for adequate protection.

No provision made for increased expenditure necessary and only means of handling it is to reduce the number of companies in service or so reduce forces as seriously to endanger fire protection of the city.

War conditions makes particularly hazardous the curtailment of fire service.

The number of additional men the firemen estimated will be necessary to inaugurate the new system is far too low.

To establish properly the service under the two-platoon would require 173 additional men at a cost of \$171,264 a year, plus the cost of fire prevention work.

No provision made for continuance of fire protection work or for firemen's health.

Because of municipal tendencies to keep down costs, most cities where two-platoon system has been tried, have reduced greatly their fire-fighting efficiency.

Limiting of authority of the Fire Chief over men as provided in the bill is taking away the most essential feature of responsible management.

While other cities are striving to increase their fire-fighting efficiency because of the war, Portland is proposing to experiment with a system which definitely decreases the practical value of every member of the force.

Engineers of the National Board of Fire Underwriters of America, brought here by civic organization to make an impartial investigation and report on the firemen's two-platoon bill to be voted on June 4, denounce the bill as a step decidedly in the wrong direction, in a report made public yesterday.

The committee made the report after an investigation covering several days. The report is signed by W. E. Mallahan, general manager, and George W. Booth, chief engineer of the Board.

Less Hours the Only Benefit.

A careful perusal of the proposed act and the reasons therefor will show that the only increased benefit to be derived is that the members of the department will have less hours on duty and lose none of their present privileges, including present salaries, days off and vacations.

"The proposed amendment is an attempt to legislate without making proper provision for the proposed changed conditions."

"The more important points which have been ignored or not given sufficient thought are as follows:

"No definite provision has been made for maintaining even the present strength of companies which is much below that required for adequate protection. The act simply states that after its adoption the City Council must make an appropriation for two shifts of men in each company. It does not specify the strength of each shift. A chart has been prepared by the two-platoon committee which endeavors to show that in order to maintain the present strength of companies it will be necessary to add only 72 men to the department on regular duty and 20 additional men to take care of vacation periods, making a total of 92 men to be added to the department. It will be shown further on that this estimate is too low, but even supposing it is correct, where will the necessary funds be obtained to pay the additional 92 men? The act specifically states that present salaries shall not be reduced. Under the prevailing rate of pay of \$80 monthly for the first six months and \$85 monthly for the second six months, it will require an additional burden on the taxpayers of \$91,080 for the first year and each additional year this will be increased.

The bill as submitted is condemned because it goes farther than to provide a two-platoon system. The report shows that the bill wipes out fire prevention work, which already has saved Portland several millions of dollars in fire losses, deprives the fire chief of authority over his men, makes no provision for increased number of men necessary, and is defective in many ways.

The engineers say the system would require 173 additional men at an increased annual cost to the city of \$171,264, and that the money required could not be raised because of the recently enacted 6 per cent tax limitation law.

Inasmuch as the firemen campaigning for the two-platoon bill have been heralding to the public that the National Board of Engineers, authority on fire matters, favors the two-platoon plan, the report has come as a severe blow to the two-platoon campaigners.

Following are the comments of the engineers on the subject:

"Under a 6 per cent tax limitation amendment to the state constitution a

city cannot increase its tax levy more than 6 per cent unless specifically authorized by a majority of the legal voters voting on the question. A written opinion of the City Attorney states that this law would apply in the present case, as there is no authorization for additional expenditures included in the proposed ordinance. It is obvious that to increase the department by 92 men, the number suggested as sufficient by the advocates of the two-platoon system, a large part of the \$91,080 needed can be obtained only by depriving other departments of their normal increase in expenditures. Unless more than a proportional increase in the appropriation for fire department salaries is allowed, provision can be made for more than one-third the men claimed to be necessary to maintain even the present inadequate strength. Where, then, is the money to come from to pay the other men required? The obvious answer to this is that it will be necessary materially to reduce the number of companies in service or will it result in even worse conditions, by dividing the already inadequate force into two shifts, leaving all companies so inadequately manned as to seriously endanger the protection of the city?

