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WHAT "TAXPAYER" COULDN'T SEE

How prone is man to misjudge his fellows. To misconstrue his actions, misinterpret his words and erroneously impugn his motives and his purposes.

How often are these wrong deductions but the subconscious reflection of one's own mental structure, the inward appraisement of one's own moral character, the involuntary admission of one's own faults and frailties.

In last Saturday's issue of the Chestertown Transcript a writer hiding his identity behind the nom de plume of "Taxpayer," makes a vain and ridiculous criticism of the attitude of The Enterprise Editor toward the Street Improvement Bond proposition.

The criticism is vain because of its ill-concealed imputation of insincerety as its only basis for argument; it is ridiculous because in its futile attempt to build upon such erroneously conceived deductions it manifests all too plainly that common weakness referred to in the opening paragraphs of this article, viz: the tendency to misjudge others thereby reflecting the true status of one's own mentality.

Having "read" The Enterprise editorial of last week "Taxpayer" proceeds to "boil it down" to suit his own peculiar purpose. By misinterpretations scarcely plausible enough to be sincere, and conclusions clearly at variance with most obvious intent; or by ignoring altogether our positive declaration to the contrary, he would make it appear that the only reason for our editorial opposition to the $100,000 proposition is that we might personally evade the payment of additional taxes.

In a hypothetical soliloquy he would have the editor say: "Don't tax me too heavy for the improvements I realize are necessary for our town."

If this were true. If we were so sordid at heart, so niggardly in principle. If, having affirmed that "the best interests of the community" alone determined our judgment, we could secretly harbor or maintain any other purpose or desire, then were our effort indeed but trash and not worth reading; and nothing further that we could or may say would be worthy the slightest consideration.

Happily, however, "Taxpayer" has misjudged us. Has he but revealed the true measurement of his own moral stature?

Let us repeat the pledge of good faith as expressed in our editorial of last week:—"This judgment of the editor is given with all due respect to the opinion and wishes of others * * * * He has reached this decision after most careful consideration of the proposition from every angle, having in view only the best interests of the community in which he has spent his entire life and with the complete effacement of self and personal interest."

By the many hundreds of our friends and readers, who know us and believe in us, this declaration was accepted at its full face value. Of this we are sure. Only by those of atrophied mentality and whose own capacity for self-sacrifice is of negligible measure will the sincerety of our declaration be questioned or the integrity of our purpose doubted.

Even these doubting Thomases would be less skeptical, perhaps, if they could but know the circumstances under which our words were written.

A sick bed, a body temperature at 102 degrees; a whole army of grip microbes in constant action with sinus nerves of face, eye, temple and scalp as their battle grounds; the heavy artillery of congested respiratory organs rolling along over breast and shoulders, the incessant discharge of rapid firing machine guns piercing diaphram and back bone, and all the while myriads of little germ devils playing at sabre practice on every joint, and nerve and muscle.

Certainly not very favorable conditions under which to write, nor conducive to intelligent expression of thought. Only a contingency of extraordinary import and urgent demand would justify undue effort, either mental or manual. Why, then, at such time and under such circumstances, bother with writing anything concerning the Bond proposition.

Let us tell you why. Because we felt the urge of Citizenship duty. Chestertown, the place of our birth; the home of our paternal ancestors through five generations; the scene of our boyhood pranks and the arena of our every activity from the cradle to the present; the dearest spot to us on earth, hallowed by cherished memories of friends that are gone and glorified by the joys and trials, the pleasures and difficulties of existing conditions which contribute to the making of life worth living. Chestertown, wherein is centered all our desires, all our ambitions, all our hopes to the very end of time itself, was calling. Calling upon us as a child of her bosom, as a man developed among her environs, as a citizen from whom loyal allegiance is due, to speak in her behalf.

A crisis in her history was imminent. A public question of unusual interest had arisen over the adoption of which her people were sorely, hopelessly divided. A question of vital import and of tremendous potentiality, affecting not only the present community thought and action but determining to a very great extent the future development, progress, peace and prosperity of the town and her people.

We had carefully refrained from any personal participation in the agitation or discussion of the subject hoping, believing that before the enactment measure was ready for final action its provisions would have been made to meet every requirement of wise precaution and conservative judgment. But such was not the case. The youthful spirit of Optimism riding the fleet-footed steed of Adventure got-away to a flying start, and the preliminary race for unity of action, the only hope of successful achievement, was lost. Result, a "Bill" that is not acceptable to a very large per cent. of citizens and taxpayers.

