

THE 'PROTEST' MEETING PACKS TOWN HALL HECKLERS & DISORDER DROWN EXPLANATIONS PROFIT OR LOSS ON BEACH UNDERTAKINGS?

C.T. July 10th, 1937

A MEETING of Protest against the action of the Beach Committee in proposing to lease the Mudeford Sandbanks to The Hengistbury Beach Company for 21 years was held at the Town Hall on Monday night.

The Hall, literally packed with protestors, failed to accommodate all who wished to attend. It was the biggest public meeting held in Christchurch within memory.

Its success was qualified by reason of rowdies and hecklers, who, whilst listening intently to protestors, refused to allow members of the Christchurch Town Council a hearing. Much of what they wished to explain was lost in din and disorder.

OVER ORGANISED.

The meeting may be said to have been over organised, since the net result was to let loose upon the assembly representatives of political organisations. These nullified any dignity the consequent vote of censure upon the Council may have been expected to carry, and denied those ratepayers in the audience the opportunity of hearing from their Council representatives an explanation of the Mudeford Beach negotiations.

Half-an-hour before the advertised hour for the commencement of the meeting, the main assembly hall was filled, and the vestibule, corridors and retiring room, together with all approaches to the stage, were packed. A large percentage of those attending were beach hut owners of this and other districts. At eight o'clock, Mr. D. Llewellyn, the convener of the meeting, was compelled to invite these seated to move their chairs forward in order to accommodate a portion of the large crowd waiting outside. The hall forthwith registered capacity, approximately 400 persons.

MIXED "PLATFORM."

In addition to Mr. D. Llewellyn, and the chairman, Mr. Melvill Druitt, Mr. F. Ricardo had arranged to second the proposed protest. These gentlemen were attended by a generous overflow portion of the audience upon the platform, seats being also allocated to Alderman E. R. Oakley, and Councillors Laphorne, Markham, Shave, McArdle; Councillors Preston, Ridout, Stephens were "in attendance" off-stage.

Opening the meeting, the chairman, Mr. Melvill Druitt said that those present were well aware of its purport, which was to discuss the action of the Town Council on the question of the Mudeford Beach.

"I have received much useful information of this matter during the past week from the issue of the "Christchurch Times," from which I gather that we are a noisy minority. I, therefore, hope," he added, "there will be no undue noise."

He referred to an item published in this journal from a correspondent, whom, he declared, must have had a very clear inside knowledge of the workings of the Beach Committee.

"We have been kept in the dark on this question," said Mr. Druitt. "We, the unfortunate ratepayers, have no idea of what has been going on behind the scenes. What small information we have had is conflicting, for we understood that the matter was voted for unanimously in Council; now it appears there were three who voted against it.

"We may be a noisy minority — but the Council are too-silent men."

BALANCE NONSENSE.

Criticising the balance sheet published in this journal relating to the beach, Mr. Druiitt said that "some items are put into this account—I don't say on purpose to mislead you—but the profit shown for Mudeford Beach is nonsense."

He declared that with the removal from the balance sheet of numerous non-recurring items, which should have been charged to the capital account, the balance in hand on the beach would show a profit of at least £850. By the Corporation's own statement £595 had been shown as profit, when they had experienced a bad year, and while the beach was still in the process of being "built up."

My contention is that the Council are doing a bad deal. (Applause.) But we are told by this special correspondent to the "Christchurch Times" that our Town Council are incapable of managing it. Do the Town Council admit that? . . . I wonder ?

"A sum of £20,000 must be spent in development of this beach. If that is done what will happen? It will mean that the whole character of the beach will be altered.

Voice: "A good job, too!"

"I do not know what is at the back of the Council's mind, but it does not seem to be in any way a justifiable cause."

CANON GAY ON "TRIPPERS."

