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SHIRE OF LILLYDALE.

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VIC

A. Chalmer Esq.

Ringwood

via
Councillor A. B. Taylor (BA.)

PRESENTS his Compliments to the Ratepayers of the South-Western Riding, and begs the favor of their

Vote and Interest

On Thursday, August 24th, 1905.

• **Votes for the Riding may be Recorded at any of the following Booths:—**

| | | |
|-----------------|-----|---------------|
| RECREATION HALL | ... | RINGWOOD |
| STATE SCHOOL | ... | CROYDON |
| STATE SCHOOL | ... | MONTROSE |
| STATE SCHOOL | ... | MT. DANDENONG |
| SHIRE HALL | ... | LILLYDALE |

Polling Hours : 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Cr. TAYLOR'S ADDRESS.

(Reprinted from the Lilydale Express)

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, Ratepayers of the South-Western Riding,—I am here to-night to render up to you an account of my stewardship of your interests, which you were good enough to intrust to me nine years ago. Since then you have twice expressed your approval of my conduct of your affairs by returning me unopposed; and at the conclusion of this, my third term of office, I desire to address a few remarks to you concerning the business of the Shire in general, and the South-Western Riding in particular, and my personal relations with the Ratepayers whom I have had the honour to represent for such a

Looking back over this period, my thoughts recur, with feelings of extreme pleasure, to the gentlemen who have been associated with me at the Council table. I have had as my colleagues in this Riding ex-Councillors Hewish, Blair, E. Smith, Cottingham, Allen, and Chandler, and the present representatives, Cr. T. Kinsella and Cr. E. Jerves, to all of whom, as well as to the Councillors in the other Ridings, I am indebted for many acts of personal kindness as well as for a generous support of any movement which has been made for the advancement of the interests of the Ratepayers, too large a share of which has, I feel, been credited to myself.

I desire also to testify to the zeal and capacity of the Council's officers, past and present, and their readiness at all times to serve the interests of the Ratepayers.

During my nine years of office I have attended every meeting of the Council save one, and that through a misunderstanding as to the date. On three occasions the South-Western Riding has been honoured by my colleagues electing me, without opposition, to the Presidential office.

During these periods I have felt it my duty to represent the interests of the Shire as a whole; but I can conscientiously affirm, and appeal to my colleagues to bear me out in what I say, that I have always acknowledged the prior claims of my own Riding to my time and attention. While mentioning the word Riding, I should like here to say that I am a strong upholder of the provisions of the L.G.A., which enable a Shire to be subdivided for the purposes of equality of representation, and an equitable distribution of the revenue; but, at the same time, I hold that a Councillor should think for the Shire as a whole, and endeavour to obtain for his own Riding in return the benefit of the brains and intelligence of the representatives of the other subdivisions.

I have always advocated, for this reason, an

occasional inspection of the Shire by the whole Council, and I am glad to be able to say that the suggestion is meeting with warm support, and likely to be acted upon in the coming year.

And now a word or two about our finances, our assets and liabilities, and our revenue and expenditure.

We have, in the Shire, four loans. No. 1 is a small advance of £25, made by the Government under the Bush Fires Relief Act; paid back 10s. per annum. No. 2 is the big loan of £12,500, floated in 1888, and expended in various works throughout the Shire. No. 3 is a loan of £250, floated in 1896, for the purpose of purchasing the Mechanics' Institute. No. 4 is a loan of £150, floated in Nov., 1903, under a special improvement rate, for the New Mountain Road.

Of these loans, No. 2, the big loan of £12,500, bears interest at 5%, and carries a sinking fund of 2%, and involves the Shire in an annual expenditure of £875, divided amongst the three Ridings in proportion to the share of the loan money spent in each.

Unfortunately, when this loan was floated, no provision was made in the L.G.A. to enable a Council to repurchase its debentures, so that the full payment of £875 per annum must go on until such time as the accumulations of the payments into the sinking fund, with interest, will amount to £12,500. At the present time the sinking fund stands at about £6000, and should reach the required amount in 1915, but, owing to the fact that Sir Geo. Turner, when Treasurer, reduced the rate of interest allowed by the Government on these fixed deposits, it will require a year or two longer before the loan will mature.

