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Commissioners Ignore Civil Service Rules

Police of Democratic Fire Board Members

Merit at a Discount

Stubborn Fight of Mr. Cathcart for the Law

Eligible List A Mockery

Twenty-Four Men Appointed Over the Head of the Man at the Top

“I am glad to have been able to assist in the passage and also to approve the ordinance placing the entire force of employees of the fire department, with one exception, under the most strict civil service rules.

The appointment of all such employees and their tenure of office is based solely on merit—no human influence or agency can be of any avail in procuring places in this service now or in the future. The board of fire commissioners have and will faithfully execute this ordinance”—ANNUAL MESSAGE OF MAYOR HAYES.

When the mayor penned the above vigorous sentences he had no intention of rivaling Ade and Dunn. And yet, in the light of recent events, they have come to be exceedingly rich and racy humor.

Messrs. Sirich and Parrish, the democratic members of the “non-partisan” fire board, have brought about the charge. It is their opinion that a democrat, on general principles, makes a better fireman than a republican.

This doctrine is not a new one. In the old days, when the brad-awl figured at the polls, it was universally held by the powers that were. But in so far as the fire department is concerned, it was thought that it died when the ordinance mentioned by his honor was approved. This belief, however, was based upon error.

Eligible List Ignored

Since the day the present board took charge of the department President Cathcart, who began his service under Mayor Hooper, has fought for civil service methods, just as he fought for civil service methods in the department for years previous. Each time that appointments have been considered he has voted first for the man at the head of the eligible list. And with almost

equal frequency with singular cheerfulness, Messrs. Sirich and Parrish have outvoted him. There were democrats further down the list who wanted jobs, and they got them.

Last Thursday the effect of this "non-partisan" policy was unexpectedly shown At the board meeting that afternoon two letters were received from Mr. Millard F. Taylor, the lawyer. One was addressed to the commissioners and the other to Chief Engineer McAfee. Both were in high praise of William L. Hedges, a substitute with No. 11 truck, who saved Mr. Taylor's life, at the risk of his own, at a fire at the former's home, 404 East Lafayette avenue. Messrs. Sirich and Parrish heard the letters in silence.

A Signal Case

Hedges took the probationers' examination May 22 last. His average was 95-1/2 and he stood fourth on the list. Since that time 24 men lower than he and the three above him have been promoted. For months, in consequence, he has been at the head of the list. Four or five times, when promotions have been considered, President Cathcart has voted for him. And each time Messrs. Sirich and Parrish voted for men below him.

Hedges is a republican, and for being guilty of this heinous crime, he failed to find favor with the democratic commissioners.

On Saturday President Cathcart again proposed that Hedges be promoted. There are vacancies among the probationers, but Messrs. Sirich and Parrish were not ready to fill them, yet they were ready to make other promotions.

For lieutenant of No. 8 Engine President Cathcart voted for C.M. Soper, the first man upon the list. But Messrs. Sirich and Parrish said "No," and J.F. McGuire got the place.

When the vote for the promotion of pipemen from the probationers' list was taken up Mr. Cathcart nominated W. H. Darney, who stood first. But Messrs. Sirich and Parrish would not hear of it, and in consequence six men were promoted over Darney's head.

The Bad Effect

This method of making promotions is having a very bad effect upon the department. When the civil service ordinance was passed the good men hailed it as a relief from the old system of jobbery. But soon they found that the value of "influence" was not less than before. Unless their friends "saw" somebody, they learned their standing upon the eligible list would be of little avail. And in consequence they have come to the conclusion that efficiency is at a discount.

The democratic commissioners' small efforts to hamper Chief McAfee have confirmed their opinion. With great persistency they have endeavored to curtail his authority and belittle his ability, and in so doing they have made a joke of the mayor's serious utterances.

Mr. Cathcart's Work

Mr. Cathcart's record as fire commissioner is well known. He was first appointed by Mayor Hooper, and was selected by his two colleagues, Messrs. Gilbert and McFaul, to act as president of the board. The department was in a state of unrest, due to general apprehension that the new republican administration would mean the decapitation of the democratic firemen, and

there were few who were not democrats. The board announced its intention to recognize merit and not pull.

Mr. McCaul candidly advocated a somewhat different policy. He was frank and open, and made no attempt to conceal his motives, and the fight he made was unquestionably in accord with his just convictions. The battle waged and Mr. Cathcart and Mr. Gilbert won.

When Mr. Malster took charge of the municipal government there was a universal demand for Mr. Cathcart's retention. He was reappointed and Messrs. Short and Mullen were made his colleagues. These two gentlemen also had ideas of their own regarding appointments. They were not as radical as Mr. McCaul, or if they were, they did not let it be known. However, they made an effort to overthrow some of the reform plans of the department just as Messrs. Parrish and Strich are doing now, but they never went to the extremes attempted by the present commissioners.

Mr. Cathcart's third appointment was by Mayor Hayes, and the new charter providing that the Mayor designate the members of the board who should be president. His Honor straightway named Mr. Cathcart for continuation in that position. He has worked earnestly for the maintenance of the standard of the department, but his colleagues, with ideas of their own, have repeatedly and systematically ignored and hampered him.