

THE MILITANT COUNCILLOR

We Ask Him Why?

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Not everyone appreciates Councillor McArdle's militant Councillorship, especially those upon whom he focuses his enquiring mind. Ratepayers appreciate his militancy for he is a disturber of ancient calm, which is generally a lurking place of things done by tradition.

He has been accused of seeking self-advertisement, but his prolific pen, when writing to the local press, has only come into action when he found it to be his sole means of addressing the ratepayers. His followers grew and his applause became louder.

Latterly his critics have increased, perhaps in ratio of the number of enquiries he has been making in the interest of the ratepayer. Yet his militancy does not flag; so we asked him why.

Here is the answer:—

WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR.

"As I have been charged with interfering with matters which should be no concern of the average Councillor, I am glad of an opportunity to explain not only to my supporters, but the ratepayers of the Borough generally.

When I was elected as a representative of the Central Ward in 1935, I gave my word that I would watch the ratepayer's interests—and throughout the Borough—without fear or favour.

Amongst other things, I stated that I would do my best to obtain a much wanted playing field for the children.

The first thing that happened to stiffen me was after I had taken my seat and raised the matter of the playing field—I was to my intense surprise, laughed at! I was told that many had raised that, but it was a vain hope. One member, Alderman Miss M.B. Robinson, spoke to me encouragingly, and promised all the help she could give in the matter of my objective.

It was no later than in the March following that we actually got £50 passed in the estimates to go towards a playing field, with never a voice raised in dissent. I took hope.

Then later Mrs. Conyers Morrell sent a cheque towards the fund for the children's playground, which was brought into being just before the completion of my first term of office had expired.

ECONOMY IN COUNCIL WORKING.

In 1938, upon my re-election, I turned to a subject that must affect each and every one of us—economy in the working of the Council and its employees—and I first called the attention of the responsible committee to the very slack way their work was being done on Stanpit Marshes.

I also called their attention to the indifferent pace of the work at Mayor's Mead and the Corporation Yard, and I was for my pains summoned before the Municipal Committee, when I was asked to prove my accusations. This I am pleased to say I did up to the hilt. I

quite recognise that I did not increase my circle of friends in doing so, but I believe I won the approval of many ratepayers.

In my opinion the supervision by the inside staff over the outside staff of the Council is the whole cause of waste of money.

I could tell of many an episode which would prove that I am always keen for a chance to contest waste. Ratepayers will no doubt remember the installation of shower baths at the Town Hall at a cost of between £70 and £80 pounds. When the time came when they had to be taken away and the old lavatories replaced as they were before September 3rd last.

My Council minutes showed that the "Emergency Committee" had passed a recommendation to accept the tender of a certain firm to do this work—that is removing the shower baths and replacing lavatories at a cost of £19.

Immediately I knew, as any burgess would, that the price was to say the least excessive, and I made up my mind to prove it.

I went to other local tradesmen and asked them to give me their price for the work in question. To cut a long story short, the result was that by Thursday evening, at the Council meeting, I was enabled to hand in another trader's charge amounting to £6. 8s. 0d.—as against £19 and no questions asked! Furthermore, the local firm of hot water engineers who quoted £6. 8s. 0d. for the job, offered £2 odd for the material removed—so the ratepayers were saved a matter of £12—if not more—on that little transaction.

When I pause to consider that the ratepayers are maintaining a staff which is supposed to know how to prepare an estimate for any work that is needed and then allow estimates similar to the one quoted to pass unchallenged, leaves me thinking furiously.

This, may I emphasise, was done despite my notice of motion in September last that no work of any kind costing over £2 should be put in hand until tenders had been received from several traders or contractors.

ONLY ONE TENDER ASKED.

This was completely ignored, although passed and approved by the Council.

Actually in this case only one tender was sought, and that was from the firm who installed the baths.

Please remember that our late Mayor, Councillor Laphorne, was not a member of this particular committee, so he may not be blamed for this glaring blunder.

It is economy—so essential at a time like this that is driving me, and I simply don't care whether my enquiries and searching's to find the truth give offence. I say, it's got to be done and someone must do it. Not a pleasurable task I can assure you, for my enemies grow steadily in number.

In my humble opinion, the financial affairs of this borough could be administered much better—and far better than they are now, if they were directed from one department and not by several (as obtains at the present).

The office which Mr. Preece controls is surely the proper one.

Economy and no muddle and no hanging on to traditional ways of doing things is what we must secure.

Very many of my colleagues on the Council are of the same mind as myself, but they fear to make enemies. Well, I don't. I am out to do to the letter the work for which I was elected and I'm doing it. Threats have failed, in fact they have encouraged me, for that proves I am cutting through something.

So if I am asked why do I invite so much trouble, there is my answer. I was asked by the ratepayers to take charge of the ratepayer's affairs, so I'm simply doing my job."

T.H. McARDLE.