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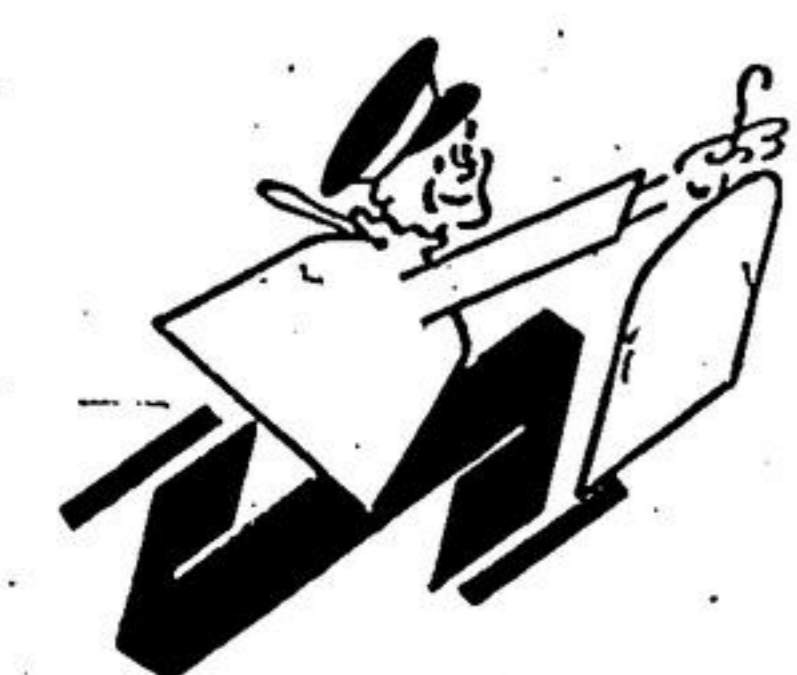
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This Councillor is No Gentleman!

"Don't be surprised," says Counsellor Esther Taylor, of Acton, author of this article, "at anything you may hear about council activities in these hectic days. It may be true."

(Reprinted from the Family Herald and Weekly Star)

Do you feel that your knowledge of human nature is narrow and incomplete? Do you suspect that your representatives on town and township council are corrupt, inefficient and lazy? There is a solution, a partial solution, that is: get yourself elected to council, even for one year, and you will receive a marvelous education in the intricacies of human reactions, and their impact upon municipal affairs.

Do I speak with authority, and from the conviction of personal experience? I do! I am one of those eccentric creatures, recently derided by most of my own sex, and derided by the lordly male. Since I was twelve, politics have fascinated me. I am still fascinated by the subject. If I live to be eighty, the fascination will remain. It's just one of those personality kinks, no one can explain.

And now for the experience. A year ago, I was nominated as the town's first woman councillor. Suspecting the nomination had been made in jest (to test my common sense) I reserved the right to qualify, at the same time, commenting in public at an open meeting that I appreciated the humour of those who had seen fit to propose my name. I definitely stated that I was convinced women should be elected to public office, in view of the mess men were making and had been making, ever since they assumed the role of leadership in all affairs of state. But I honestly felt, and still feel, there were many women, even in our own town, who were more mature and efficient than I, a confirmed spinster and rebel.

It Was No Joke

Much to my honest surprise, during the day before qualification the telephone screamed constantly I was assured by representatives of both sexes, that the nomination had been no joke, and would I seriously consider signing the qualification papers. My immediate family exclaimed in no uncertain terms: "You're daft! You're not cut out for that sort of thing. Before the year is half over you'll drive us all silly, too, not to mention the other members of council." My frankest sister declared bluntly: "I don't think you could do the job. Forget it."

More than any friendly persuasions, that settled it. I gritted my remaining molars, and marched right down at night to sign the papers. The following week before election, was full of surprises. I got my first new lesson about people. People are funny. They are unexpectedly kind and enthusiastic, when the impulse seizes them. From the first, I had no intention of asking my fellow citizens to vote for me. For the same reason, that I could never sell successfully even tickets for a church banquet, I balked at soliciting votes, except by the customary advertisement in the local paper.

Much to my amazement and encouragement, scores of local voters went out of their way to volunteer support, in a very heartening fashion. An incident I cherish most tenderly and with the greatest delight, concerns a picturesque Irish Liberal, who met me on the street a day or so before we went to the polls. As I passed he clapped me on the shoulder, and I halted in some wonderment, because until then, I knew the gentleman only by sight, and "good day."