"Mr. Llewellyn read a letter of apology and support from Canon W. H. Gay, R.D., C.F. (Vicar of Christchurch), saying: "I cannot be with you, having to present the new Vicar of All Saints', Southbourne, at the same hour, but I associate myself with the protest for the main reason that this beach is the Christchurch beach and a large number of us do not wish to see it commercialised for the benefit of trippers. The charm of Mudeford Beach is its naturalism and simplicity, and to spend £20,000 on it would deprive us of its beauty.

"I grant that a private company would run the beach more efficiently, but would rob us of our rights for a generation."

Do leave us this little bit of old England, unspoiled and unexploited.

I trust that the Council will not surrender their control for the sake of a few hundred pounds. Mudeford Beach is at least unique, let us keep it so."

"P.S.—Any commercial firm could run Christchurch Priory far more efficiently than our Church Council—but oh, the vandalism that would follow—perish the thought."

A letter of similar protest had also been received from the Rev. Leslie J. Thompson (minister of the Congregational Church).

PLEA FOR "NO PERSONALITIES."

At the outset, Mr. Llewellyn said that he did not intend to individualise or indulge in any personalities. They were merely gathered together to criticise that particular decision of the Town Council.

"It has never been my practice to criticise the Town Council. I have never called a public meeting before and I hope I shall never have to do so again.

"Normally, I have no desire to criticise the Council in any shape or form. I have many times proposed the toast of the Mayor and Corporation, and I have paid tribute to them for giving their time and services to the town. I do so now. In fact, I consider that the Beach Committee are doing their work very well.

"It was only six years ago that they began to build up the beach, quite slowly and very carefully. We can find fault here and there, but give them time and they will remedy the faults."

Mr. Llewellyn detailed that the beach was partly owned by Major Sir George Meyrick and by the Bournemouth Town Council, and up to the time that it was taken on lease by the

Christchurch Council for 99 years there was no system of control operative. The Council had taken the beach over for the benefit of the burgesses and had made every effort to secure the Avon Beach. Why, then, after these efforts to acquire the beaches did the Corporation suddenly propose to make over the beach to a private company? he asked. To aggravate the situation, negotiations had been carried out in the strictest secrecy, the reason for which he was totally unable to understand.

"Had the matter been made known, it would never have been necessary to convene to-night's meeting, for I am sure that the gradual pressure of public opinion would have dissuaded the Council from taking this step."

WHY NOT FOR PUBLIC TENDER?

He admitted that certain matters dealt with by the Council, such as acquirement of land or property had to be dealt with in committee, but in this matter under discussion if it had been vented in Council discussion, it might have provided an opportunity for another to step in and offer a higher price. (Applause).

"Even if all here were in favour of disposing of the beach, is it not right that it should be put out to public tender?" (Applause.)

"What is going to happen at the end of 21 years," he asked. "The beach would then be taken over again at valuation, less depreciation, and if the terms were disputed it might lead to arbitration. He knew that arbitrators, when assessing the value, made a habit of adding to the sum disputed in favour of the goodwill left behind by the vendor. If this happened, Christchurch would get the worst of the bargain, when the present goodwill of the beach would be handed over to the company without any additional charge.

Mr. Llewellyn criticised certain figures of the balance sheet, with references to the inclusion of non-recurring items, and typified it as "a bad bargain and bad business."

"If I made a bargain of that character for the people who employ me, they would send me going," he said.

He declared that the paragraphs in the "Christchurch Times," attributed to a correspondent, had obviously originated from someone with a very clear inside information of the Beach Committee's workings.

"PIFFLE!"

According to these statements, the rights of the fishermen were to be firmly and legally established. This he described as "Piffle."

In substantiation, although Mr. Llewellyn said he had been bound to secrecy, he could not refrain from reading a paragraph from a letter received from Mr. Cuthbert Watmough, who had been known as one of the prominent conveyancing barristers of his time. Mr. Watmough suggested that the fishermen obtained their rights from age-old custom and at common law, which over-rode the rights of the Lords of the Manors.

TO MISLEAD ?

