

(February 4, 1935)

My Four Years at the City Hall

By W. J. STEWART, C.B.E.

PRESIDENT JAMES:—Gentlemen, on your behalf, I welcome here today as our guest of honor, ex-Mayor W. J. Stewart, a gentleman who needs no introduction to a Toronto audience. We desire to pay tribute to you for four years work well and truly done as chief magistrate of this city. No one occupying the Mayor's chair for many years has gone through so difficult a period as faced Mr. Stewart during the last four years. It is largely, we think, due to his able leadership through that trying four years, that Toronto now finds itself in the safe and secure position it is in. It was particularly gratifying also to the citizens of this city that only last month just on retirement from office. His Majesty the King was pleased to confer upon him the order of Commander of the British Empire. It is now with very great pleasure I call upon Mr. Stewart. The subject of his address is, "My Four Years At The City Hall."

EX-MAYOR STEWART:—Mr. President and gentlemen, I wish to thank you for the very generous references of introduction and for your very friendly greetings and I desire to extend thanks for the privilege of being with you. I see before me many that I regard as my friends. In connection with your references to my term of office I might say any success I enjoyed is due to the fact that I was surrounded by a splendid staff of able officials. I am glad to see Fred. Hamilton and many others who were helpful during my term of office and last but not least I am glad to see my friends of the press because I have a unique distinction in public life. I am about the only man who has never been misquoted.

I know that your club is regarded as an organization of representative citizens for city and national welfare and for the preservation and further development of friendly relationship throughout the Dominion and for Empire solidarity. Why you asked me to address you, I do not know, unless having acquired a few grey hairs from carrying the worries of office for four years and by contact with all sections of the population and having experienced the tempering influence of responsibility, I am at least in some measure fit to discuss with you a few of the problems of the day. May I take the opportunity to once again thank my fellow-citizens for the high privilege conferred upon me as Mayor. I am forever grateful for the opportunity that they gave me to serve the city of my birth and birthplace of my parents. You ask me why I did not run again. My answer is that the political sun is much brighter at noon than at eventide. May I, sir, request your pardon should my remarks sound as a personal note of reflection upon my term of office, if I speak for a moment or two on civic affairs with which I had some direct connection as Mayor. I am sure it was a source of joy to you to learn from the Medical Officer of Health that in 1934 we had the best record in the history of Toronto for good health. May it be ever so, now, and for the years to follow. I should like to refer to the important matter of relief. At the end of 1934 we had approximately the same number of families on relief as in 1933. Since the first of the year the number has increased from 27,500 to 30,000. There is no need for begging on the streets. We have five depots centrally located for the issuing of vouchers six days a week while a central bureau is open on Sundays. Our unfortunate fellow-citizens are supplied through these agencies with food, fuel and shelter. School books are provided for the pupils in secondary schools whose families are on relief. Then we had 3,000 homeless men at the end of the year and there were about 375 homeless women taken care of in a home.

Gentlemen, I ask you this question, is not a decent subsistence for all citizens a first charge upon our city and country? To guard against imposition we applied a work-

test, requiring any person, if fit, to do a very little work in return for keep. When first applied we had 3,949 homeless men as our guests. Shortly after application for some reason the number dropped to below 1,000. We had the first year of the troublesome times transients from 144 municipalities. Now then there has been a protest raised against the work-test from some sections. I do not believe it comes from the sincere chap down on his luck. I believe it is more or less a political agitation. Instructions were issued during my term of office to Welfare Commissioner Laver to use discretion in the test. He has done so and particularly in seasonal employment. The giving of relief and distribution have received a great deal of consideration at the hands of your officials and a great deal by your elected body. I am glad to tell that under able management it has been administered at a cost to the city of \$3.40. I think that reflects a great deal of credit.

When I had a conference with the Minister of Public Welfare and a number of other mayors I advanced the idea that methods of relief should be standardized, sufficient in quantity and of good quality and reasonable, seasonal changes in variety. But the giving of relief should not be approached by administrators as a competitive industry, nor in such a manner as to make it a permanent national industry. Standardization throughout the Province would tend to cause people to stand, and not to flock into the larger centres of population. It is important that the giving of relief and those responsible for its administration should ever strive to keep it from the realm of political opportunity. There are two sides. The needs and requirements of those who receive relief and the taxpayer who has to pay the bills. I rejoice that there is daily increasing evidence of return to normal prosperity. On the Hydro Commission, on which it was a pleasure to serve, we have learned of daily increasing demand for electrical energy. That is a good sign.

