

"No Reason for Alarm About Water," Says Mayor Mitchell.

Ald. McLellan Makes Demand for Investigation by Expert Chemist and for Separate Control of Filtration Plant--Water Committee Opposed to It--Nothing Sensational When Reports Are Read.

The report of the Water Committee upon the City Engineer's report on the Filtration Plant and Pumping Station was presented to the City Council in committee last night, and the report of the City Engineer was also read. As was forecasted by the Mail, no drastic action was promised by the Water Committee. That body took upon itself the blame for many of the undesirable conditions at the Pumping Station and for friction between the City Engineer and Chief Engineer Bowers. Some of the faults found by the City Engineer in his report were admitted by the committee, and some of his recommendations were accepted. The recommendation that the Filtration Plant be operated under management separate from that of the Pumping Station was not acted upon, although considered by the Water Committee.

Ald. McLellan followed the report presented by Ald. Everett, chairman of the Water Committee, with a long speech in which he congratulated the committee upon the attitude it had assumed, but expressed regret that it had not gone farther. He strongly advised placing the Filtration Plant under the supervision of an expert and also the securing of the services of a qualified chemist to place the plant on a proper working basis. He characterized Chief Engineer Bowers as incompetent—a man who did not know how to operate the Filtration Plant, and who never would know. He also spoke strongly against the use of so great quantities of alum in the process of filtration.

All members of the Water Committee—Aldermen Everett, Alderman Burnett and Alderman Shea—replied to Alderman McLellan. The proposition to bring in an expert chemist to make a report was opposed by all as unnecessary and expensive. The opinion was expressed that time should be allowed for the reforms of the Water Committee to be put into practice.

Mayor Mitchell voiced the feeling of the majority of the Council when he stated that the citizens need have no fear concerning conditions at the Water Works, and that an excess of alum was to be preferred to an outbreak of typhoid.

The reports in connection with the Water Committee were presented in the Council Chamber in order that the large number present might have a chance to hear them. The spectators

departed after the session expressing disappointment because the proceedings were so tame and the sensational disclosures, which they had been led to expect would be made, had not been forthcoming.

Reports Presented.

Ald. Everett, chairman of the Water Committee then reported. He first read the report of City Engineer McKnight upon conditions at the Filtration Plant and Pumping Station which appears elsewhere in this newspaper. He followed it with the report of the Water Committee, which also is reproduced in full.

Discussion followed. Ald. Reid said that more attention should have been given the City Engineer's report on the main pump.

Ald. Everett stated that the only defect was looseness of the packing. That condition had been remedied.

Ald. Reid said that at a previous meeting it had been said that the main pump was in a dangerous condition. Mayor Mitchell said he believed that the matter was hardly placed before the council in that manner.

Ald. Everett said that experts from Montreal and St. John who had been recommended by the makers of the pump had repaired the pump about two years ago.

The Mayor said that that was correct and that the pump was working in about the same condition as the experts had left it.

Ald. Everett stated further that the leak which had existed at the Pumping Station had been repaired.

Ald. McLellan's Views.

Ald. McLellan said that the Water Committee evidently was taking hold of the problems of the department man-fashion. He could promise his support to the committee in its attempts. While on a recent trip to Montreal he had been able to obtain some information which might be of value. He felt sure that unless a radical change were made in the supervision of the Filtration Plant and Pumping Station the Water Committee would accomplish very little. He did not think the man in charge a fit or competent person to be in control. Besides the Filtration Plant there also was the question of the main pump. At a previous meeting of the Council there had been a discussion of that very matter. Ald. Burnett had then shown that he had an extensive know-

ledge of the condition of that pump and it might be well to hear from him.

Returning to discussion of the Filtration plant, Ald. McLellan said that the report of the City Engineer had been endorsed by the Water Committee and been found correct. In view of this fact, the Water Committee should do its utmost to prevent a continuation of the conditions complained of by City Engineer McKnight.

Question of Alum.

Ald. McLellan discussed the charge that an excess of alum was being used in the water. That item at present prices meant \$1,200 per year, enough to pay the salary of an expert to take charge of the Filtration Plant. In addition there was the cost of replacing flushes, hot water boilers, etc., in residences. This amounted to \$7,500 per year. This was due to the 100 per cent. excess of alum which was eating and destroying plumbing.

