

## Objects to Using Electric Surplus Fund for Building New Village Hall

In a letter to the President and Board of Trustees Richard H. C. Miller has made a strong protest against the proposed plan to use the surplus in the electric light fund to build a new Village Hall. The main point that Mr. Miller makes is that the unimproved property in the Village, which should rightfully bear a share of the expense, would not be taxed at all. It is also requested that a flat rate of four cents a kilowatt hour be made to electricity users of the Village for the next ten years. At the request of Mr. Miller the letter is published herewith:

President and Board of Trustees,  
Village of Winnetka.  
Gentlemen:—

I have just received the Annual Report of the Village of Winnetka for year ending March 31, 1919. It is the most comprehensive and satisfactory one that has ever been submitted. There is revealed in this report a startling condition of affairs in regard to the electric properties.

As I understand not a dollar of Village money was ever invested in this plant. It has been built up wholly from revenues, excepting a few thousand dollars special assessment surpluses which remained after paying for certain improvements, and which legally should have been refunded. The property as it stands belongs equitably to the unincorporated body of electricity consumers, and for this body the Village Trustees are ex officio and de facto trustees. It would seem clear that the trustees' duty is, and their aim should be, to administer this property in the interest of the consumers alone, and to give efficient service at the lowest practicable rates. Our Trustees are now, and have been for several years, grossly violating this trust. In the present report it is comical to observe the naivete with which we are told that the Village general fund has been permitted to sponge upon the electric current users with impunity so long and so extensively, that it is now become an institution, and it is apparently regarded as a matter of right.

It is evident that for a number of years large sums of money, aggregating probably \$100,000, have been improperly appropriated under the guise of dividends and otherwise. In the report before me it is stated that this policy will be continued, and that the Trustees propose to build expensive public improvements, (in no way connected with electrical use or development), at the cost of consumers of electricity. They propose to exempt six-sevenths of the property of Winnetka from its just share of the burden of taxation. The amount of the gift proposed, and which electricity consumers are expected to donate, is approximately \$300,000 in the next five years, including the so-called dividends on moneys never invested.

Let me illustrate. We are told that a new Village Hall is to be built by electricity consumers. Assume it costs \$100,000. We are told in report, page 76, that Winnetka has 40.2 miles of street, 1341 dwellings, or an average of 29.5 dwellings to the mile. It is evident then that six sevenths of the property is not built on, and does not use electricity. All property, however, is taxable for a Village Hall. Six sevenths of the burden of \$100,000 is \$87,514, and one seventh is \$14,286. The proportion of the cost then justly falling on citizens using current is \$14,286. It is expected, however, that they will not object to paying the additional \$85,714, thus relieving the wealthy owners of large holdings and land speculators holding extensive tracts from having to shoulder their share of the cost of our new Village Hall.

It is clear from the report that current for domestic purposes could be furnished for about 6 cents per kilowatt hour in place of the present 10 cents. It is further clear that in view of the large surplus and depre-

ciation reserves, and of moneys improperly appropriated during the past five years, that the current could safely be supplied for the next ten years at an average price of 4 cents per kilowatt hour.

It is further noteworthy that in appropriating the so-called six per cent "dividend", this has been figured on a sum of \$173,000, while the book value of the property is only \$131,000. In other words there has actually been appropriated 8 per cent on the value of the property as shown by the books. Furthermore one is curious to know why the electric accounts show no interest as being received on surplus and depreciation reserves stated to be over \$116,000.

I have the honor to be, Gentlemen, with great respect,

Yours very truly,

Richard H. C. Miller.

P. S. I do not wish to be understood as reflecting in any way on the personal integrity of any member of the Council, for all of whom I have the highest respect. The policy adopted, however, is indefensible in principle, unlawful, and unjust to electricity users.

### Winnetka School Problems

The following questions are answered by Superintendent C. W. Washburne this week:

Q.—A propos of the individual system: Should I be surprised if my son comes home with a paper saying he has been promoted downward in one or more subjects? In other words, is this system responsive to the pupil's aptitude at all times?

A.—As far as possible we shall not risk discouraging pupils by promoting them downward, even if individual tests show them to be below the standard of their present grades. Any parent who requests it will be told frankly in a personal interview of the exact standing of his child, but downward promotions are rather dangerous. A pupil who is behind in the work of his grade will not be promoted as soon as a pupil who is up to standard. In this way the system is responsive to the pupils aptitude at all times.