Mr. Llewellyn also criticised the statement that public access to the beach would be secured, when the proposed landing stage was erected.

He supposed that a charge would be made for the landing of pleasure boats, which would be paid out of the pockets of the public.

"These statements are made absolutely to mislead you," he declared, "but I am determined, whilst there is breath in my body, to see to it that you are not fooled."

Mr. Llewellyn objected to certain references to "water profits," contained in the "Christchurch Times" correspondent's statements.

"The sole object of these words is to prejudice this meeting against me," he declared.

"Again, why is Highcliffe Beach introduced? It is drawn into it in an endeavour to ensure the support of the Highcliffe Councillors.

OUR SHOP WINDOW.

"Mudeford Beach is our shop window. It is the only beach we have, and we do not want the town cut off from the sea. It is our beach, our playground, our birthright, and I only hope to hear that the Bournemouth Corporation and Sir George Meyrick will turn the proposal down. If not, we will go to the Ministry for a public inquiry and, if necessary, we will instruct a counsel to appear for us." (Applause.)

THE RESOLUTION.

Mr. Llewellyn then read the resolution before the meeting :—

"That the meeting protests against the decision of the Christchurch Corporation to lease Mudeford Beach to a syndicate for a period of 21 years, and pledges itself to take all necessary steps to ensure that the beach remains under public control."

THERE MAY BE A REASON.

Seconding the motion, Mr. F. Ricardo spoke appreciatively of Mr. Llewellyn's address. He declared that he was present as an individual ratepayer, who seldom visited the beach and did not occupy a hut.

"I think you all share the indignation which I felt when you read that the beach was to be leased," said Mr. Ricardo.

In all common fairness to the Councillors, what would their feelings have been if they had read in the papers that the beach was leased.

"Why in the name of common sense was the matter kept so dark and hidden from us?" he asked. "I do not want to be unfair, and there may be a good reason for it. We may hear later, but at present I do not mind telling the Council that as far as I can see, they wanted to smuggle it through. I hope I am wrong, for it is a terrible thing to say."

"We are all parties of this agreement of theirs, and we should all have known about it."

"If the Council had such a splendid deal dangling before them, why should they have been afraid of letting us know what a golden path they were treading? As far as I can see this matter has been a close one between the members of the Beach Committee."

"I do not know whether they solicited other tenders, we have heard nothing," he continued.

"I think this is a rotten way of doing business, not only from a business point of view, but from that of the ratepayers."

COUNCILLORS BARRACKED

The defence for the Council was opened by Councillor H. E. W. Laphorne. He spoke with difficulty, owing to the many interruptions.

He detailed the conditions of the lease.

"I feel quite certain that you will realise that your Council has protected the interests of every burgess and the Borough of Christchurch," he began, "and at the outset I will say that I myself know nothing at all about the 'inside information' which appeared in the 'Christchurch Times.' " He suggested that this was probably obtained from a similar source from which the organiser of the meeting had learned it. He alleged that it was common knowledge amongst many of the objectors that the leasing of the beach was to take place.

He pointed out that by the covenant of the new lease no roads or piers could be erected on the beach without the Council's permission. Advertisement hoardings, amusement parks or fun fairs

were permitted, and the sands were to be permitted solely for public recreation. The continuation of planting shrubs to preserve the shore would be observed, and £100 would be paid by the company towards the construction of a groyne for coastal protection.

CHARM ALREADY GONE.

"I wish that I could see Mudeford Beach as I saw it as a boy," said Councillor Laphorne, "but that is impossible." He added that the population of the town was increasing rapidly and if some improvements were not made for the beach it would prevent many people from becoming visitors.

Speaking on the question of "what it is going to cost," Councillor Laphorne admitted that the company would pay nothing for the goodwill of the beach, but when Christchurch regained the beach at the end of 21 years, the Council would pay nothing for the goodwill built up by the company, which would be valuable indeed.