Our fellow citizens, in numbers, appealed to us, urged us to make known our attitude, to express our judgment. As one of their number they had a right to demand. As a newspaper publisher there was a moral obligation to comply with their request. The duty as a citizen was even more pressing, and unescapable.

The time for action was growing short. Soon it would be too late to reconsider, too late to amend by legislative action the objectionable Bill. The only alternative would be a bitter contest at the referendum election, and, regardless of the result of the balloting, a serious, lasting detriment to the town and community. This conflict could be avoided by quick action. By appeal to reason and the spirit of conciliation and compromise for common good. Amend the Bill. Give the taxpayers a proposition that looks conservative and safe and they will support it.

This, my fellow-citizens, is the call that Chestertown, our only love, sent ringing into our ears. Which call we answered as best we could.

With fevered brain, and aching body, carefully suppressing from our attending physician the knowledge of what we were doing, we found time between his visits to write a few lines. We suffered the mental anguish, we endured the pain, we took the risk. We thus prepared a statement giving as clearly as mental and physical conditions would admit our position on the Bond question. We suggested a substitute measure, one that we believed would meet more general approval and that would make for community co-operation, something that Chestertown needs badly—even more than she needs streets, has needed for many years and without which she will never reach her rightful place among Peninsula towns.

The statement was given to the public. Not as a dictum. Not with assumption of superior wisdom. Not in the spirit of arrogance. But simply the desire of one citizen to give to his fellow citizens the benefit of his observations, his experience and of his very best and most conscientious judgment.

It was an honest opinion. Every word was sincere. Every decision was determined solely from the viewpoint of community welfare. Every thought of self and personal interest was effaced and forgotten. What the tax would cost the writer was never for a moment considered. The general effect of the accummulation of Bonded debt and consequent tax in ratio to benefits derived was carefully considered to be sure, as this is the very crux of the contention. But in so far as it affected our personal interest is was blotted out of the picture, discarded absolutely.

It was the best effort of a good citizen to do a real service for his home town and his home people.

That there might be no misunderstanding, no question of shirking responsibility, no mistake as to authorship, the statement was given to the public as a personally signed editorial.

But, woe is me. To one reader at least it was "all greek." That any man could approach a public question with other than mercenary motives and consider it with other than selfish interest was beyond the mental grasp of "Taxpayer" and his ilk. Here was an exhibition of citizenship for which he had no measuring cup, so he put it in the caldron of his own biased judgment, "boiled it down," and all he could find was—"Don't tax me."

Poor, wizen-souled "Taxpayer," his own measure of self-sacrifice and public-spiritedness could probably be contained in a half-pint cup with false bottom and perforated sides, and never a drop be spilled.

When this editorial was begun it was our intention to dissect "Taxpayers" ridiculous criticism and analyze it word by word to show how miserably vague indeed is his conception of the real, underlying needs of Chestertown to insure town improvement and community progress. His utterances bear but little relevancy to the true conditions, and are meaningless as the croaking of the black-plumed bird of the Poet's fitful dream.

But time, space and the demand of more important things will not permit. Perhaps during the Referendum campaign another opportunity may be presented.

L. BATES RUSSELL.

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STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT

People of Rock Hall now is the time for action.

For some time now you have been contemplating the adoption of methods for fire protection. If reports are true money has been raised toward this end and we do not doubt that definite plans have been formed. Now is the time to start the ball moving. With the disastrous blaze of last Saturday morning still fresh in their minds those who have been a trifle slow in backing your progress will be more ready to fall in line. Begin now.

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PLATFORMS

With three candidates having already avowed their intentions of seeking the office of Town Commissioner and another candidate, possibly two, on the verge of tossing his hat in the ring, Chestertown is in for the warmest political campaign in the history of town elections.

Sadly lacking, however, is an essential of all good political campaigns the platform upon which the candidate hopes to ride to victory.

It has already been indicated that this will be a real political campaign one in which shall be used all the tricks of the trade.

Someone of the candidates will be elected and it is right to suppose that he who stands in a platform best suited to the tastes of the voters will be the victor. But as yet there has been no statement, at least publicly, by the candidates as to just what they stand for, or against.