He grinned a puckish, Irish grin, and exclaimed in his inimitable brogue: "Sure, now, here's one election I'm not going to miss. And I'm going to put my X down for the first lady councillor, even though she is one of the damndest Tories I ever met." And I'm sure he did just that.

When the votes were counted, a flabbergasted spinster headed the local polls. And she was flabbergasted and subsequently deeply touched, and appreciative of the sincere expressions of congratulations that arrived by telephone and mail.

It was an auspicious beginning. And throughout a gruelling year in office, during which the tenderfoot had to "learn from scratch", fellow citizens were extremely kind and helpful. This fall again, after being nominated for mayor and reeve, and council, she ran again, as councillor.

And for the second time, a woman headed the local polls. This was the most rewarding experience to be thus assured that the townsfolk had enough confidence in me, to put an X beside my name on the ballot, for the second time.

the subject of provincial and federal government.

A Handout Complex

I have discovered that quite intelligent people concern themselves with council affairs, only if they feel that they are involved personally. An increased tax rate arouses squeals of resentment. Yet many of these same critics are overheard saying almost in the same breath: "Why doesn't the council do something for the town? We need artificial ice and a swimming pool. The roads are terrible. The park could do with a new grandstand. Why doesn't the council do something? Here let me whisper a confession. I used to make similar statement. But having acquired a little wisdom, after suffering the trials and tribulations which befall a public servant, however humble, I will never talk like that again.

It seems to me that our generation suffers from a "handout complex." We expect, and often demand, additional services of our governing bodies, and howl like fury when we discover that all these social blessings must be paid for, and with our money. I believe this attitude is due largely to the terrific amount of socialist propaganda to which we have been subjected since the depression, following the First World War.

There is a fashionable theory — and a most cynical one — about the conduct of public servants from the municipal to the federal level. As a class, they are all alleged to be dishonest, blasé and not above enriching themselves at the expense of the poor taxpayers.

Undoubtedly, there is more generous opportunity for graft in the provincial and federal fields than in a town or township council, the servants of the people have only the remotest chance of indulging in practices of graft and political corruption.

For one thing, at the inaugural meeting, each member takes an oath that he or she will not accept money from the corporation during his term of office. At the outset, this precludes almost all possibility of obtaining financial benefit, as a result of holding office.

A few years ago, after he had served on council for two years, one of our most efficient municipal representatives bought a new car. Public reaction, half jocular, half in earnest, was revealed by remarks such as the following: Not bad, eh? Fantastic as it may seem, certain suspicious taxpayers really believed their own statements.

Few, if any, groups of people suffer more from popular support more half truths than the members of town and township councils. In all fairness, most local yarns have a kernel of truth, if one penetrates far enough. But half-truths are often more pernicious than downright lies.

Difficult Moments

Last year, following the installation of a sewage system, proved one of the most difficult and perplexing in the history of our town's administrative affairs. Most major projects cause dissension and hysterical accusations amongst the taxpayers concerned. As a result, locally, our council was accused of every crime and weakness, ranging from discrimination, to insanity and communism. Another group of critics declared we were a clique of Tory dictators.

Before the year was over, a few of us wished our judges would arrive at a decision once, and for all. Were we arrogant Tories or downright (not forthright) communists? A local arbitrator who waged a loud, twelve-month battle against a sewage by-law, so far lost control of himself, as to declare we had killed one fellow citizen!

This was a novel experience for me. As a demure, ten-year-old, from time to time, irate mothers complained to my mother, because I had licked their "bully boys." But never until assuming the glorious mantle of councillor, had I been accused, openly, of murder.

As a member of the weaker sex, I did not receive quite such brutal treatment as my hard-working male colleagues. But the reverse also, was true. They were not subjected to the same petty, and sometimes amusing criticisms and innuendoes.

For example, since my twelfth birthday, I have worn shorts during the summer months. I intend to wear shorts, until I am too old and unshapely to appear publicly in that attire, without feeling ridiculous. Aha. The lady councillor was reproached, by the more conservative taxpayers last summer, for dressing as she had dressed for twenty-four summers. It was not dignified for a member of the council. It was shocking. Furthermore, the bathing suit of the female representative was much too brief for swimming. And as for donning it to sunbathe in the secluded back yard, that, fellow citizens, was an outrage against propriety! I would like to announce she

profited by these admonitions, and mended her ways. But alas—it would not be honest. As a matter of fact, the lady councillor felt duty bound to state at the nomination meeting last November, she intended to wear a similar garb, whether elected or not, come the sunny days of June, 1952 (unless prevented by an alarming increase of avardupois!) The confession probably lost me some votes. However, at least I did not contest election under false pretences.