He was of the opinion that Mr. Cuthbert Watmough was incorrect in his statement that the fishermen were at liberty to use the Mudeford Beach. Many years ago the Lord of the Manor had granted them the rights of fishermen's bank, which was across the other side of the Run, and he failed to ascertain any other place over which they had any rights.

The chairman asked Councillor Laphorne to give the conditions upon which Bournemouth and Sir George Meyrick had granted the lease to the Christchurch Corporation. Councillor Laphorne briefly replied that he would answer questions at the proper time at the end of the meeting.

This produced what may be truthfully described as a derisive howl from the clique assembled for that purpose at the back of the hall.

When the hubbub from the rear of the hall had subsided, Alderman Oakley rose in defence of the Council.

ALDERMAN OAKLEY "NOT HEARD."

"You are here to protest against the action of the Council with regard to the leasing of the beach.

"In the first place I object to the criticism of the accounts that have been raised tonight," he said. "The inference is that this balance sheet has been drawn up and published for the express purpose of putting a good face on the matter. It may look like it, but appearances are rather deceiving."

"These accounts are drawn up in the expressed form required by the Ministry of Health," he pointed out.

He mentioned that although a profit of £595 was shown, there were many charges of administration which were not subtracted from this total.

ROWDYS TRIUMPHANT

Interruptions here made the Alderman's speech disjointed and impossible to report.

He referred to the general financial position of the borough, saying that when the estimates were considered this year, and the rate fixed, they were forced to agree that nothing could be undertaken unless it was provided for in the estimates.

"You must understand that we were faced with increasing the rate of the borough," he said.

This was the reason why the Mudeford landing stage idea was turned down. They could afford to do nothing that might increase the rates.

"The town was in an awkward financial position and apparently others outside the Council also noticed it, for we received an offer to rent Mudeford Beach for £1,000 a year. Some of us were amazed, and I think that you would have been amazed," said Alderman Oakley.

The rent was finally raised to £1,150 after some negotiations.

"I think that the Council have done the right thing," said Alderman Oakley. "I believe that this will be the means of producing a considerable amount of money for the benefit of the ratepayers of Christchurch. I cannot see myself that there is any harm done, and from the financial point of view it is a very good thing for the town. That is my opinion of the matter."

"LITTLE VOICE, LITTLE MIND."

At this juncture Councillor T. Markham took up the defence, and prefaced his remarks by saying that his one object in view was the betterment of "our dear old town." He complimented the organiser of the meeting, whom, he said, "had done his work well," adding that the Councillors were grateful for the opportunity of expressing their views.

Rating had been mentioned in connection with the beach, and he recalled sitting throughout the whole of the summer, "not days and nights or even weeks, but months," puzzling over the re-assessment.

"So you are the culprit," exclaimed a voice from the obscurity of the rear of the hall."

"A little voice! Probably a little mind," was the quick comment.

The whole problem of re-assessment had been brought about by the County officials, Councillor Markham hastened to assure his listeners. They had been faced with the position that if they did not increase the assessments the County would have forced their hands and done it for them. Thus they were bound to explore every means of relieving the rating burden.

TO REDUCE THE RATES.

"The essential idea behind this Mundeford Beach scheme is an endeavour to decrease the rates," he declared, "and we have pledged ourselves to explore every channel that we can."

"It has been said that Mundeford Beach is our shop window, if that is so, it is about time we improved it. In the whole of my life I never saw such a 'ramshackle affair.' "

"Mundeford Beach is not, and has not been attended to in a proper manner, and I accuse the Beach Committee for not consulting an expert in the matter. There is not a man on that Beach Committee that is capable of sorting the beach out."

Councillor Markham reminded the assembly that out of the 400 beach huts, only 92 were occupied by Christchurch people. The rest belonged to residents of Bournemouth, Southampton and other places.

The Councillor declared there were "hundreds of people" in the town who had never seen Mundeford Beach, being chiefly concerned that the town should be conducted in a "business-like" manner. (Loud cries of "No," and general hubbub followed.)

