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BRINGING UP FATHER



By George McManis

HOSPITAL AFFAIRS ARE UNDER DISCUSSION AND ANOTHER OFFER IS MADE.

(Continued from Page One).

all. The hospital was compelled to accept all that offered and must take care of the sick. It was not always possible to collect bills at once and diligence could only be used in following up these matters. Despite high cost of operation which was necessary in Prince Rupert, the average per capita cost last year had been \$3.18 which compared favorably with any hospital in the province. At that it had just got by on the city per capita grant of 70c. While the overhead would be just the same this year as last there were indications that the revenue would not be as great. Therefore the hospital board felt that it would be impossible to finance this year on the 50c. per capita basis, much as it would like to do so if possible. It would mean, however, inferior service, higher charges or a deficit at the end of the year. He felt sure that the council would not have the hospital board accept a policy that it knew would result in going in the hole.

Incorrect and Misleading

D. C. McRae asserted that statements had been made last week which were incorrect and misleading. The hospital board had proved that it had no chip on its shoulder by its willingness to confer with the city finance committee and furnish it with all the information that it had desired. The finance committee, however, had delayed a reply on the matter of a financial understanding for the year. Ald. Stephens had said that the hospital had received \$4,172 in December as share of liquor profits. This was not true. The money had been put in the bank for the benefit of the nurses' home. Ald. Stephen should not have referred to the payment for the ambulance by the city in his statements of city grants to the hospital last year for at no time had the hospital board felt that it was in a position to undertake the purchase of an ambulance. Neither had the \$5,000 Moffatt legacy been included in last year's hospital business. Ald. Stephens had left the impression that the hospital receipts last year had been \$2,000 and had endeavored to show the source of \$26,000. In doing so he had left on the minds of the people an impression that was untrue and incorrect. The hospital receipts last year had been \$52,909. Of this \$26,800, or 50 per cent, had been from patients' fees, \$14,797 or 26 per cent, from the provincial government in its per capita grant (\$9,524) and share of liquor profits (\$5,272), \$11,000 or 20 per cent, from the city per capita grant and the remainder from miscellaneous sources.

Vancouver Financing

The budget of the Vancouver General Hospital this year showed that that institution expected to receive 44 per cent, of its total receipts from patients' fees, 24 per cent, from the provincial government in per capita grant and liquor profits, 20 per cent, from city grant (60c. per capita) and 12 per cent from miscellaneous sources. He would emphasize the fact that the Prince Rupert General Hospital had received 50 per cent of its receipts last year from patients' fees while the Vancouver hospital this year figured on getting 44 per cent of its receipts from patients' fees. Of 705 hospital accounts here last year, 491 had been paid in full, 64 had been paid in part and 147 had not been paid at all.

Ald. Stephens had said that the hospital board had written

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off \$27,000 of accounts last year. This was correct but it did not mean that they were all bad debts. They were an accumulation of several year's outstanding and many of them were still collectable. All these things had been explained to the finance committee and he could not understand why Ald. Stephens had seen fit to scatter broad cast an impression that the hospital board had not told the whole story. At the first of the year the board had put these accounts in the hands of solicitors. Some were coming in slowly but all were being looked after. An unfortunate impression had gone abroad that no effort had been made to collect hospital accounts. In 1921 and 1922 they had had a collector at work. If 82 accounts were good, as Ald. Stephens had asserted, then the machinery was in operation to collect them.

At Other Hospitals

Referring to the average cost per hospital day in the Prince Rupert hospital, Mr. McRae said that the \$3.26 here in 1921 and the \$3.18 in 1922 compared well with any other average in the province and he doubted if there was any hospital in B.C. more efficiently managed. Average costs per day in 1921 at other hospitals in the province had been as follows: Neison, \$2.96; Vancouver \$3.10; Victoria \$3.72; Prince George \$5.34. The average cost for the province had

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been \$3.25 in 1921 and Prince Rupert's had been \$3.26.