Q.—Is there danger in the individual system for a child to advance too rapidly in one or two subjects, and be backward in others?

A.—Not if properly administered. A pupil decidedly ahead in some one subject will use the time generally allotted to that subject for work on those subjects in which he is behind. Such an evening-up process is a relative simple matter, and is taking place right now in the case of those pupils who have finished their spelling work for the year, and those who are more than a year ahead in their reading.

Q.—How should a pupil who is behind in a grade catch up? Has the teacher time to help him, or should the child be helped by the parents at home?

A.—When the individual system is fully established there will be no need for pupils "to catch up". Each pupil will go forward at his own natural rate of progress. Under the present organization, however, teachers help those children who are behind, and in some cases are glad to have the co-operation of the parents in this work. Any parent whose children are behind in their school work should have a personal conference with the teacher, and find in what way the children can be best helped.

Q.—I understand that teachers' ad-

vancement and increase in salary depends upon the improvement of pupils in their tests. This being so, will not the teacher be under such stress and strain to bring the children up to the desired marks that she will spend all her time on drill work, and leave out of her teaching the higher things of life: creative ability, imagination, character, etc.? Don't you think there is danger in placing our children's education at the mercy of dollars and cents?

A.—A teacher's advancement does not depend solely upon the improvement of her pupils. This is one factor which is taken into consideration. But the spirit of her class room, her discipline, and her own professional improvement play an equally, if not more, important part in determining salary increases.

### Claims Skokie Has Peculiar Attraction

Hugo von Hofsten, Famous Winnetka Artist, Prefers Open Fields for Subjects

President Hugo von Hofsten of the society "The Painters of the Forest Preserve of Cook County" has often been asked why he liked to paint the Skokie. In fact, Mr. von Hofsten's painting excursions in Michigan resulted in sketches of marshlands and pools kindred to the lowlands west of Winnetka and Glencoe and beloved by north shore residents. Mr. von Hofsten said, when talking it over:

"When I first saw the open stretches of the Skokie I felt there was something peculiarly attractive and familiar about it. One reason for this is, perhaps, due to my early art school work in Sweden. As a pupil of Prof. Hugo Palm of the Royal academy I spent two years studying and painting in the national gallery at Stockholm, which contains an unusually good collection of the old Dutch landscape painters such as Ruisdale, Hobbema, Cuyp, Roos and others. It is possible that I absorbed the vision of these good men and their liking for seeing things. At any rate it was good schooling, and since then I have preferred the open fields and similar subjects. This is my defense for painting "The Skokie."

Mr. von Hofsten's grandfather was commissioned by King Oscar to travel and buy the paintings of the old masters in Holland.

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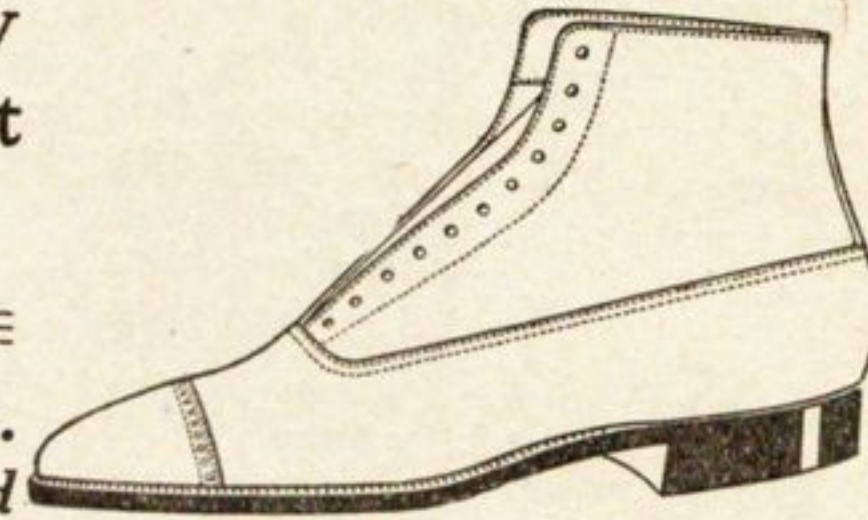
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