Are we far wrong then in calling for a statement of platforms; platforms with all the planks?

We herewith offer the columns of The Enterprise to the candidates as a vehicle for the statement of their platforms.

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A "GOOD" IMAGINATION

Imagination is worse than the sting of a bee, it was disclosed in an experiment in a New York medical college. Fifty students were given capsules to take, some containing sugar of milk and some containing poison of the bee and spider. The students were instructed to report any sickness that developed. The quickest to report—and the symtoms wer the most virulent—were those who had partaken of innocuous milk.

Moralizing seems to be an all too common practice in this age, but the modal here is so good that it deserves some consideration, because it is so true to life.

Imagine the surprise of the students who fancied themselves ill, when they learned that they had partaken only of harmless milk. Yet, the vast majority of people are harrassed by fears and misgivings for the future that have no more foundation in reality than the fears of the students who thought they had drunk some poisonous substance.

We worry not alone about our physical well being, but also our businesses and small, daily tasks. Most of us have a weakness for "crossing the bridge before we come to it," when, if we wait until we actually arrive at the point where the "bridge" was supposed to be, we would discover that it was only a "dream bridge."

This is not to say that we should not plan ahead. Foresight is essential to progress and nothing worthwhile is ever accomplished without having first been thought through. But there is a vast difference between laying plans for future action and worrying about what the future holds in store. One course is strengthening and the other is destructive.

Worry may be likened to the constant dripping of water on hard stone. It at first seems to have no evil effect. But it is persistant. The habit grows and it begins to become a part of the individual who permits himself to dwell on anxieties and perplexities existing alone in his mind.

A few tests applied to our imaginary troubles will show them to be about as ridiculous as the New York college experiment was.

CANDIDATE FOR RE-ELECTION AS TOWN COMMISSIONER

Having been solicited by a number of citizens and tax payers of Chestertown, I hereby announce myself as a candidate for re-election as town commissioner, subject to the will of the majority. I make no promises to any particular section or to any individual, but if elected will try to work for the best interest of ALL.

JOHN W. BARNES.

CHRIST FOR ALL—ALL FOR CHRIST

The Word of God

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.—Psalm 119: 105.

March 13, 1927

HOW TO CONQUER AN ENEMY:—When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. Proverbs 16:7.

PRAYER:—O Lord. Thou hast revealed Thyself and taught us to rest in Thee, for Thou hast compassed us about with songs of deliverance.

What cometh when we draw water out of the wells of salvation?

Answer, read—Isaiah 12:2, 3.

Letters To The Editor

Chestertown, Md.,
March 7th, 1927.

Mr. L. B. Russell,
Editor of the Enterprise,
Chestertown, Md.

Dear Sir:

The March 2nd, 1927, issue of The Enterprise contains an editorial over your signature relative to the proposed bond issue for certain improvements in Chestertown. In discussing this subject reference is made to the sewer and water mains. For fear your remarks covering present conditions may be misunderstood by the taxpayers, as they seem to be by yourself, I desire to call your attention to the following facts.

In the first place the sewerage system is not inadequate or antique. It is very true all sections of the town do not have sewers but those that have been laid were well built and amply provide for present and future needs. The physical conditions existing within the Town limits render possible, by reason of the sloping character of the ground, an ideal design for constructing sewers and water courses for sewage and drainage.

The State Board of Health in their effort to improve conditions in communities such as ours and protect all citizens, have suggested certain improvements. The chief of which is a provision to take care of raw sewage that is now deposited in Chester river. This is the one important problem Chestertown must solve. Briefly it involves the construction of an intercepting sewer at some location in the lower part of the town and leading directly to a disposal plant. Some plan should have been made years ago with this object in view, but was not done by the Commissioners. The time has come, however, when steps must be taken to provide for it. The committee of citizens gave the matter careful consideration. It was the unanimous opinion that the very first thing to be done was to employ an outside sanitary engineer to make a survey and study of the situation and report his recommendations, taking into consideration what we have at present, how it can be enlarged and the necessities for the future. Modern practice on this subject has changed considerable in recent years and therefore requires careful study and planning.

When our sewer requirements are known the details can be worked out. Money was provided for in the bill for the $100,000 bond issue. The committee had no intention whatsoever of laying any sewer after the roadway was completed, but before.

