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1947 Exchange Speech

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Exchange 13 Oct. 1947

Dear fellow Exchangites---

Now that the presentation has been made, I am really embarrassed. You may expect too much from me, and I know that I am not a public speaker. But I don't want to deceive you and I shall try to give you some facts concerning the Lewiston City Government, even if I have to be "short".

May I take this occasion to tell you how much I appreciate the great cooperation most of you have given me since I became your Chief Executive. In return may I assure you of my sincere efforts to help ~~make~~ you solve any problem that may arise. I am open to any suggestions on your part and I want you to bear in mind that I have been elected Mayor not ~~only~~ for a few but for everyone in this community. I am at your service and I hope you won't hesitate to call on me.

Since I have been inaugurated I have had many problems to tackle and in my estimation, the best way to handle such problems is to be human and use common sense. There is a human side even in municipal figures.

But there is also another great principle involved in the local government, and that is to eliminate petty politics in the administration of the City affairs.

Your city government is run by various boards and commissions which employ a great number of persons to do the work. Every member of the staff, whether they be elected, nominated, appointed or hired becomes a public servant and as such is pledged to serve the citizens to the best of his or her ability. To serve the public means to be loyal, unbiased, fair and honest.

Since my inauguration, I appointed different citizens as members of boards, commissions and special committees. In every case my choice was guided primarily by the qualifications of the appointees. Some of those I have selected were far from being ~~my~~ my personal friends, but I knew they could do a good job. Some others were personally unknown to me but were recom-

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MENDED TO ME BY SOME CITIZENS AND AFTER INVESTIGATION I APPOINTED THEM. THEY STAND AMONG THE BEST YOU COULD FIND IN THIS CITY, AND THE ONLY THING I KNOW ABOUT THEIR POLITICS IS THAT THEY ARE CITIZENS AND ENTITLED TO VOTE AS LONG AS THEY ARE CAPABLE OF BEING OF SERVICE TO THE CITIZENS, I FEEL THEY SHOULD BE APPOINTED. WHEN I SAID, BEFORE ELECTION, THAT I WAS PLEDGED TO NO ONE FOR ANY OF THE APPOINTMENTS TO BE MADE, THAT WAS EXACTLY WHAT I MEANT, AND IT STILL STAND.

FOR THE PAST SEVEN MONTHS OR SO IT HAS BEEN A REAL PLEASURE FOR ME TO WORK WITH THE MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL. THERE YOU HAVE A FINE GROUP OF MEN THAT HAVE THE GUTS AND WILL STAND ON THEIR FEET TO RESIST ANY PRESSURE. THEY DESERVE CREDIT FOR THE WORK THEY HAVE DONE TO WELL SERVE THE PEOPLE. THEY TOO BELIEVE IN BEING HUMAN AND USING COMMON SENSE. IT CERTAINLY WAS NOT FOR THEIR OWN ENJOYMENT THAT THEY VOTED SUCH ORDINANCES AS THOSE CONCERNING THE ZONING, FIREWORKS, OVERNIGHT PARKING AND OTHERS.

AS FOR THE CITY FINANCES, THERE IS A VERY CAPABLE GROUP OF MEN TO TAKE CARE OF THAT. I MEAN THE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF FINANCE. LET ME SAY TO YOU, GENTLEMEN, THAT I WOULD GO TO BAT ANYTIME, ANYWHERE, FOR SUCH DEPENDABLE CITY OFFICIALS. I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT THEY ARE HONEST, MOST COOPERATIVE AND THEIR ONLY INTEREST IS TO WISELY SPEND THE TAXPAYERS' MONEY, ^{and} NOT WASTE IT.

IN THE PAST, SOME DEPARTMENTS USED TO REQUEST TRANSFERS FROM THE CONTINGENT FUND, EVEN ONE MONTH AFTER THE BUDGET HAD BEEN VOTED. UP TO THE PRESENT TIME, AND WE HAVE BEEN IN OFFICE SEVEN MONTHS OR SO, THE CONTINGENT FUND HAS BEEN KEPT INTACT. WE INTEND TO KEEP IT THAT WAY UNLESS THERE BE A CONTINGENCY, WHICH MEANS AN EMERGENCY, AND NOTHING ELSE.