"I appeal to you to leave it to your Council." (Cries of "Why" and dissent.) "Do not forget they are elected by you," added the Councillor, as order was restored, "and that their work is a work of love."

SUNDRY SPEAKERS.

Opinions from the audience were then invited, and were readily forthcoming from several members of the local Labour Party, who spoke at length of "Capitalist Syndicates," offering to propose a more sweeping resolution (which the chairman refused).

AXE GRINDING DISTRESSING.

From Mr. Gordon Palmer, of Highcliffe, came the only words of support, expressed with balanced restraint and the power of an accomplished speaker.

"As a ratepayer of this borough it has distressed me to see so many political axes being

ground here to-day," he said.

"I hold no brief for any member of the Council. They represent you all, and if they are not effective why did you elect them?"

There was more pathos in this than was understood by the assembly.

"It has been said that many people of this town have never seen the beach. I am one who has never seen the beach.

"If we can secure protection for the fishermen, visitors and residents, the beach will still be vested in the public for ever."

In a "poor borough" such as Christchurch, he considered that every expense and every gain should receive careful attention, reminding them that the £1,000 was equivalent to 3d. difference in the rates.

"You are running a great risk," he declared, "increased rates in fair weather means disaster in foul. The leasing of the beach is a safeguard and a financial benefit.

"You can take it from me that if any of the interests or responsibilities of Christchurch are being neglected, or if any undue risks are being taken, the watchful Ministry of Health will never countenance it."

"Many a slight has been cast at Highcliffe," he remarked, "but remember that it is itself a part of the Christchurch Borough. At Highcliffe that part of the Council's beach property, which has been leased to a private enterprise, has brought profit and good results to both residents and visitors."

A BOMBSHELL—OR A BRICK?

Mr. David Llewellyn next dropped what was considered to be a bombshell, in announcing that the chairman of the Beach Committee (Alderman Norman Barnes) had absented himself from the meeting "from motives of loyalty to his colleagues." He had, however, sent a statement for Mr. Llewellyn's information, which showed that the profits on Mudeford Beach for the past five years had been: 1932, £405; 1933, £530; 1934, £795; 1935, £1,047; 1936, £1,065.

Upon a more or less triumphant note a vote was taken, the chairman seeking votes only from ratepayers. This was either misunderstood or too strictly adhered to, and a vote from the assembly was asked and was forthcoming with enthusiasm.

This terminated the proceedings.

SEQUEL TO THE "PROTEST" MEETING ALD. NORMAN BARNES ADMITS ERROR CENSURE MOTION WITHDRAWN

C.T. July 17th, 1937

THE meeting called to inquire into statements alleged to be erroneous, made at the now notorious "Protest" meeting and also to pass a vote of censure upon a member of the Council, took place on Monday last.

Following an urgent appeal from Alderman Barnes the procedure relating to the vote of censure was withdrawn.

THE Mayor explained the reason of the meeting and asked that there should be no manner of interruption from the assembled members of the public; doubtless having a remembrance of the unruly behaviour of the audience at the Protest Meeting on the Monday previous.

Alderman Russell Oakley said there were two motions to consider.

"The first matter, the real reason for which this meeting has been called has reference to the public meeting held in the Town Hall on the 5th of this month. It was there asserted that the audited accounts of this Council were false and inaccurate.

"The motion is that the Council should print the whole of the accounts relative to Mudeford

Beach and that a copy should be supplied to the "Christchurch Times" and the "Echo."

"Actually and previous to the meeting a statement of the whole accounts appertaining to Mudeford Beach had been published in the "Christchurch Times," and this action of the Council was no new procedure. For many years certain accounts had been printed and circulated to ratepayers of the borough, but owing to the expense entailed, and the small public interest, this appeared to be serving no useful purpose, and the system was dropped.

WRONG FIGURES.

"I was present at the protest meeting in the Town Hall on Monday last together with a large number of local people," continued Alderman Oakley, "and probably the most important discussion centred upon the profits made on the working of Mudeford Beach."

