

"HIDING A DAGGER WITHIN THE FOLDS OF THE FLAG"

Street Commissioner Wilson Makes Vigorous Defence Before Controllers and Deputation to Charge of His Men — Effort to Restore Harmony Fails.

CONT. CAMERON DECLARES CAMPAIGN TO BE "PREPOSTEROUSLY UNTHINKABLE"

Street Commissioner Geo. B. Wilson is not to be taken out and shot at sunrise. His official head is still on his shoulders, though a big deputation of Orange leaders and employes of the Street Cleaning Department clamored for his dismissal to-day because he had removed a little Union Jack from a manure truck.

For over two hours the controllers and the deputation and the commissioner discussed this vexed civic question in the Mayor's private office, and finally, though an attempt was made to smooth matters over and restore harmony, it failed, and the matter stands as it is, pending action by the Street Cleaners' Association to-night and the Board of Control to-morrow.

Much strong language was used in the course of the debate, and Street Commissioner Wilson stated his case in vigorous style. The men refused to be placated entirely, though some of the deputation admitted that their case was weakened by the statement of the commissioner.

"Political Tricksters."

Mr. Wilson, in his own defence, declared emphatically that the whole affair was the result of "picayune, political tricksters, who have been guilty of sowing the seeds of dissent among the men."

"Were the statements made about me true, an internment camp is too good for me. I want you all to understand that. There is nothing pro-German about me. The Wilson family has been represented at all the engagements in which the British have been in so long as I remember, and I want to say it is remarkable to think that any individual should get behind a four by four flag and use a dagger from within its folds. This is only a pretext."

The Commissioner then related his side of the incident and said all he did was to take the flag and lay it on the radiator of the car and he indignantly resented any idea that he acted in a disloyal way.

"That, gentlemen, is the extent of the degradation of the flag," declared Mr. Wilson, "and anything said to the contrary is absolute falsehood."

Ramsden Leads the Attack.

Ald. Ramsden, who introduced the deputation, said he believed the commissioner had acted in a small, arbitrary way. "I don't intend to condone that sort of thing. If he had any regulations prohibiting the carrying of decorations, he should have got one of his foremen to carry out the instructions. I told the men this morning when they came to my home, that I believed the commissioner should be severely reprimanded, and I also said I would not sanction the using of the flag for the purpose of hammering the commissioner. I am as loyal as anyone, but I don't believe in bringing in the flag unless there is some intentional wrong done to the flag. I said I could not conceive a man holding a position in the city of Toronto that would deliberately insult the flag, with public opinion at the point it is at present. We must not get agitated or allow ourselves to be carried away with anything not intended to insult the flag. Another complaint has been made that the commissioner tore a decoration off a horse's head. I think it was just a piece of hotheadedness."

Mayor Church: "Men are allowed all over the city by private firms to have decorations on their horses' heads—little flags, or anything like that."

"Why can't we have a meeting of the Board of Control and settle the matter?" asked a member of the deputation.

Mayor Church: "I cannot call a meeting of the board in five minutes."

Mr. Wm. Crawford, who was one of the men in the deputation who saw the Mayor yesterday in regard to the incident, was the next speaker. "I have no umbrage against Mr. Wilson," he said, "but I differ from the alderman in regard to this flag incident. Every true Britisher worships the old flag, and I think it is an everlasting disgrace for any man in a temper to do anything like this. The man from whose truck the flag was torn off, has three boys at the front, and one of them has lost a leg. I say all honor to the man who carries the little Union Jack on his truck, and I say God spare him that he may long do it. It is your duty to see that such a thing as this is not tolerated. Why should a man in a cart not carry a flag as well as the man in the automobile?"

Won't Accept Apologies.

"We are here by the express orders of our fellow workmen," said J. Kennedy, "to protest against the insulting of the British flag. It has been shamelessly lowered to the ground. Our men are Britishers, and that is a thing they cannot stand for. Why should we stand and see the flag lowered to the dust. We are here to request that Commissioner Wilson be dismissed from the department and nothing less. We won't accept any apology. Our men refuse to work under such a man any longer. Our position on our wagons is just as high from our viewpoint as Commissioner Wilson's at the City Hall, where the flag flies all day."