In looking about for the means of saving some of our expenditure, and thus increasing our revenue, I am inclined to think that something might be done here which would have the effect of setting free a portion, if not the whole, of the amount paid yearly into the sinking fund, by means of a scheme to which I shall refer later on.

The other loans require, I think, but passing mention, one being of a reproductive character and more than self-supporting; another being a charge upon a special area only.

Our revenue from rates last year amounted to about £2700, of which our Riding contributed about £950.

This, as you know, is our main source of revenue, and I purpose showing you how much of this is available for new works after the necessary deductions are made for indispensable expenditure.

In order to avoid confusion, I shall set forth

the position as it affects the South-Western Riding only.

Our share of interest and sinking fund amounts to £313, salaries £126, day labour £193, and maintenance metal £125, or a total charge upon the Riding's funds of about £760, thus leaving something less than £200 for contingencies and new works; or, putting it in a more forceful light, out of every shilling in the £ which is raised upon our assessment, nearly elevenpence is allocated before the rate is struck. I mention this to show to our critics that there is some excuse for the comparatively slow rate of progress made by us in effecting as much new work as the growing importance of the district demands. Of course, I am not taking into account the Government subsidy nor the special grants; but we must remember that the former is a continually diminishing and always uncertain quantity. Looking over some old balance-sheets, I find that in the year 1890 the amount of endowment received by this Shire was very nearly £3000; last year it amounted to only £320, and we never can make sure that the day will not arrive when some needy Treasurer will cut it out altogether.

Last year our hopes were raised, as, under the Reclassification of Shires Bill, our position would have been improved, inasmuch as we were to be allotted 5/-, instead of 2/6, in the £ on the amount of our shilling rate. This Bill, as you know, was amongst the slaughtered innocents at the end of the Session, and, consequently, our expectations were committed to the grave of untimely disappointments.

I need not, I think, weary you any further as to our financial position, but I wish to remind you here that the accounts of the several Ridings are kept as separate and distinct as if in a separate bank, and except in matters of general concern, as the loan, for instance, not one penny is expended outside the Riding in which it is raised.

After this statement of our financial position, I trust that those ratepayers whose properties abut on private roads will, at least, modify their transports of indignation against me for failing to give them the assistance out of the ratepayers' money that they desire. I would remind them that the provisions of the special improvement rate have been purposely inserted in the Act to meet their case. So long as I am in the Council, my services will be ever at their disposal to enable them to reap the full measure of the benefit arising therefrom; but in the present state of many of our Government roads, of which we have still about 100 miles unformed, and with the means at our disposal to improve them, more than this I dare not promise to do.

Soon after I was elected to the Council, I was struck with the fact that we have in our Shire many acres of unused land on our unnecessarily wide roads, and the idea suggested itself to me

that here was something which might be turned to our advantage if we reduced the roads in width and sold the frontages to the ratepayers entitled to them.

Upon looking up the Act, however, I found that the whole of the proceeds of such sale went to the Government. I therefore determined, if possible, to secure an alteration of the Act, and with that view got the consent of my colleagues in the Council to bring the matter before the Municipal Association. Accordingly, at the annual session in October of that year I had an opportunity of submitting my proposal, in the form of a motion, to the delegates of the Councils in meeting assembled, amending the clause so that the proceeds of such sale should be paid into the municipal fund of each Council. My motion was seconded by the Mayor of Bendigo, and carried unanimously, and I was warmly congratulated for having brought a matter of such great importance to the municipalities under their attention.

A Royal Commission was then sitting and enquiring into several suggested amendments to the L.G.A.

The Royal Commission embodied my proposal in their recommendation to the Government exactly as I submitted it, but when the new Bill was drafted, a slight modification was introduced, and now, under the new Act, the Councils receive half the proceeds direct, and the other half is paid into the fund called the Closed Roads' Fund, from which grants are to be made to necessitous Shires.

Our engineer has made for me an approximate estimate of the superfluous land on the roads in this Shire, and he computes it roughly at something over 800 acres.

Now, valuing this all round at, say, £5 per acre—and some of it is worth considerably more—a present has been made to us, by this amendment of the Act, of something like £4000, half of which we can get immediately, and the other half we can obtain later on, if we make out a sufficiently good claim for it.