"But it must be remembered that there are, even now, not enough companies in service as they are seriously undermanned. The danger arising from such a condition is so serious that no thinking man or woman who realizes the possible appalling loss, both in property and lives, which might easily occur from the lack of a sufficient fire force, should sanction any measure increasing it. The present state of war in this country, with its consequent probability of incendiary fires, adds another hazard that should not be ignored.

Increased Cost Will Be \$171,264.

"The number of men which it is proposed to add to the department, supposing the funds were available or could be made available, is below that necessary to maintain the present strength. In the estimate submitted by the two-platoon committee no account was taken of the one day off in six, which the proposed amendment will still give the men. They say that the City Council can pass an ordinance requiring them to work every day in the year except the 15 days' vacation, but it is doubtful if the City Council has the power to pass such an ordinance or would pass it if they had the power. The act to be voted on includes the ordinance granting the one day off in six, and the act can only be changed by another vote of the people, so that the one day off in six is quite likely to be a permanent institution. A written opinion of the City Attorney states that under the proposed act the members of the department are still entitled to six days' vacation and one day off in six. With this in mind it is apparent that instead of the 466 men which it is claimed are all that are needed to keep up the present minimum strength, it will really require 76 men more, or a total of 542, an increase on regular duty of 148 over the present force, and 25 more to take care of vacations, making a total increase of 173. This would mean an increase of \$171,264, or \$111,264, making an expense for salaries alone for next year of about \$693,984, or approximately \$2.78 for every man, woman and child in the city, based on an estimated population of 250,000. This, however, does not allow for unusual absences due to sickness, for which substitutes must be employed.

Reserve Force Argument Answered.

"The number of men proposed by the committee, but not specified in the act, would seem to be equal to or in some cases even slightly in excess of the minimum required by the National Board standards for day shifts, but no account has been taken of the one day off in six. It is argued that the off-shift would give a reserve force of trained men at time of serious fires, but the provision in the act for the response of members of the off-shift is so worded as to require the members to be notified in person that their services are needed, or they shall have actual knowledge that great or unusual danger exists. In a written opinion of the City Attorney on this point he says: 'Before a fireman could be held to answer for failure to respond to a call it would have to be shown that he had actual knowledge, or that actual notice had been given to him in person, that a great and unusual danger existed.' It is obvious how unsatisfactory such an arrangement would be and how impossible it would be to serve personal notice to the firemen, especially in the time of serious conflagrations, when every man is most urgently needed.

"The night strength under the present system is much greater than the day, and this condition will always be found in single-platoon systems, and there is good reason why this should be so, as, for instance, the greater difficulty in combating night fires and the likelihood of night fires acquiring greater headway before discovery.

"This is of great importance at all times and of particular moment at the present time, as during the night hours will occur most of the malicious fires resulting from the present critical conditions.

"This need of a stronger night force is endorsed by a majority of fire chiefs, as indicated by recent strongly expressed opinions from chiefs in many of the larger cities.

Important Matters Forgotten.

"Other features which have been overlooked in the proposed two-platoon system are: Provision for officers and company members to make frequent and periodic inspections of all important buildings in the company district; provisions for regular drills of all company members and provisions for substitutes to take the places of all members on sick, special leave and days off.

"No arrangements have been made for any of these important features. The present system is made that the chief can detail men from the day force or temporarily from the night force for inspection work, but the already inadequate force would be still further weakened to such an extent that this course would be entirely inadvisable. The result of discontinuing inspections undoubtedly would be an increase in the number of fires and a corresponding increase in fire losses. Even with a full complement of men, the two-platoon system will require some modification to provide for necessary building inspection work. This work cannot be adequately covered by a separate force of inspectors, as one of its prime advantages is the intimate knowledge it gives the firemen of local building conditions—a knowledge necessary for good fire-fighting and safety to the firemen. This inspection work, unless the firemen under the two-platoon system spend some of their time off in inspection work, will necessitate adding one or more men to the day shift of each of the high-value companies to relieve the man making inspections. The remarkable work that is being done by the Portland Fire Department and which under the proposed two-platoon system will of necessity be discontinued, is well illustrated by the fact that in the two years the Fire Prevention Bureau has been in operation the number of fires has been reduced from 1980 to 734, the loss have been reduced from \$1,800,000 to \$276,000, and the per capita loss reduced from \$8.78 to less than \$1.