Now in reference to the water system. Chestertown has today one of the cheapest and best water supply found anywhere in a town of this size. It is not perfect and we all realize certain defects. It is absurd to say, however, that it will collapse very shortly and involve a large expenditure for renewals. With the exception of the line on High street it is quite modern and will last a great many more years. The program of roadway paving involved two blocks where action will have to be taken by the Water Board before any new work is done. In one of these blocks it was their intention to lay a new line this year whether the bond issue is approved or not. The pipe is on hand, bought and paid for. Its installation will go forward in any event. In the other block the conditions are somewhat similiar. The material, however, has not been ordered, but will be if the necessity arises. Funds are also available for its payment.

The water main on High street was laid in 1884. By the law of averages steps should be taken for its renewal. It is not, however, necessary to do this work all at one time. If one block a year is laid down the cost would be a minimum and the objection of tearing up a large portion of our streets avoided. In doing the work thus no bond issue would be required but it could be paid for by a very slight increase in water rent. This in turn would not be a hardship, for we not only enjoy ideal water but have it at an absurdly low cost compared with other communities. Chestertown can congratulate itself on the situation surrounding this utility and well afford to boast to the outside world, rather than knock, about its water. So many places do not have this advantage.

In regard to the other improvements I will only say this. I have never yet seen a man who appeared in a neat and tidy suit of clothes who was not respected, sought after and cultivated. But the fellow who needed a new suit and bought only a pair of trousers because he was waiting for his son to supply the coat and vest was not "among those present." He wasn't even an "also ran."

Very truly yours.
G. B. TAYLOR.

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To the Editor of The Enterprise:

I feel sure you will open the pages of the Enterprise to further discussion of the Bond Issue since everyone enjoys a friendly argument and likes to view it from all angles when possible.

I have been deeply interested in the Bond Issue and its ultimate outcome, not as a taxpayer of Chestertown, but because of my parallel experience as a taxpayer in a New Jersey town, therefore I have sought the opinion of individuals in Chestertown among large and small property holders and among those who will receive direct benefit from the proposed improvements as well as thost whose property will not be affected except through the betterment of the town at large.

In 1911 we bought a house on a corner lot 50x100 in New Jersey. The street in front was improved, the side street being merely a red clay road. When the town was ready to pave that roadway we were not consulted, the work was done and a bill for curb, gutter and road amounting to $360 was presented to us for payment and that was before the World War! The sidewalk which was already placed had been paid for by the former owner of the lot. Town improvements followed in rapid succession and taxes increased accordingly. Finally a million dollar high school was erected with a stage in the huge auditorium second to none in any school building in the United States at that time. Tax payers rebelled every step of the way as is the habit of taxpayers the country over. Taxes have more than doubled since 1911 but it would seem that the results justified the means. The town is near New York City, a commuters town, and property has more than doubled in value while vacant lots are at a premium. This was the direct result not only because of the town's proximity to New York but because the Town Fathers were farsighted enough to make the town worthy of the attention of a good class of newcomers.

Chestertown apparently stands in a similar position when the Bay Bridge materializes. She is bound to reap the earliest and greatest benefits from the bridge, therefore she can afford, it would seem, to bear the burden for a few years until a greater population, increased business and higher salaries enable her citizens to meet other problems as they arise in the future. But even without the bridge the place is bound to grow and this generation is not foisting the tax on the coming one without doing its duty until the younger generation is well able to take over the responsibility.

Chestertown must prepare to meet more or less of an influx in the near future and we who enjoy the town surely want to see it make its appeal to a class of people who will keep up to the present high standard of American citizenship. I have presented my New Jersey experience as a concrete example of the foresight of the Town Fathers whereby that town was saved from becoming a second rate surburb.

I am not now discussing the lesser tax, as proposed by your splendid editorial of last week, but I do find that a number of those who oppose the $100,000 Bond Issue were not present at that open meeting. Was it a lack of civic interest on their part and is it not too late to recall it from the General Assembly without making Chestertown lose its dignity in a ludicrous position even if such a thing as a repeal were possible?

Will Chestertown suffer from growing pains or from rheumatism brought on by inaction?

Nell C. Westcott.

Announcement

I hereby announce myself as a candidate for Town Commissioner at election to be held on April 25th.

A. E. CULVER.

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