These profits were represented by the organiser of the meeting to be as follows :—
1932, £405; 1933, £580; 1934, £795; 1935, £1,047; 1936, £1,065.

"These figures are absolutely and entirely different from those in our financial statement. A statement which has been examined and passed by the district auditor. The ratepayers are naturally bewildered by the discrepancy. It is, therefore, desirable that these figures be published in the manner indicated by the Ministry, especially for the benefit of the vast number of ratepayers who were not present at the meeting."

Alderman Barnes interjected: "I think that it is entirely desirable that every ratepayer should know how the borough's money is spent."

Councillor Spickernell asked if it was a fact that members of the Council had received a statement of the Mudeford Beach accounts. "I am not a member of the Beach Committee and I have never received a copy of such accounts."

A REQUEST.

At this point of the discussion, Alderman Barnes again broke in.

"Before you put this proposition, I am going to ask your permission, seeing that it amounts to the passing of a vote of censure on myself, to allow me to make a statement of the action that I have taken in this matter."

"Under the circumstances it would be the fair and sporting thing to do, to permit me to state my position before I am criticised. When I have placed my position before you, you can pull it to pieces as you will."

The Mayor: "From the wording of the resolution there can be little doubt that a vote of censure is intended, and I think that you will all agree with me that such a vote will be very regrettable.

Alderman Barnes has served this borough honestly for very many years. For three or four years he has been Mayor of this town, and he is a gentleman whose honour and integrity cannot be assailed.

Councillor McArdle: "Is it not rather late for Alderman Barnes to explain now? Why was he not present at the protest meeting?"

The Mayor: "I cannot allow you to say anything about that."

"This request places me in rather an invidious position," said Alderman Oakley.

"I should like to remind you that such a course was never anticipated. Only three or four months ago, when a vote of censure was passed upon Councillor Lane with regard to another matter, I pointed out then that it was a dangerous way for this Council to conduct its business. We have no right, in a sense, to criticise any member of the Council in any action. This matter has gone far beyond anything that has been contemplated by any member of the Council. I think that Alderman Barnes' request is an eminently reasonable one.

"I do not wish to press this matter, but if I have to, I will do it. I think it is right that the Council should decide, and I am content to abide by it.

"All I want is to get a clear and sound view of this accountancy, relative to the Mudeford Beach; for no amount of publicity will overtake the statements made at last Monday's public meeting."

Alderman Barnes: "I am quite prepared to leave it to you."

MAYOR GIVES CASTING VOTE.

A motion "That Alderman Barnes be heard," was then proposed by Councillor W. G. Spickernell, seconded by Alderman J. W. Tucker.

The resultant vote was evenly divided for and against, and it was decided in Alderman Barnes' favour by the casting vote of the Mayor.

ALDERMAN BARNES EXPLAINS.

"What I am going to make is a plain unvarnished statement," said Alderman Barnes.

"All manner of criticism has been levelled at me, and I have been vilified in the press, but not one of my colleagues have come to me saying: 'Surely there must be some mistake?' Instead, I have been slandered, and if I ever had a reputation, it has been torn to shreds."

"If my detractors had come to me, I would have satisfied them at once of my honesty and integrity.

"I have been your colleague ever since most of you joined the Council, and never before have any of you said that a public action of mine was not worthy of my position. Now all this calumny has come upon me and all at once.

"Up till now you have given me every honour due to a gentleman. I am going to ask you to be fair-minded colleagues. I ask you to listen to me with the fairness of Britishers, and with British justice."

Alderman Barnes continued that he missed his first Council meeting last April, when he was abroad. Upon his return he found that the Council had passed the following resolution:—

"Mudeford Beach.— That the Council accept the offer to take a lease made by Mr. Ward, with reference to Mudeford beach, subject to the following conditions: (a) The proposed scheme being approved by the Council; (b) satisfactory arrangements made to safeguard existing interests; and (c) the consent being received of the lessors of the beach, namely the Bournemouth Corporation and Major Sir George Meyrick."