An Expert Needed.

He felt sure that every man and woman in the city would support the Water Committee in taking the step of bringing an expert here to run the Filtration Plant. He regretted that the Committee had not decided to do so. The step should be taken at once. The City Engineer did not have the knowledge necessary to run the Filtration Plant, although it would not take him long to fit himself for the position. It would not be satisfactory, even if he should, as it was necessary that there be an official who could devote all his time to the operation of the plant.

Ald. McLellan quoted a letter from Mr. C. H. Hunter, resident engineer in Canada of the New York Continental Jewel Filtration Company, stating that a travelling representative of a recognized firm of chemists could be got to visit Fredericton and put the Filtration Plant on a proper working basis.

No Personal Feeling.

The speaker said he had no personal feeling against Bowers as a filtration man, but he thought Bowers knew nothing about it and never would. The City Engineer could not spend all his time at the Filtration Plant watching that man, who would probably give only a half grudgingly assistance.

As far as the Pumping Station was concerned, there was no necessity of keeping four engineers there. Three men could do the work on eight-hour shifts—one competent chief and two subordinates. One man could be let go—the worst one, of course.

Ald. Everett Replies.

Ald. Everett, chairman of the Water Committee, replying to Ald. McLellan, stated that Chief Engineer Bowers, a short time after coming to Fredericton, had superintended the repairing of the little engine which had been given up by local and outside machinists. That fact gave him considerable confidence in Mr. Bowers. As far as the use of

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alum was concerned, he could point out to Ald. McLellan that in 1912-13 the filtration efficiency was only 79 or 80 per cent. Chief Engineer Bowers had obtained an efficiency of 93 per cent. The people of Fredericton knew that, and noticed the fact particularly. The question of reducing the quantity of alum had been considered, but it had been found by experiment that a reduction in the quantity of alum was always followed by a reduction in efficiency. Fredericton water and Montreal water differed materially, and what was done in a Montreal plant could not be taken as a guide for the Fredericton plant.

Ald. Everett then quoted letters from officials of the New York Continental Jewel Filtration Co., which spoke highly of the operation of the Filtration Plant by Chief Engineer Bowers.

He said that he was not attempting to excuse any inefficiency if there was any, but he claimed that good results were being obtained. There had been no typhoid. If there were any method by which greater efficiency could be obtained the Water Committee would be prepared to follow them. The proposal to separate the Filtration Plant from the Pumping Station as far as supervision was concerned, had been considered, but no action decided upon.

Ald. Burnett said he was not prepared to inform the committee or the public as to what the Water Committee would do. He was not in favor of expert advice being obtained. The Lighting Committee had obtained expert advice and it had cost the city \$600, with no result.

The Water Committee had admitted that there had been some neglect. He did not think, however, that a man, after admitting he was wrong, should be driven into the mud. He should be given a chance.

Ald. Burnett then discussed the Allis-Chalmers pump. He claimed that it should be put back in the condition in which it was when sold to the city, it would do the work expected of it. When the size of the plungers was reduced, its efficiency was impaired.

The alderman, discussing the proposal of Ald. McLellan to supervise the Filtration Plant, said that one man could not work for twenty-four hours per day. Separation of the two plants could not be accomplished without increased cost. He was strongly opposed to any expert being brought down to say "Do this, do that," and look wise.

Ald. Shea said he expected better results in the future with Chief Engineer Bowers and City Engineer McKnight working in harmony. The matter of the proper point at which to feed the chemicals into the water was open to argument. Expert engineers had differed on that. Ald. Shea said he was strongly opposed to bringing any expert here.

Mayor Mitchell.

Mayor Mitchell said that the matter of the alum eating away portions of the plumbing was not as serious as a typhoid epidemic. All could remember what conditions were before the Filtration Plant was built. The alterations to the Allis-Chalmers engine and pump had been made on the advice of the people who had built them. There was no doubt that the engine and pump had been in the nature of an experiment.

There was no reason why the public should be alarmed concerning conditions at the pumping station. The reports of City Engineer McKnight and of the Water Committee showed that.

This ended the discussion on the reports.

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