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Daily Alta California, Volume 3, Number 106, 16 April 1852 — THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CITY CHARTER [ARTICLE]

THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CITY CHARTER.

A great deal of gasconade has been indulged in for many months past relatives to amendment to our city charter. We have forbore to notice the subject mainly from the belief that it was scarcely to be expected that this Legislature would make any change in our present municipal constitution. Within the last few weeks, however, the matter has assumed more importance, from the fact that two parties have entered the field. One party is extremely desirous to amend the charter in order that the present city officials may be legislated out of office; and the other is equally anxious to amend the same instrument, but in such manner as shall retain the officials now in power. The strenuous efforts making on both sides indicate the possibility that some changes may grow out of the "keen encounter" of the "outs" and the "ins," and it may not, therefore, be inappropriate to glance at a few of the amendments proposed.

The first proposition relates to the offices of mayor

and recorder. One party proposes to abolish the of

— fice of recorder and to devolve his duties upon the mayor, adding two thousand dollars per annum to that

functionary's salary. The other party proposes also to abolish the office of recorder, and to constitute a recorder's court which shall consist of the mayor and two aldermen. The main arguments in favor of these proposed changes are: 1st. That the city will save two thousand dollars per annum; and 2d. That the duties of mayor are so light that he can easily per-

perform the additional duty of the recorder. The saving of two thousand dollars per annum to the city is an item of moment, if it can be accomplished without detriment to the public interests; but the proposed method of doing so does not at all strike us as a judicious one. We believe that sound public policy demands that the two offices should be kept separate and distinct. They require different accomplishments to fill them with ability and fidelity, and the two positions are so far incompatible that though a good recorder might (and probably would) make an

excellent mayor, it by no means follows that an excellent mayor would or could be even a tolerable recorder. The proposition to unite two aldermen with

the mayor is quite as objectionable. You might by

such a process save the city a paltry two thousand dollars per annum, and at the same time inflict upon it an incalculable amount of injury. Indeed, we think the present arrangement the most judicious that can be adopted.

It is also proposed by one party to abolish the office of street commissioner and merge the office in the marshal. The other party proposes to abolish both marshal and street commissioner and appoint two captains of police whose duty it shall be to discharge the duties of marshal and of street commissioner in their respective districts. The first proposition is an excellent one. The office of street commissoner can be justly and properly united with that of marshal, thus securing both efficiency and economy. But the proposition to abolish the office of marshal is highly objectionable. It would leave our police without a head—or rather with two heads—than which disaster none could be more fatal in an executive point of

view.

It is also proposed to abolish the office of treasurer, and place the public funds in a banking house, subject to the draft of the comptroller. This, certainly,

cannot be an advisable proceeding; for, if either office were to be abolished, we think that of controller the least valuable and necessary of the two.

A change is also advised in regard to the three city assessors. One plan is to abolish the office, and make the county assessor discharge the duties, and the other is to permit the council to elect the city assessors instead of the people. If we have city assessors, they ought to be elected by the people and not by the common council; but we are quite strongly of the opinion that as the county assessor does now discharge the whole duty, the tax list might just as well be made from his books as to have the expensive and useless interference of three city assessors.

Another proposition is to make the aldermen and assistants elective for two years—one-half of each board retiring from office annually. As this proposition is not at all likely to find favor with the community, it is hardly worth while to expend many words in an endeavor to prove its impracticable and insupportable character.

The most material amendment, however, is that which proposes to change the time for holding the municipal election. As the law is now administered, the election takes place at the general State canvass in September of each year. For various reasons it is deemed advisable to hold the municipal election in the spring. Both parties appear to be agreed upon this subject, but the "outs" desire that a new election should be held in the coming May or June, whilst the "ins" are equally strenuous in asserting their right to retain office until next September, and they therefore think it advisable to postpone the next election to May or June of 1853. The "outs" think this a monstrous proposition; but at the same time they forget that they claimed to have been elected to office for a

year and a half, and were only ousted by the Supreme Court. In truth, though we are decidedly in favor of holding the municipal election in the early portion of the year, we would suggest, as a species of compromise, that the officers elected at the next election in September should hold their positions to the following April, May or June. Despite all the loud-mouthed denunciation of the present city officials, we think this might be done with safety, if not with advantage, to the city.