"I was disturbed at this, and thinking the matter out I came finally to the conclusion that the Council was doing something that was absolutely wrong, and at the next meeting I opposed it. My arguments were that it was a mistaken policy, that we should lose control, that profits would go to other than the Council, then rent was too low, and the lease too long.

"I was, as you know, unsuccessful in persuading the Council that I was right, and I think only six members voted for me." (Cries of "four," and Alderman Barnes corrected his statement).

"The figures of the financial statement that he had worked out from the Mudeford Beach accounts were known to members and officials of the Council, and although Alderman Oakley made criticism of certain items, there was no actual opinion voiced as to whether they were right or wrong.

"It was these figures from the financial statement that I passed on to Mr. Llewellyn in perfectly good faith. The Mayor showed me a letter he had received from Mr. Llewellyn asking for some figures.

"I entirely agree that Mr. Llewellyn made a very serious mistake and I have been let down very badly in consequence. I never dreamt that he would make such use of my figures." (Hear, hear !)

He never made the explanation of my workings that was necessary.

"I want to show you that I have been victimised.

"It appears at the meeting a week ago, Mr. Llewellyn gave the result of my working, without the necessary qualifications as to how the figures were arrived at.

"I have received since then revised statements of the beach accounts for the past four years, and I find that the accounts given to me in May were only calculated up to the end of the summer season—October or November—and did not include the winter wages, and that some adjustments had to be made.

"In this simple statement I have told you the absolute truth. I have never done anything to score off my colleagues, and I have never tried to mislead anyone. I only hope that after this meeting we shall all be shaking hands again.

"My honour is at stake, and I feel it very keenly. I simply beg that you will treat me as anyone of you would like to be treated in my position, and I venture to hope that the mover of the proposition and seconder will not proceed.

A STRAIGHTFORWARD EXPLANATION.

At the conclusion of Alderman Barnes' speech, the Mayor said : —

"I am sure that we are all very much impressed by Alderman Barnes' very straightforward explanation. He is a gentleman who has served this town honestly and well for very many years, and if this action proceeds it can do no earthly good at all, | but only embitter us one with another.

"Knowing you all as I do, I do not think that it is your wish that this motion be brought forward, and I am going to appeal to Alderman Oakley that he will not proceed with this motion."

WAS GOING TO "LAY IT ON."

Councillor T. Markham: "I am going to propose that this motion be not put. I have altered my views since I came to this meeting, and I hope my colleagues will not blame me for it.

"I came with the one idea of 'laying it on,' but the Deputy Mayor has made a very full apology.

"I would, however, ask him to look through our spectacles. We attended the protest meeting with one object in view, and that was the betterment of the town. We were but poorly rewarded, in fact we met with everything but kindness. There were many strange things said; a lot of nonsense about lovely ladies flopping about like performing seals, but the best was kept till the last. Those figures made us gasp, and I wondered whether they were discussing the National Debt.

"The Deputy Mayor has said that he is a sportsman, and we must accept his word that a great mistake has been made on his part. We want our Deputy Mayor with us for many years to come, and I feel that if this vote is passed, I do not see that he could remain here."

Seconding the proposition, Councillor McArdle agreed that the vote was unnecessary.

Councillor J. C. Wyatt, supporting the motion, said that he considered the protest meeting a very bad one. (Hear, hear.) Because it was too "one-sided." He had always known Alderman Barnes to be a sportsman, and he was sure that he had made a bad mistake.

THAT REGRETTABLE MEETING.

"It is very regrettable that we are here for this purpose, but Alderman Barnes says he was vilified, and I am afraid that it was we that were vilified by the ridiculous remarks that were made at that ever to be regretted meeting."

The Mayor: "I do not think we need say that, Councillor Wyatt."