Now, you will remember that I referred earlier in the evening to a scheme I had for reducing our expenditure, and this is it. We should, I think, sell this land and use the proceeds to save further payments into the sinking fund, and every ratepayer throughout the Shire would receive his share of the benefit arising therefrom. We should then have an additional £250 per annum to spend in improving the roads of the Shire.

Our Riding is advancing rapidly, and its assessment is now higher than that of either of the other subdivisions of the Shire—a result which is due, of course, to the settlement of population which is taking place, and to the improvements which are being effected.

It is our duty as Councillors, so far as we can, to endeavour to keep pace with this develop-

ment, and render this portion of the Shire still more attractive to those in search of homes.

It has a great future before it. Its accessibility to Melbourne and its natural features offer great attractions for settlement.

I find, on reference to the books, that, since September of last year, new works have been carried out in this Riding to the extent of £700. Now, from what I have stated previously, you will understand that this could not have been done out of our ordinary resources had they not been supplemented by Government grants and private subscriptions, which account for more than half the above sum. To do justice to the growing importance of our Riding, we should require to spend on new works at least as much as this every year. Many of our bridges and culverts, constructed out of loan moneys 17 years ago, require repairs, and the extension of our roads involves the necessity of an increased supply of maintenance.

During the last two years we have effected a saving in the cost of our administration by a readjustment of the duties of our officers.

I conceive it to be our duty to endeavour to keep the working expenses of the Shire within reasonable limits, and to take advantage of every legitimate means at our disposal to increase our income without adding further to the burdens of the ratepayers.

There are other matters affecting the prosperity of our district which claim our attention as your representatives. We require improvement in our train service, both as to additional trains and a lessening of the delays and inconveniences to which we are at present subjected.

Additional recreation reserves are required at all the centres of population for our young people to indulge in every form of manly sport.

Combined action, too, on the part of the municipalities is necessary to deal effectively with the "starling" and other pests which are threatening the existence of our fruit industry.

In matters such as these, even though they do not come within the four corners of the Local Government Act, we should be the mouthpieces of the ratepayers, and bring the whole weight of our municipal organisation to bear on any movement which makes for the protection and advancement of the interests of the ratepayers.

And now, Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I fear I must have tired you with this long address, but before concluding I feel a duty to you, as well as to myself, to refer to some statements which have been circulated to damage me in the eyes of the ratepayers of the S.W. Riding. I hold in my hand a letter which I received today from one of the many steadfast friends I

have in this Riding. In it the writer informs me of reasons which have been urged by my opponents against my candidature.

1st. That I am not a resident of the S.W. Riding.

2nd. That the moneys of the Riding are taken to beautify Lilydale.

3rd. That the Mechanics' Institute and Public Baths at Lilydale are maintained at the expense of the S.W. Riding.

Now, Mr. Chairman, and ladies and gentlemen, some, if not all, of you know that there is not a scintilla or semblance of truth in any of these statements, and I should not deem them worthy of notice did I not fear that some who have come to this district recently may be misled by them.

I will answer them seriatim.

To the first, I will say I am and have been a resident ratepayer of the South-Western Riding for the past twenty years, and own 320 acres almost in the centre of it.

No. 2. No money of this Riding is taken to beautify Lilydale. The improvements recently made have been effected entirely by private subscription.

No. 3. The Mechanics' Institute belongs to you as much as it does to any other portion of the Shire. It is a very good asset. It is worth at least three times what was given for it, and last year netted a profit to the S.W. Riding of £8 6s. 4d., which has gone to help to make our roads.

No. 4. We have nothing to do with the Baths, which are regarded as being entirely the property of the N.W. Riding.

Surely an election might be fought out on more honourable lines than these. If my opponents find it necessary to resort to such questionable expedients as calumny and misrepresentation, their position must be that of the attorney who whispered to the barrister he was instructing, "No case. Abuse the other side."

Ladies and gentlemen, I challenge my detractors to say that I have shirked my duty as your representative. I have endeavoured to serve the ratepayers faithfully and honourably, without fear or favour to any portion of the Riding.

During these nine years I have placed, unreservedly, at your disposal the best gifts which God has endowed me with. If you still have faith in me, if you think I have done my duty, if you feel that I have made the best use of the opportunities I have had of advancing your interests, then I will ask you, even though it be at the cost of some personal inconvenience, to put forth your most strenuous efforts on Thursday, Aug. 24, to mark your approval of my past actions, by securing my return once more as your trusted representative.