Your Commissioner of City Buildings tells us that in 1934 twice as many buildings in dollar value were erected as in 1933. I learned that the T.T.C. reported an upward trend in earnings. Your Harbor Commission tell

us that in 1934 the greatest amount of water-borne traffic passed through our harbor. I might say that C. L. Burton deserves a great deal of credit for his work on the Industrial Commission. They have brought industries to Toronto which require $1\frac{1}{2}$ million square feet. It would require one building a hundred feet deep and $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles long. There are 107 new industries in Toronto and 16 in the suburbs.

Gentlemen, let us be cautious and not frighten away new industries or drive out existing industries by taxation or sur-taxes. Our condition today is excellent. Commissioner Wilson has ably and faithfully directed the treasury and wisely counselled the elected body sometimes against their liking. There is \$73,000,000 net debt. Against that you have your water works, fire halls, police stations, civic buildings, parks, schools, streets and other civic assets far in excess of the city's debt. I have heard it said that your local Hydro could be sold for a fabulous sum, over and above paying off the entire city debt. Gentlemen, we must ever be on the alert to keep this great utility for public ownership. Notwithstanding, arm-chair-critics' comment, with one-sided publicity by paid secretaries, Toronto is in a most enviable financial position. I respectfully tell you that from 1931 to 1934 we paid off debt before maturity to the amount of nine million dollars. Your tax-rate was lowered notwithstanding the fact that the rateable assessment had been materially reduced. The citizens have and deserve the sincere thanks of the official and the elected body.

As evidence of Toronto's standing is the recent bond issue. Your treasury board which is the Finance Commissioner and Mayor recommended and put it through. The price obtained was the best for the city of any federal, provincial or civic issue in years. It goes to show the faith the investing public have in Toronto and in the administration of our affairs. I respectfully inform you that by careful management by the official body and loyal support of the Board of Control and Council the cost of operating your city in 1934 by taxation was \$4,000,000 less than in 1931. Is that nothing? I submit that good

water and proper sewage disposal are indispensable factors in any city. The fourteen million water-works plant, which you voted for as rate-payers, is well advanced and nearing completion. The proposed new sewage disposal plant has been referred to experts to tell us where and how Toronto can be most efficiently and economically served.

When Mayor I said, and I still believe, this question should be submitted to a vote of the people. This is an expenditure estimated at \$25,000,000, and your borrowing margin is roughly \$11,000,000. I respectfully warn you, the support of the citizen body to the elected is necessary to maintain our enviable financial position.

Some criticism has been levelled for funding relief expenditures. During the war days the same policy was pursued. Your Council adopted this policy only after receiving expert financial advice. Opponents say we are capitalizing where there is no corresponding asset—opponents, arm-chair critics and paid secretaries! Gentlemen, I say to you, taxpayers could not easily bear higher taxation. The method pursued provided a breathing space, as it were, in the way of relief from taxes. As to the asset, is the preservation of life, peace and the morale of our people not an asset?

When demanding your elected body to make expenditures, remember in the days gone by, publicly and privately, we have too heavily mortgaged the future. Such actions are responsible, in some measure, for the hard times we have experienced. We are a young country and have been trying to outdo our elders. It is in the interests of the citizens that the city should be a good employer and continue to pay decent wages with good working conditions. When you are requesting public expenditures, ask yourself the question, should not the public interest and the good of the community as a whole supersede local desires? I urge you to support your Mayor and Council in financing necessities. Postpone your desires until the other people get on their feet. Sectionalism must not supersede the general public good. There are many public-spirited citizens who have earned the recognition of the citizens as a whole. I refer to people who have given

gratuitous service on our centennial committee, the man-a-block campaign and clean-up-paint-up campaign, the Citizens Friendship League, comprising 1,800 people, of all denominations, going among the unemployed, telling them that somebody cares. There are your various charities, your Harbor Board, Industrial Commission and C.N.E. All the members of these boards have been serving without remuneration and are surely entitled to some measure of thanks.