Councillor Wyatt: "But I do say it, and I want to say it because it is a matter to which we have not replied. Anyhow, I hope that this decision of ours to lease the beach will be in the best interests of the borough."

Councillor Shave was the next speaker. He declared that he was one of those responsible for

calling the meeting, and he had voted against the Deputy Mayor being allowed to give his version of the happening.

"But those of us who have seen a dark side of the affair now see a very much brighter one now. I am very glad that we allowed the Deputy Mayor to have his word."

A KEYED-UP AUDIENCE.

"We, who were at that meeting last Monday, felt hurt and deeply shocked to see that the audience were keyed up to a pitch when they would simply swallow anything. The bombshell came with the figures that the Deputy Mayor had given, and I am very glad that he now confesses he has been made a victim.

"This vote of censure can do no good, and we are all here for the welfare of this ancient borough of ours.

"We all make mistakes, and I am sure that if Alderman Barnes had known that these figures of his were going to be manipulated as they were, he would never have let them out of his hands."

Councillor Clarke also expressed the opinion that he did not believe in votes of censure.

SOB STUFF.

Councillor Pawley: "We have listened to a good deal of sob stuff, and I must protest that we are laying it on a 'bit thick.'

"We have passed from a vote of censure to a mutual admiration society. Here is a member of the Council giving away information to the enemy, and as such he should be shot at dawn."

(Laughter.)

"There is no reason why we should be laying on the jam like this. It is absolutely disgusting and no credit to this Council.

"I should like to know if we are going to have the opportunity of criticising a townsman who was responsible for calling the protest meeting. Those who were there had no chance of replying to his statements, and I think that we should be given the opportunity of replying."

The Mayor interposed.

NOT LOYALTY.

Councillor Laphorne said: "I agree that we shall serve no useful purpose by continuing with this vote. I have no personal enmity about this matter, but I should like the Deputy Mayor to understand my feelings about last Monday.

"Twenty-four hours before the protest meeting Alderman Barnes came to me in the precincts of the Priory Church and said that he would not be present at Monday's meeting from motives of 'loyalty.' He said he had given a statement to Mr. Llewellyn.

"That is not my interpretation of loyalty. To go outside and give to a man who is organising a meeting of this description figures which have been changed about in this fashion.

"If a company promoter did a thing like that," concluded the Councillor, "his punishment would be severe."

GETTING AT THE TRUTH.

Alderman Oakley: "I do not think it is necessary to pursue this matter further.

"In view of the explanation given by the Deputy Mayor that the figures were not in fact the official statements, I have no desire to be the instrument of trying to get a vote of censure passed in this Council. My whole purpose was not to pass a vote of censure on the Deputy Mayor, nor to do anything that could be a matter of recrimination, but simply to get at the true facts.

"I have attended public meetings for 35 or 40 years on most debatable questions, and I've

generally had a hearing—but I could not get a hearing last Monday.

THE REASON OF IT ALL.

"The reason was, because I intended to refer to proper audited figures, but they had figures which were entirely different from mine, and I was not to be heard. It was to be concluded that I was put down as a liar. I felt extremely hurt about this, and that is the reason of this meeting.

"With your permission and with very great pleasure, I will withdraw this motion."

ALDERMAN BARNES' THANKS.

Alderman Barnes, in conclusion, said that he appreciated the criticisms which his colleagues had made, and he appreciated that they had been made in fairness.

"I am sure that it will make us better friends than before," he said.

Councillor Pawley next attempted to register his remarks of protest as indicated by his previous speech, but the Mayor terminated the open session of the Council with a swift interposing of "In Committee."

There were some cries of protest in consequence.

THE WITHDRAWN MOTION.

The motion which was withdrawn read:

"That this Council does not approve of the action of the Deputy Mayor as chairman of the Beach Committee, in sending to the conveners of the public meeting financial statements purporting to show the profits of that undertaking; as the figures supplied by him were not true copies of accounts compiled by the borough accountant, which had been audited by the district auditor."