In closing, Mr. McRae said that he had not come to make a demand of the council for 70c. per day or for the \$2.50 method, had impressions had been made last week and he had been glad of the opportunity to assist in their correction. The criticisms made by the council had been unfair, unreasonable and unjust.

Salaries of Nurses

S. K. Campbell said criticism had been made of the hospital management but he could not see where it could be pointed to unless possibly it was in regard to the collection of accounts. The average salary of the nurses was 26c. per hour and supplies were secured at a reduced cost. The overhead could not be reduced. The hospital board would like to accept 50c. but it was impossible. He did not see how the hospital could finance this year on a smaller per capita basis from the city than last year. For one he would be willing to give the city a sporting offer in accepting 50c. with the understanding that the city meet any deficit or 70c. with the understanding that any surplus be returned to the city at the end of the year.

T. Ross Mackay referred to hospital matters at Ocean Falls. There were difficulties in making collections even in such a conducted town as that. He believed the strictest economy possible was being exercised in the Prince Rupert hospital. Nurses were receiving an average of 26c. an hour in pay and were being fed 19c. meals. Hospital collections at 50 per cent compared favorably with city taxation collections.

Mayor Newton maintained that neither he or any of the aldermen had attempted to cast aspersions on the conduct of the hospital work. Not one of the members of the hospital board had suggested a way out so that the city would not be compelled to pay as much this year as it had done last. He felt that with a greater volume of collections this year and the liquor profits besides, the hospital should be able to entertain the 50c. offer. He thought that the hospital board should co-operate with the city in an attempt to cut down expenses. He was inclined to favor Mr. Campbell's offer.

No Apologies

Ald. Stephens said he had no apologies to offer except possibly two mistakes he had unwittingly made. He had understood that the \$5,000 Moffatt endowment had been paid to the hospital last year. If that was not the case, then the hospital should be that much better off this year.

Nurse's Home

The building of the Nurses' Home then came under fire at the hands of the mayor who felt that the time was perhaps inopportune and that any liquor profits which might be proposed to use in paying for its construction should go towards ordinary hospital expenses. The deferring of the project he thought might be advisable.

Mr. Williams and Mr. Campbell maintained that the Nurses' Home would be a factor towards reducing nursing costs. It would be possible then to use more student nurses instead of graduates.

Definite Offer

Ald. Collart moved that 60c. per capita be offered the hospital board. This was seconded by Ald. Macdonald and passed unanimously. The delegation then left the chamber after 10 o'clock, President Stewart thanking the council for its generous hearing and giving assurance that the offer would be considered at as early a moment as possible.

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He was glad to hear that many of the written off accounts were collectable. That would tend to make the hospital financing even still easier this year. He had no criticism to make of the operating end of the hospital but he would reiterate the statement that he was not satisfied with the business end because the collections, a matter of prime importance, were weak. People should be compelled to pay their hospital bills because they were receiving the benefit of one of the most valuable services the city had. As for his statement regarding the year's business of \$12,000 instead of \$52,000, he had received his information from the hospital board.

Mr. McRae stated that \$42,000 had been the hospital earnings and not its receipts.

Ald. Stephens said that personally he would feel like taking Mr. Campbell's proposition to pay the hospital 70c. provided they turn over any surplus to the city together with uncollected accounts. As for 70c. straight, he would prefer the \$2.50 plan.

Read Daily News

Mr. McRae at this point read portions of last week's report of the council meeting in the Daily News to confirm Ald. Stephens' statements which he said were misleading and unfair.

A debate ensued between Mayor Newton and W. E. Williams on the point of whether or not the hospital could get along with 50c. or 70c. per capita. Mr. Williams maintained that collections would be more difficult than ever this year and the revenue less while overhead would be about the same as last year. He would be satisfied however, if the council would undertake to give a hard and fast agreement to pay any deficits over the 50c. per capita. Other members of the council and the board then engaged in discussing the merits and demerits of such a course.

Ald. Macdonald suggested 60c. as a compromise, Ald. Collart supporting it.

Board

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