Frequently, you heard the argument for fewer civic departments. When Mayor I advocated consideration of a plan, an objective to be worked out over a period of years rather than snap merging. It was a co-ordination of effort in the various departments rather than amalgamation. There are two groups in the civic service. There are the administrative departments, the Health, Treasury, etc., and the operating departments, the Works, Parks, Property and Streets. These could not be conveniently merged. The operating departments present great possibilities, also great difficulties. I think it could be done by progressive methods. Objection has been taken to operating departments competing with tax-paying firms in construction work. Objection has been taken also to inspectional departments doing construction work. This major question cannot be dealt with by me now, nor does time permit.

Toronto is in a very happy position of having a splendid body of officials supported by a capable and loyal staff in various departments.

For some years I have advocated a change in the methods of construction of your Police Commission. At present you have a three-man Commission—the Mayor and two Government appointees. This is not a matter of party politics. I approach it from the viewpoint of public interest. There is certainly no reflection upon the present personnel. I have made my suggestions to a previous government.

Under the present system, the Mayor, the people's representative, becomes a minority. The majority of the Board are not directly responsible to the tax-payers. The

Mayor is the only one who is. While the elected body, that is the City Council, controls the estimates for expenditures. I have heard frequently that there was a move on foot to get legislation to make it obligatory to vote any sum requisitioned by the Commission. In other words, taking the control of expenditures out of the hands of the people's representatives. The Police Commission must certainly be kept out of politics irrespective of the party in power and free from political bias or influence. It must also be kept out of civic politics. Every time your Council is divested of power of control, taxes mount and the elected representatives would simply become a tax-levying body. Your local Hydro Commission is much nearer perfection than your Police Commission. There are many positions for which the tax-payers are called upon to pay the wage bill. He has nothing to say about the salary where the Government makes the appointment, fixes the salary and fixes the retirement. These are matters which require some consideration.

On March 6, 1934, the Lieutenant-Governor proposed investigating housing conditions to mark Centennial Year Day. The Board of Control requested representative citizens to serve with His Honor as a committee. The Lieutenant-Governor and his committee have rendered a great voluntary service to the less fortunate. Last year's Board of Control had no desire to shelve the matter at all but treated that report as all reports. It was submitted to an official body for consideration and investigation. I believe that report well worthy of consideration and of some action. I believe it can be carried into effect without any burden on the tax-paying body. His Honor has given leadership in the same enterprise as His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. Where there is no vision the people perish. I think today we are in need of men of vision. Citizenship, I believe, is the ultimate objective of every municipality. To have a happy, contented, loyal self-sustaining, God-fearing people. What are the conditions today? After several years of economic disorder, financial re-adjustment and a disturbed social order, many are discouraged and down-hearted, but have not lost hope. In

days of distress and adversity, disaster and despair, our people have displayed fortitude and staying power. That is truly characteristic of our stock. With unconquerable faith they have faced the problems of life in times of difficulty and trial. In the words of Babcock, "Failure will hurt, but not hinder us. Disillusion will pain, but not dishearten us. Sorrows will shake us but not break us. Hope tightens the cords and tunes up our heart strings."

Hope is the first line of defence against adversity. With you I rejoice that the enemy has not broken through the first line. Patiently our people have borne their burdens. We will go forward to a brighter future with courage invincible in our hearts. Today a broader vision looms before us. I believe progress is being made toward better times. I believe in a re-adjusted social order human values will enter more and more into our sphere of influence and calculations. Men are awakened today and many are asking "Is it true?" Business life has had a long season of Autumn conditions—season's mists, the withered leaf and the faded flower—in fact many have felt the cold frost of Winter and the bite and sting of red ink. When is it going to stop? It is like the question, "When is it going to stop raining?" It always has. As Hutchinson has written, "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

We can all rejoice in the daily increasing evidence of progress of a return to normal prosperity. Canada's trade is well over the billion dollar mark. Canada still occupies the fifth place in world trade. Last year her revenues were twenty-five million greater than in 1933.

Speaking of conditions throughout the city today, we have too many people demanding and speaking about what they believe to be their trouble and giving no thought to duty and responsibility to each other and the State. Many self-appointed speakers and self-appointed authorities teaching cure-alls—imaginary routes to success and happiness, teaching subversive doctrines and-isms to a discouraged section of our people—people advocating new taxes, advocating municipal suffrage to all persons over 21. There are thousands of unemployed in our midst—a rising generation asking "What is there in life for me?" A

varied assortment of political party policies, democracies on one hand and in other countries dictatorships.