It is, however, an apparent and palpable fact, that

all this cry about amending the charter is but little

removed from absurdity. There may be, and probably is, one or two minor points in which it could be benefitted by pertinent and practical amendments; but the real object which both parties have in view is to legislate for office. One party desires to turn its opponent out immediately; and the other is seeking to secure a new lease of power from Sept. next to May next. Such efforts are most pernicious in their effects upon

the body politic. It is a species of special legislation

which is always injurious, and can only be justified upon the ground of choosing the least of two evils. If such practices are to be resorted to, we should like

to know what security there is for any party which

may happen to have the control of our city affairs.

If the Legislature can be appealed to, to oust a party in power to-day, what is to prevent it from exercising the same function to-morrow? Assuredly, nothing.

The only true course, then, is to abide the legitimate issue of events, and punish according to law those who may prove derelict in duty. Nothing can be more dangerous to any community than the exercise

of a legislative prerogative for expelling from office those who may have become obnoxious to a portion

of their constituents. Such measures are revolutionary in their character, detrimental in their tendency, and can only find justification or palliation in the most apparent and imperative necessity.

We should be sorry to be found in opposition to any plans which are likely to obtain a benefit for the city. But we cannot think the proposed amendments to our charter are of the urgent nature with which it is sought to invest them. Neither do we believe they are of such pressing necessity as to require immediate legislative interference. Most of the propositions are certainly of very doubtful propriety, and those which are material are not extremely impressive in their character. Under these circumstances,

and with a lively appreciation of the necessity which exists that our city government should be permitted to acquire a settled and stable character, we beg leave to ask our fellow-citizens if the following section of Article VI of the city charter do not prescribe a sufficient remedy for the evils which afflict us?—

SEC. 11. When any amendment to this charter shall have been agreed to by three-fourths of all the members elected to each board, it may be submitted to the people at any general election, and if approved by them, it shall become a part of the charter. Said amendment shall be published at least sixty days before said election. It shall also be the duty of the Common Council to call a convention of delegates for the revision of this charter. Said convention shall meet on the first Monday of March, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-three, and shall consist of three members from each ward. Should the charter as amended and adopted by said convention be approved by the people at any general election, it shall become the charter of the city of San Francisco, subject, however, to the approval of the Legislature.

ENGLISH PROJECT FOR COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC OCEANS.—We find in our late files of English papers reports of the meetings of the Geographical Society, at which lengthy papers were read, and a project discussed for connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans by railroad and water conveyances, via British North America. The report was the offspring of Capt. Synge, R. E., and at the

meeting of the Society, Jan. 27, the second portion was laid before the members. The method proposed in the first instance, is to take advantage of the great natural chain of communication by lakes and rivers, which for the greater portion of the distance is already completed. The St. Lawrence and the great Canadian lakes form the main features of this chain. Westward of Lake Superior there exist numerous lakes and rivers, the waters of which, though separated, it would be easy to connect, and to reach the Pacific by the Lake of the Woods, and the rivers Assiniboya and Saskatchewan. The paper comprised many extracts from the works of Mackenzie, Sir G. Simpson, and other travellers, showing the great natural advantages and capabilities of the country. Sir R. Murchison spoke of the proposal in terms of commendation, comparing it to the achievement of Peter the Great in the Russian empire, in connecting the Black Sea with the Baltic. Major Carmichael Smyth warmly supported it, urging that it was necessary for the protection of British commerce and the consolidation of the empire, and denouncing the monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company as unfavorable to colonization. Mr. Crawford thought the scheme wanting in definiteness and practical character, and complained that no details were given either as to the quickness or probable cost of conveyance by this route. He admitted that it would be shorter than any now in use, but for half the year many of the waters of the region in question were ice-bound. Capt. Synge, in answer, explained that he wished to see an electric telegraph and railway established, though his views were directed in the first place to water communication. Before the adjournment of the Society, Sir R. Murchison announced that the subscriptions in aid of Capt. Beatson's expedition in search of Sir John Franklin were proceeding favorably, and that Earl Fitzhardinge would contribute £50 to it. The Russian authorities had also promised

every facility and assistance, in the event of their being required.