A Question of Propriety

Another quaint superstition prevailed here during the year 1951. The average meeting of council lasted from 7.30 p.m. until 2.30 a.m. Such conditions had never arisen before the election of a woman to the local governing body. Direct refutation to this conjecture is the fact that the only session from which I had to depart early, dropped on until 3.45 a.m.!! Were these long sessions necessary? Absolutely: because as a result of numerous construction projects, the volume of town business was abnormally heavy.

The majority of popular misconceptions about the lady councillor, were on the whole, reasonably good natured and harmless. Only one invoked resentment. Frequently, I encountered the query as to the propriety of one female, spending long hours amongst eight males! Could I, an impressionable spinster, withstand their manifold masculine charms and wiles? Well, I could, and did.

My colleagues, all married men, took their places around the council table for one purpose only: the efficient transaction of town business. As a matter of fact, after serving with them, I have a deeper respect for the male of the human species. (This admission, from me, is as the teen-agers say, "really something.") They were all gentlemen, against whom I can direct only one serious charge. At every opportunity they hid my shoes. And for this grave crime, I am directly responsible, because I confess to a habit of kicking off my footwear, when in the throes of concentration. Naturally, we engaged in bitter warfare on controversial subjects. Insults flew, and no quarter was given to any member, regardless of sex. But we emerged good friends still, and with a healthy respect for the other fellow's opinion.

The reward? Our council serves without remuneration of any kind. Throughout the county, the majority of town and township representatives receive a modest sum for every meeting they attend. Whether this practice is advisable is a debatable point. However in no instance, does the payment begin to compensate financially for the expenditure of time and thought.

The reward for municipal service is derived from a sense of personal satisfaction which attends a job discharged to the best of one's ability. As for public gratitude, sometimes it is forthcoming, and just as often, condemnation and carping are showered upon the hard-working representatives of the people. This is true in all fields of political endeavour.

At the best, popular fancy, or general opinion is a fickle thing. As a rank beginner in municipal politics, I have discovered that you cannot please everyone. Sometimes, one feels that it is impossible to please anyone. And frequently, the results of elections disproves the belief that the best man or woman always wins. Even in small town balloting, adverse and unfriendly propaganda can defeat good candidates who have already proven their worth, and elect opponents, without experience, who have nothing to recommend them for public office, beyond glibness, and a talent for hysterical declamation. I believe this is one of our weaknesses as of the atomic age; the majority of us citizens fail to apply our full intelligence and talents, to the solution of political and international problems.

GRADUATES FROM RMC WILL GO TO KOREA

LI-Col. and Mrs. Bourne are in Kingston in connection with their son's graduation from RMC. Cadet Sqdn. Ldr. Robert P. (Robin) Bourne will later go to Korea to join the 25th Infantry Brigade.

Recent visitors: Mr. Wm. Hale and Carol and Mrs. James Black of Dunnville with Mr. and Mrs. James Noble.

Mr. and Mrs. Weller, Toronto with the Gearys. Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Campbell and Billie, Hamilton; Mr. and Mrs. Alex Trotter, Stratford; Mr. and Mrs. Stan Norton and Barbara, Acton; and Mr. and Mrs. Lorge Norton, of Georgetown all with Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Norton on Sunday. Mrs. Alex Wright came from Toronto. Mrs. Gordon Walker, London with her twin sister, Mrs. S. Wright. Misses Helen Mills and Betty

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Yake with Mr. and Mrs. Mills. Miss W. Polkinghorne of Swansea with Miss Ivens. Mrs. Whitford of Edmonton with the Roughleys. Mr. and Mrs. Paul Spitzer visited at Galt on Sunday. Misses Shirley Wright, Anne Luke, and Toots Murphy are on a holiday to Florida. We are sorry that little Tommy Sutton is confined to Sick Children's

Hospital with an attack of pneumonia but hope that she makes a speedy recovery. Mrs. Jean Roughley of Edmonton left on Monday for Chicago where she will spend several weeks with her daughter before returning home. She has been visiting her son, Mr. Jack Roughley, wife and sons here for a few weeks. The Wrights visited at London on Sunday.