What is the solution of the problem? People are saying the war was fought for democracy. Is democracy to set up a despotism to destroy itself? It must be a great source of satisfaction to see the Mother Country the firm bulwark of democracy amid the shifting sands of Europe. It is possible with political democracy to see an amazing parade of industrial autocracy. In some countries, democratic institutions have fallen into contempt and in others they are abandoned. I believe if we are to preserve our democracy it is necessary to have vigilant criticism—criticism, with self-examination and an educated citizenry with a deeper appreciation for matters of government. Ever remember a man may assail his country by bullet or ballot. If we are to preserve our democracy, a greater appreciation must be demonstrated for the high privilege of citizenship in the Empire. Our privileges are unexcelled and unequalled. As trustees, are we worthy of our trust? One high privilege is the franchise. Do you appreciate it? Do you exercise it? Are you a fire-side voter or an arm-chair critic? Which are you? All elected bodies, I submit, can spend sufficient to please taxpayers, even now when they are responsible only to ratepayers and direct tenants. I tell you if you add all who are 21 to the municipal voters' list you may accomplish one thing—a more complete and thorough job of spending could be done. A taxpayer has one vote on a property. I know of a case of 14 living on a property so that the tenants have 14 times the voting power of the owner. In private business you elect your directors because you are interested in dividends but in public business we forget. Your Council are your directors and the day after the election you sit back and criticize.

I think it would be in our interests if we had citizenship study groups which would discuss the problems of the unemployed. I have advocated a Civilian Re-Establishment Commission—service clubs and all civic organizations, setting aside days for the study of citizenship. I am glad to see that schools are teaching civics. I think less time should be spent on homework and more on

good citizenship. After the war the Government set up the Soldiers Civilian Re-Establishment Commission. I have advocated a Civilian Re-Establishment Commission. Why? Men want work not relief. Work is necessary. Relief is a temporary expedient. Relief is only a palliative. Two thousand years ago work was thought to be menial, was something for slaves. Work is no longer a matter of choice. Work is now a privilege. It has taken years and years to teach people that work is necessary for self-development and that work is honorable.

How many people have we got today who have never had a day's work? The highest type of citizenship can best be expressed in a social order which provides the right environment. Idleness does not provide such for youth or any of us. There are perilous hours of leisure. Last year there were 27,500 families on relief—there are now about 30,000. There were 375 homeless women and there were 2,312 homeless men. Of that 2,312, 998 were not physically fit to do a day's work. If it is true of the 2,312 men is it not true, in some measure of the 30,000 heads of families on relief? Is it not necessary to get these men fit to go to work? Is it not a national responsibility to get these men fit to go to work, if it is a national responsibility to get them fit to go to war? Last year your expenditure for social welfare relief was something over twelve and a half million dollars. The Government required general registration, why not classify the people on relief? I regard the soldier not as a indigent but as a creditor of the nation. Many are older in body than in years. Why not extend the old age pension? Mechanization of industry has resulted in thousands being thrown out of work and working hours reduced. In North America it is estimated at 23 per individual, in Britain 11, in Germany 9, and in France 4. Protracted periods of idleness renders many physically unfit. You have white collar men who cannot labor and do seasonal employment. I am proud of the fact that I had a very humble home with my parents. In these days many homes tided over until the Spring came. There are perennial "won't works" and civic and state treasuries are not bottomless. Idle private

capital must be called into action. Punish severely the employer who subsidizes his own business by exploiting unfortunates by paying low wages and compelling people to go on relief to eke out an existence. No punishment is too great. The rising generation must not become a jobless generation. Boys and girls in secondary schools are asking the question, "Why can't my father get a job?" Boys and girls are asking "What of my future; when do I marry?" Should she and should he under present conditions? In days of abnormal prosperity we all had extravagant ideas. I do not want to lower our standards of living but there are many trying to start in, where their parents left off. Mortgaging the future has created the problems of today. Everybody must learn that everybody cannot have a white collar job or follow a profession. Someone must do the humble and menial tasks. Natives must not foster the ideal of the importation of persons for menial tasks, then object to hard times. I ask you this: "Shall the power of youth be for weal or woe?"

