

THE GEORGETOWN HERALD

serving the communities of
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The Editor's Corner

HIGH AND LOW TAXES

So as not to be accused of "politicking" we held back on this editorial last week. We have read with interest letters received for publication in the Herald and campaign letters sent out by candidates and we have come to the conclusion that the Municipal Board should give more guidance to towns as to what is considered a fair tax rate in proportion to the assessment, otherwise none of us know what we are talking about. A municipality can be likened to an individual. Take Mr. X, who owns a home, and who has a certain yearly income. He can do one of three things — spend a certain share of his income on providing comforts for his home, go overboard and get himself so far into debt that he can never get out from under it, or spend as little as possible and not have any of these comforts. The majority of people are in the first category. They choose what they want most and buy it — often in instalments which they are relatively sure of being able to meet, for it is better to enjoy our comforts as we pay for them, rather than wait until we have saved the money only to find that we are too old to enjoy them. (An automatic ironer is a good case in point. The time a woman needs it is when her children are small and she has a lot of ironing to do. It is of little use after the children are grown up and the household reduced to two members.) Mr. X is able to budget his buying closely because he knows what his income is and what commitments he can afford to make.

A municipality is the same. It can provide reasonable comforts for the citizens with a medium tax rate. Or it can go overboard and buy too many major improvements which its taxpayers cannot afford, or spend practically nothing and have nothing except a low tax rate. The difficulty with a municipality is that none of us are quite capable of deciding just where the proper middle course is. It's a problem for an economist to figure out what part of a man's income should be spent on taxes and this information could be provided by the Municipal Board. We have heard that a man should spend no more than one week's salary on rent. If this is correct it means that a man who earns \$40 a week could live in a \$480 a year house, and if this is the case a man in similar circumstances should be able to pay in taxes this amount less adjustments for the cost of upkeep which a landlord includes in the rent. When an economist works out this figure and arrives at \$200, \$250, \$300 or whatever it may be, and providing we have a complete accurate basis of assessment (which we will have under the new system coming into force), we should know exactly how high our taxes can go before there is danger of getting over our heads in public expenditures.

To put the above argument as simply as possible, let us assume that Mr. X earns \$40 a week and pays \$40 monthly rent. At the end of a year it has cost him exactly \$480 for living quarters. Mr. Y also earns \$40 a week but owns his own home on which he must pay insurance and upkeep. Deduct these costs from \$480 and you have the maximum tax which he can afford to pay and which cannot be exceeded. It is council's responsibility, then, to see that this maximum is not exceeded and to provide, first services which are necessary for health and welfare (water, sewerage, police and fire protection, education) and second, if council feels that the people so desire, things which are not absolutely important such as better public buildings, better roads, educational frills or anything which makes a better town but which is not essential for public health.

Then and only then, when these economic facts are determined in advance, can we argue about high and low taxes and about what we can afford. If we do not determine what is sound economy, then we do not know if we have over-spent until it is too late, or we never know if we have deprived ourselves of more of the comforts of community life at the cost either of having more private comforts or of leaving behind more cash in the bank which might better have been used while we were living.

PAY FOR COUNCILLORS?

Mr. W. F. Bradley, in a letter in the last Herald, criticizes pay for councillors and suggests that this is a form of service similar to lodges, service clubs, churches or any of the dozens of other local organizations. We do not disagree with paying members of the town council, for we believe their duties are more onerous than any other public position, particularly so because it puts members in a public position where everyone can and does criticize them. We do however think that payment should be nominal and on a flat rate rather than so much per meeting. Fifty dollars would well

cover the out-of-pocket expenses of a member during a year and there is no particular need for payments to be triple this amount, especially in view of the great increase in necessary public services and rising costs of services which are now enjoyed.

Speaking of criticism, we admire anyone who seeks a public office in these days of municipal progress for at times the criticism comes hot and heavy whether justified or not. Perhaps the perfect system would be to have a criticism fee for councillors and pay them \$1.00 for minor abuse and \$2.00 for heavy blasts such as we heard directed at one council member by a citizen after a recent meeting. This of course might end up in bankrupting the town unless we in turn set a flat fee on certain critics who would throw the budget away out of balance.

POT FOURRI

Visiting friends in town while he was east for the Rough Riders-Alouettes football game was Mayor Don Sweet of Ponoka, Alberta. . . District chickens get around! Corey Harrington, who operates Sunset Poultry Farm at Stewarttown got an enquiry for prices the other day from Narong & Sons, Importers and Exporters of Bangkok, Thailand. Corey tells us that in 1930 he shipped poultry to the Pope in Italy and in 1940 a shipment went to Georgetown, British Guiana. The only time he has ever shown outside North America was at the World Poultry Congress at the Crystal Palace in London, England in 1929. . . Main Street is certainly looking "Christmasy" these days as more and more merchants put up their gay seasonal decorations. A new idea is that of the Retail Merchants Association in placing small trees down both sides of Main Street and many merchants have gone farther and decorated these. . . Relaxation of window lighting restrictions during the Christmas season will also add colour to the street. . . In case anyone thinks there is a "dark horse" in the municipal field, we can explain that the firm which made the stereo for McClure's advertisement last week mistakenly indicated Harold as the mayor in place of Jack Armstrong. . . We shouldn't talk, because this is our busiest time of year and there are no spare minutes for attending hockey games, but it is disappointing to hear of such small crowds at the hockey games after the last few bumper seasons. To encourage attendance the hockey club last Friday gave free tickets to all the public school children for use if accompanied by an adult. . . We don't agree with a resolution passed by Halton Presbytery of the United Church calling on their church people to stop buying lucky draw tickets, attending bingo games, etc. We are heartily against such gambling games as crown and anchor which encourage individuals to lose more than they can afford or more than they intend to, but can see no harm in harmless gambling which appeals to the spirit of chance which we all possess. Bingo is no more harmful than going to a show or attending a concert. . . Now that the election is over what will the Herald do for news? Those letters in the mail bag sure helped out our copy worries. Surely there must be matters of interest which people would like to discuss during the year. Keep them coming. . . After writing of so many turkey dinners we finally got invited to one and sat in with the Provincial Quarter Century Club at Hilltop Lodge, Erin, on Sunday. The dinner was delightful and we thoroughly enjoyed the evening which honoured these faithful employees of Georgetown's oldest industry. . . A new sports reporter on the job this week who prefers to remain anonymous for a time or two. At this late date we would like publicly to thank Wheldon Emmerson who provided so much interest with his Along the Boards last winter and Round the Bend during the summer. When he bought the restaurant we could see the handwriting on the wall, for it's a full-time job and allows no time for hockey or writing. . .

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BALLINAFAD
 The local hockey team played the first game of their schedule Friday night in Hillsburgh. The score was 5-3 in favour of the opposing North Erin team.
 Pupils of Blue Mountain School are busy preparing for their annual Christmas concert which will be held Monday evening in the Hall at Ballinafad.
 The three churches in this charge have planned to hold a Christmas

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Carol service in the church here next Sunday evening. There will also be lantern slides shown of the Christmas story.
 The WMS. Evening Auxiliary and Mission Circle held their Christmas meeting together at the Manor Friday night. After the separate business periods were completed all united in the lovely candlelight service as outlined in the Miscellany Monthly. It was decided to make the December meeting an annual get-together of the three groups.



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