Mayor Church: "Your wagon is your home."

"Yes, that is our position," replied the speaker, and we will stand for nothing but the commissioner's dismissal."

Charles Willey, one of the two men who made the complaint, said the Commissioner went up to his truck and said, "I don't want any darned

rubbish on these trucks," and took the flag away, throwing it to the ground. "He broke the stick the flag was on, and threw it down." Mr. Willey added that he had three boys at the front.

Mayor Church: "What did Mr. Wilson say when he came up to you?" Mr. Willey: "He said nothing."

Mayor Church: "Did he not say you were breaking some regulations?"

Mr. Willey: "He never said a word."

J. Lawrence, the other cartor, who was present when the incident complained of occurred, said he was working on his truck when the commissioner came up. "Mr. Brown, the superintendent told me to take the flag off my truck. That didn't satisfy Mr. Wilson who came over and pulled a little windmill off the front of my car and then went over to Willey's truck and pulled the flag off and threw it to the ground. I have two more witnesses who saw it."

Mr. Chas. Meech, of the S. O. E., said he felt it keenly that the Commissioner should "in a moment of passion belittle himself to throw the flag in the dust. "If the commissioner had done that in Berlin he would have been taken out to the back yard and shot. It is time we woke up and put a stop to these things and this is a matter that should be looked into. If the commissioner has made a mistake I hope it will be a lesson to him."

No Personal Animosity.

T. G. Mathewson said the men had no personal animosity against Mr. Wilson, but he did not think an incident of the kind mentioned should be tolerated. Incidentally he had some criticism for the City Hall people and did not think that the flag was on its right place on the flag pole on the lawn in front. "Put it high up over the City Hall itself."

M. Leslie, one of the workmen, complained in a general way of the treatment he alleged Mr. Wilson meted out to the men. "We have reached the end of our patience," he said, "and something ought to be done. We are really sick of his bulldozing. We want British fair play."

"I think it is an abominable scandal that the commissioner should be allowed to do this terrible thing," said Charles Mitchell. "We want his resignation, and if he does not give it he should be dismissed."

As a citizen and a ratepayer, G. Gray said there was a disloyal element in the city that he thought should be curbed.

Ald. Fenwick also severely condemned conduct such as that alleged against Mr. Wilson.

Wm. Chenery said he had three boys at the front and he regarded it as an insult to them such an incident as that attributed to Mr. Wilson should occur.

Ald. Nesbitt spoke highly of the Street Commissioner and appealed for a fair British hearing for Mr. Wilson's side of the story.

Ald. Ramsden said he knew the commissioner was a good British subject and had two brothers at the front. "What I want to say is that we don't want the flag to be used for any ulterior purpose."

Mr. T. G. Matheson: "I object to that statement."

Ald. Ramsden: "I am making the statement that I would not like to see the flag used for any motive. We have been told that it is pro-German not to sign the food pledge cards and now Mr. Wilson is called pro-German for this affair. I am not defending Mr. Wilson. I have said he should be reprimanded."

Mayor's Rebuke.

W. A. Stewart, one of the foremen in the Street Cleaning Department, said this was only a side issue, and that the flag incident was thought a popular way by some men to get back at the commissioner.

Several members of the deputation took exception to this, and during the scene that ensued, amid shouts of dissent, Mayor Church rebuked some of the speakers. "Remember, you are in the Mayor's office. I will not have any more of these unbecoming scenes."

Cameron Sees Dagger in Folds.

"I'll give a man a fair show. I am speaking plain words. It is not the mere bit of cotton. It is what it stands for," said Controller Cameron, speaking with some warmth. "It has been said that some men hide a dagger within its folds. That sort of thing we cannot stand for. I am convinced there is intolerance here. Why, gentlemen, your charge is so unreasonable, so preposterously unthinkable that I cannot credit it."

"It may not be popular to say this," continued the Controller, "but I think that this thing is just a combination of little grievances, and the incident of the flag has been seized upon as the final thing to clinch the case."

"I was told by a friend of mine not to attend this meeting after he

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For

STAR SMALL ADS

The Lost and Found Column is the wonder column for results.

If you lost your temper that column would find it.