PATOCKI, THE HUNGARIAN EMISSARY.—In the foreign news by the last steamer, we learn from Austria that Patocki, an Hungarian patriot, arrested at Rendsburg on a charge of attempting to seduce some Hungarian regiments from their allegiance to the Emperor, and of being an agent of Kossuth and Mazzini, had been executed. It appears that Patocki, although an agent of Kossuth, was not sent on a mission to induce desertion, but to prevent it. Austria has forced into her service tens of thousands of Hungarian soldiers, who know nothing but the direst hate for the oppressor of their nation, and whose allegiance knows no other motive than the discipline of the tyrant Joseph's army. On hearing that Kossuth was in England, scores of these Hungarian soldiers deserted and went to join him. Of course he had nothing for them to do, and they were without means of support. Consequently he sent a number of agents to the Hungarian regiments to tell them, from their much loved leader, *not* to desert, but to eat the bread of Austria, and perfect themselves in the art of war, that when the *time* came for another blow, they might be in a condition to do their fatherland double service, by using their increased skill *against* their instructors, and disarranging the operations of their country's enemies by leaving their ranks when service was most needed. Poor Patocki was only *one* of a number of these agents. The fact that no others of them have been discovered, though they were for months in the very heart of the Austrian camp, speaks volumes for the faithfulness of the sons of Hungary to the liberal cause, and their love for and confidence in their exiled Governor.

SUPERINTENDENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS IN CALIFORNIA AND OREGON.—We are informed, on the authority of private letters received by the last mail from Washington, that the bill creating a Superintendent of Indian Affairs for California and Oregon, has become

dian Affairs for California and Oregon, has become a law, and that EDWARD F. BEALE, late a lieutenant in the U. S. Navy, has been appointed to fill that responsible position. It is with great satisfaction we receive the intelligence, not only that we believe the office one of great necessity and importance, but because we have full faith in the ability, judgment and integrity of the appointee. Mr. Beale is well acquainted with California and her affairs. He played a very important part in the operations by which she became a portion of the American confederacy, and as the bearer of dispatches across the continent on several occasions, and by numerous other experiences, he has become intimately acquainted with the character of our Indians, and established his own reputation as a man of daring courage, coolness in the face of danger, unconquerable energy and determination, and wise inventions for overcoming difficulties that might have appalled less energetic men. Though this is comparatively a new field for him, we have no hesitation in predicting that he will discharge the duties of his office with an untiring industry, and marked administrative ability.

THE STATE PRINTING.—It will be seen that the bill to give out the State Printing by contract to the lowest bidder has passed the Senate. This is as it should be; and we begin to think the Legislature may yet redeem itself. Within the last few days the Senate has killed the Flour Inspection Bill, the Cooley Bill, and the State Printer Bill. If it will only decimate the Convention bill and the bill to squander the school lands, the public will begin to have hopes for the country and respect for her lawgivers.

THE CLIPPER HURRICANE.—Our marine record announces the arrival of the splendid clipper ship *Hurricane*, from New York, and *only sixty-one days from Rio Janeiro!* This is a surprising passage, and indeed the voyage out has been a remarkable one, comparing in speed with the best trips ever performed. The *Hurricane* has been unfortunate in encountering

severe disasters, as her report in another column will show. The dimensions of this fine ship are also given in our marine table.

FINE CIGARS.—Two sample boxes of very fine Havana cigars were yesterday presented us, with the compliments of Mr. H. Koster, at whose store in Washington street, (Washington Baths building,) over fifty varieties of fine cigars, freshly imported, are for sale.

☞ The pressure upon our columns compels us to defer a large amount of matter already in type, including our foreign correspondence.