



A Courier of North Shore Intelligence.

Published every Saturday morning at Highland Park, Ill., and Winnetka, Ill., by the

Sheridan Road Publishing Co.

OFFICES:
News-Letter Building, 255 Central Avenue,
Highland Park.

Telephone No. 92, Highland Park.

Entered at the Post-Office at Highland Park
as second-class matter.

Advertising rates made known on application
at either office.

TERMS \$1.50 PER YEAR.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2.

Public Improvement of Streets in Highland Park.

The sentiment is steadily growing throughout the country at large that the modern method of improving streets by special assessments pretty generally works against economy and against public welfare, if indeed it does not generally work gross injustice. The very fact that the legislature two years ago radically curbed the imperial power of councils in the matter of street improvements is evidence that the public sentiment, slow as it always is to move, is satisfied that the old system was wrong, if not wholly, at least in part. For instance, was there any justice in making the property owners opposite the depot pay wholly for the brick paving of that street when it was clearly for the general good of every citizen of Highland Park? Can it be for a moment claimed that all the benefit accruing from the improvement of that street goes to the property owners on the street? Unquestionably the Chicago & Northwestern road were benefitted by the improvement, and yet they were assessed a great deal less than half while benefitted, no doubt, vastly more in proportion than the property owners on the other side. We venture to say that there is not a citizen in High-

land Park accustomed to take the trains, who is selfish enough to deny that the public in justice ought to have paid part of that improvement.

Some years ago an assessment was spread over a large part of the city to cover the cost of building a bridge. It is true, it was not enforced, and the bridge was built at public expense. There is precisely the same principle involved in the case of streets, though it might not be on the face of it quite so evident, but the streets are used by the whole public just as much as a bridge is used by the public.

The law in Michigan on this point by which improvements are paid wholly or in part, as the council may direct, out of the general fund seems to be very fair. To illustrate: The general taxation in our opinion, ought to have been responsible for at least one half or three-fourths of the improvement on St Johns from Laurel avenue to Central. As streets radiate from the center further and further out towards the rural portions then it might be argued that the general taxation should pay less and less, and the city council would be the authority to decide. When you have reached the outskirts and property owners want to have streets paved for the sake of opening up unimproved property and placing it advantageously upon the market, then, if necessary, they should pay the whole expense of improving.

If not perfectly apparent, it can be easily shown that the special assessment method is an extravagant one; saddling upon the property owners a cost from 20 to 30 per cent more than it need cost the city to do it. But of this we shall speak at another time. If we are right, and we believe we are, then it is desirable to change the policy of paving our public streets by special assessment wholly, to a plan whereby at least a reasonable part shall be paid out of general taxation. That done and the improvement of our public streets would go on at a much more rapid rate and in the end be cheaper for all concerned. It may be claimed that the public would not stand the taxation. Then there is

no reason why the property owners on a given street should stand it unless they volunteer to do so, and if they volunteer then the city should allow them the privilege of paving it in their own way, subject to such control as would prevent them from endangering the public welfare.

At the last meeting of the council, held on the 26th, the mayor called two of the members of the council to order on the ground that they were discussing a motion to "lie on the table," which is not a debatable question. In doing so the mayor did what was plainly his duty, and not only did his duty, but did it in a very graceful and affable manner. But what did puzzle us a little was that he should immediately have allowed a motion "to amend" be acted upon, for a motion to lie on the table is not subject to amendment; and what surprised us still more was that an ex-alderman, one who had no earthly right to the floor or to take part in the discussion of any question, debatable or non-debatable, without the consent of the council, should be allowed to discuss the very question when two members of the council had been called to order, and appropriately so, for doing it. Not only that, but for the ex-alderman of the Third ward to thrust himself upon the council was notoriously an insult even to his own following in that body; for it assumed they had not brains enough to know what to do and what to say without his advice. But then we suppose the ex-alderman gets little chance any more to talk, except when there is a meeting of the city council, and he has been so long accustomed to tickle himself with the sound of his own voice that we presume he feels lonesome unless he can hear himself at least once in a while.

One of our aldermen at the last meeting of the council, in advocating the filter, made the remark that "there is a nigger in the woodpile somewhere." Quite possibly the alderman is correct, and allow us to remind him that that is just what the public is afraid of. There are