

Baltimore Morning Herald
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Hailed the Truce

City Officials Welcomed a Municipal Peace Conference

But Nobody Called It?

Col. Offutt Carried the Olive Branch From His Honor to the Council

This Morning the Difference Will Be Patched Up—New Problem Is to Meet Maturing Interest

Without notice of its coming the white dove of peace fluttered down upon the City Hall yesterday morning, and, according to the Councilmanic enemies of the Mayor, it was he that summoned it to appear. This, however, His Honor denies. But, in any case, the fact remains that the municipal muddle seems to be on the verge of a straightening-out and the municipal war upon the verge of a peaceful ending.

Col. Milton Offutt, counsel of the United Railways and a close friend of the Mayor, was the bearer of the olive branch. He called upon His Honor shortly before noon yesterday, and the two were closeted in a conference for 15 minutes. Then Colonel Offutt left the Mayor's office with a smile lighting his genial face, and made his way to the office of Maj. Richard M. Venable, the leader of the Mayor's opponents.

At the office of Major Venable were five other members of the Council—Messrs. Dieter and Frank, of the Second Branch, and President Gephart and Messrs. Morgan and Wilson, of the First. The sextette had met to decide upon a plan of resistance should the Mayor carry out his idea of calling a special session of the Council for Saturday morning. They had considered several schemes of action and had nearly agreed upon one of them when in walked Colonel Offutt with his olive branch.

Soon negotiations for a peace conference were well underway. After a short discussion the Councilmen agreed to meet the Mayor at his office at 9 o'clock this morning. Comptroller Smith, City Solicitor Whyte and Assistant City Solicitor Bryan will be present. It is thought that a reconciliation will be effected. The six Councilmen are authorized to act for their colleagues.

In consequence of the planned conference, and because he fears that Saturday afternoon may be considered a legal holiday, the Mayor has abandoned his intention of calling the Council in special session tomorrow. Yesterday morning, before Colonel Offutt called upon him, Mr. Hayes had prepared a vigorous vet message upon the tax levy ordinance passed Wednesday night. But in the afternoon he laid it aside for future reference.

"I will call the Council in special session on Monday," he said yesterday, "for I am fully of the belief that the \$1.95 levy ordinance is illegal. Tonight at midnight, the time given the Council to consider my veto of the repaving and school building sections of the ordinance of

estimates, expires and in consequence by disapproval will be incontestable tomorrow. Within the next few days the Board of Estimates will prepare a \$1.81-1/2 levy ordinance. This will be laid before the Council Monday, and should the Councilmen, in passing it increase the amount to \$1.95, I will nevertheless approve the ordinance. If they do so, however, I will write them a letter upbraiding them for their action.”

The six Councilmen of the conference committee deny positively that they proposed the conference. They say that until Colonel Offutt walked in upon them they had not even thought of such an end of their war upon the Mayor. It is very evident, however, that they are mightily glad of the opportunity to come to terms.

Should the conference fail to develop a plan whereby the tax rate for 1901 can be definitely fixed before January 1, the city will probably find itself in a delicate position, so far as the interest on the stock debt, which will be due January 2, is concerned. The sum payable amounts to nearly \$500,000. Mayor Hayes said yesterday that there was not a penny in the Treasury now available for the purpose, and that, in his opinion, the municipality could not borrow the necessary cash after January 1, with the tax rate unfixed, as the new charter expressly forbid the borrowing of money, except in anticipation of the collection of taxes.

“If there is no rate, how can we anticipate the collection of taxes?” said the Mayor. “Any taxpayer so minded could go into the courts and have the city restrained from borrowing money under such conditions.”

Comptroller Smith, who will participate in the conference today, feels that he has a way out of this part of the muddle, should the tax rate not be fixed in time. He prepared a statement for the Mayor yesterday showing that the city could borrow on account of the following estimated tax receipts outside of the tax levy for 1901, in accordance with Section 36 of the charter:

Tax on securities, 20 cent rate	\$193,687.53
Taxes in arrears (city)	643,984.38
Taxes in arrears (suburban)	33,617.24
Tax on mortgages	17,500.00
Interest on taxes in arrears	52,000.00
Total	\$940,789.15

If necessary, Mr. Smith said, the city Register could negotiate a short loan for the entire amount. Another suggestion made by the Comptroller was that the city might use the surplus at the end of the present month toward the payment of the interest—inasmuch as the interest is for the year 1900—and then turn the amount back into the sinking fund after the levy is fixed and the collection of taxes for 1901 is begun. In that way the city would practically borrow from itself and thus save the interest it would have to pay were it to borrow from the banks.