System Reduces Efficiency.

"While the two-platoon system in itself may not be objectionable from an efficiency standpoint if properly organized, it cannot give equal service without materially increasing the number of men and the tendency to keep the expenses as low as possible has resulted in such meager provisions for this increase that most fire depart-

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Today, Friday and Saturday.

ments where it has been introduced have been materially reduced in efficiency. A notable example is the case of Pittsburgh, Pa., where the reduced efficiency of the fire department under the two-platoon system undoubtedly contributed to an increased loss at the most serious fire in the city in several years.

LAD WANTS EDUCATION

PLACE SOUGHT WHERE BOY MAY WORK FOR BOARD.

Tom Duane Appeals to Home-Placing Department of Juvenile Court for Assistance.

Fifteen-year-old Tom Duane, a bright-eyed young chap in need of better clothes and of better home surroundings, wants a chance to secure an education. It has been a hard fight for Tom during the past few years and there have been times when it looked as though his school days were over.

He appealed yesterday afternoon to Will F. Spencer, chief officer of the home-placing department of the Juvenile Court, for assistance in finding a job in order that he might remain in school. He wants to work in the mornings, after school hours and in the evenings. No work is too hard for him; he is willing to tackle anything, for all he wants is enough to make his way through life while securing an education which will lead to better things.

Tom lost his mother when he was 7 years old. His father, according to investigation by the Juvenile Court officials, thought that the boy should be at work instead of being in school. His treatment of the boy was such as to force the lad to leave home, and he is now facing the world alone.

Tom is in the eighth grade, and neighbors in Holladay Addition sponsor the boy with reference to his good character and desire to better his condition.

If there is any person who can assist the boy in his longing to continue his school work by giving him a job before and after school hours he is requested to communicate with Mr. Spencer at the Juvenile Court.

MRS. FISHER BURIED TODAY

Services for Woman Who Took Own Life to Be at Cathedral.

The funeral of Mrs. Hazel Fisher, wife of Dr. Ralph Fisher, who committed suicide in her husband's office in the Eilers building early Tuesday morning, will be held this morning at the Catholic cathedral, corner of Fifteenth and Davis streets. Father Cronin will have charge of the services.

The funeral cortege will leave the chapel of J. F. Pinley & Son at 8:45.

Blind Regret Death of Choate.

PARIS, May 23.—Soldiers blinded in the war held memorial services yesterday for the late Joseph H. Choate, of New York, at the Lighthouse for the Blind, which was founded by New York men and women under the leadership of Mr. Choate. A resolution of sympathy was adopted and forwarded to Mrs. Choate.

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The Neglected Wife

Are you to blame? Is the other woman to blame? Is the wife to blame?

The erring husband—you know him. He is everywhere. He is your neighbour—he is mine. He wooed and won a wife—and then forgot her. He is wholly to blame? Or was it that his wife forgot to make his home happy, permitted the other woman to come between? In

The erring husband—you know him. He is everywhere. He is your neighbour—he is mine. He wooed and won a wife—and then forgot her. He is wholly to blame? Or was it that his wife forgot to make his home happy, permitted the other woman to come between? In

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Write us what you think is the best solution to the problem, using one side of the paper only and confining yourself to not more than 200 words. Your answer will not have to correspond to the ending in the picture and literary merit will not count. A committee of men and women of national standing will act as judges.

Your idea may win one of these prizes! Address your solution: Contest Department, Pathe Exchange, 392 Burnside St., Portland, Oregon. No replies considered after August 12th, 1917.

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