We have before us a major social problem. The problem demands a solution. It calls for an interpretation of intelligent application of social justice by a social civilian re-adjustment commission. We all want good citizens. Are the rising generation taking an interest in Civic, Provincial and Federal Government? There are many youth movements today that I question, but there is one that I commend to you—the Boy Scouts. I hope the citizens will respond to the appeal of His Excellency in supporting financially the Boy Scouts which is a character-building and loyal institution. What is being done to guide the rising generation on matters of citizenship? There are many teaching subversive doctrines and there are those who won't sing or pray "God Save the King." We must be prepared to fit the rising generation into our social order. If you don't, can you expect peace, order and happiness? We need a Citizens Committee of Citizenship.

We pin our faith in this country where Queen Victoria pinned hers. Teach loyalty and respect for British traditions. Teach tolerance and the right to have ideas of your own and respect for the fellow who differs. Teach that

liberty is not license. Teach that liberty comes from discipline and restraint—that liberty comes from government not anarchy. Free speech? Yes, but without accountability. Teach that the country owes no able-bodied person a living but the opportunity to earn a living. Teach honor in filling the humble tasks of life. Teach that you cannot reap unless you sow. Teach that you cannot forever put your hand into other people's pockets or in the city or state treasuries unless you put something in. Teach that reasonable profit is an incentive to be self-sustaining. Profit-making should be without sacrifice of principle, honor or truth. He who serves best profits most. Teach by example that honorable industry and constructive, productive self-effort, honest service and faithful labor are entitled to a just reward. For evidence I give you the parable of the talents. Teach return commensurate with the talent called in service. Teach service to others and less of self service. The capitalistic system is not perfect. But what other system has proved to be better? Do not wreck the system. Let us seek to correct the weaknesses in the system. Regrettable conditions that caused the trouble today are not by the use of the system but by those who have abused it by pursuing a policy of profit at the price of principle by exploitation, ruthless methods, stock watering, gulling the public.

Our economic system should be and can be adjusted. It is amusing to hear how some persons would do it—chaps who have never had a dollar in business. I am friendly with the worker, I know their view-point and their difficulties. The workers have borne their burdens with commendable fortitude. I don't have to express my sympathies. I have demonstrated and proved them by deeds and action. The capitalistic system requires a major operation. You need a skilled physician for the operation. We are a young country with wheat elevators loaded and two railways partially idle. There is something wrong when you have wealth on one side and poverty next door. I am not a defender of plutocracy nor a radical. Nursing privately a physical illness and hiding it from your family and friends does not cure the illness nor remove the cause.

We were not stricken suddenly. We were on the high seas on the joyful waves of prosperity and we must get rid of the barnacles from our economic ship. The people have endured much and cannot endure much more. When the doctor comes into the house and tells you you must be operated upon, life is precious. So is our economic and social structure. Business has been ill and something must be done immediately to clear the system of abuses. The welfare of the people must transcend the profits of a few. The operation may call for a transfusion, as it were, of new blood into a weakened body. The operation calls for a skilled operator.

Exploitation of the system or by the system does not necessarily condemn the system. It only condemns those who exploit and abuse. Gentlemen, are you going to look for leadership from Moscow to change conditions? Let us put our own house in order. We have too many agents in this country who seek to disrupt and tear down the product of strong arms and stout hearts which has taken centuries to build up.

Back to the problems of youth? What are you going to do to guide the rising generation? The rising generation is like electrical energy. If controlled, it will drive the wheels of industry and illuminate the world. If not controlled, it may cause a short-circuit or a burnt-out social order. Get to know facts by conviction, not by mob psychology. Do not be a follower of party for party or by birth. Get to know the facts. People are not going to vote for the preservation of party but for the preservation of country.

Gentlemen, I sincerely hope for a Civilian Re-Establishment Commission. A year ago the Board of Control asked for a report on it. Let our policy be truth, honesty, fair-play, justice, courage, determination and intelligent application of social justice; faith in each other and abiding faith in our country and faith in an all-wise Providence. Let us one and all join hands in the noblest of enterprises—the making of good citizens.

PRESIDENT JAMES:—Mr. Stewart, may I on behalf of the Club, express to you our sincere thanks for a thoughtful and frank message.