THE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF FINANCE HAVE ALSO RULED A FEW ^{months} ~~years~~ AGO THAT FROM NOW ON, NO ADVERTISEMENT OF ANY KIND SHALL BE PAID BY THE CITY FOR PUBLICATION IN MAGAZINES OR PROGRAMS. THE RULE SHALL APPLY TO EVERYONE AND TO EVERY OCCASION. TOO MANY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE PAST HAVE CONSIDERED THE CITY TO BE A SANTA CLAUS. THE TAXPAYERS' MONEY ^{should be used} ~~BE~~ FOR THE TAXPAYERS' BENEFIT ~~AND~~ AND NOTHING ELSE.

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OTHER BOARDS OR COMMISSIONS ARE ALSO COOPERATIVE AND DESERVE A GREAT DEAL OF CREDIT. ONE OF THEM IS THE PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD OF WHICH OUR FELLOW EXCHANGITE, JOS. GENDRON, IS THE CHAIRMAN. ANOTHER ^{ONE} IS THE PUBLIC LIBRARY, OF WHICH OUR FELLOW EXCHANGITE [REDACTED] ELWOOD ROSS IS A TRUSTEE. ANOTHER ONE IS THE MEMORIAL ARENA COMMITTEE OF WHICH FELLOW EXCHANGITES CHICK LEBLANC AND LARRY CHAREST ARE MEMBERS.

AS FAR AS THE CITY'S EMPLOYEES ARE CONCERNED, THEY REPRESENT A LARGE FAMILY AND I AM CONVINCED THAT ALL OF THEM ARE ENJOYING SATISFACTORY WORKING CONDITIONS AND DECENT SALARIES OR WAGES.

BY THE WAY, SPEAKING OF WAGES AND SALARIES, THAT MEANS TAXES. AS YOU KNOW, THE TAX RATE FOR 1947-48 HAS BEEN SET AT 44 MILLS. THE CITY IS PAYING THIS YEAR A SUM OF ABOUT \$160,000 MORE THAN LAST YEAR FOR WAGES. THAT ALONE WOULD HAVE JUSTIFIED AN INCREASE OF MORE THAN FIVE MILLS. THEN YOU HAVE NEW MACHINERY, NEW MATERIAL, [REDACTED] MORE IMPROVEMENTS THAN EVER BEFORE, PUBLIC WORKS OF ALL KINDS. DEMANDS FOR SERVICES HAVE MORE THAN TRIPLED SINCE THE WAR IS OVER. THE COST OF LIVING HAS INCREASED IN EVERY HOME, BUT THE COSTS OF REPAIRS, MAINTENANCE, NEW PROJECTS AND SALARIES HAVE ALSO INCREASED IN EVERY CITY.

STILL, OUR TAX RATE IS AMONG THE LOWEST IN THE STATE AND LEWISTON WILL KEEP ON WITHOUT A SPECIAL [REDACTED] WATER TAX, WITHOUT A SPECIAL SEWER TAX, WITHOUT A SPECIAL SNOW REMOVAL TAX.

IF SOME PEOPLE CONSIDER IT A CRIME FOR A MAYOR TO BE IN OFFICE UNDER A 44 MILL TAX RATE AFTER FAVORING AN INCREASE IN WAGES FOR THE CITY'S EMPLOYEES AND A PROGRAM OF EXPANSION FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CITIZENS, THEN I AM TWICE GUILTY, BECAUSE I PROPOSE TO KEEP ON PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE AND GIVE THE TAXPAYERS SOMETHING REALLY WORTH WHILE FOR THEIR MONEY.

THE CITY OF LEWISTON HAS BEEN FOLLOWING TOO MUCH OF A ROUTINE UP TO THE PRESENT TIME. I REMEMBER THE DAY WHEN A PROMINENT CITIZEN MADE A PUBLIC STATEMENT SAYING THAT LEWISTON WAS A CITY WITHOUT A SOUL. HE WAS

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RIGHT. OF COURSE THERE ARE NUMEROUS WONDERFUL ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE WORKING IN THE INTERESTS OF THEIR MEMBERSHIP; THEY PROVIDE SHELTER, OR ENTERTAINMENT OR WELFARE TO THEIR OWN MEMBERS. BUT HOW ABOUT THE CITY ITSELF?

LET US WAKE UP TO THE REALIZATION THAT MONEY OR FINANCES ALONE DO NOT PROVIDE THE TRUE WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE. TAXPAYERS ARE PAYING WHAT IT COSTS TO MAINTAIN A MUNICIPAL COURT. AND THEY PAY WHAT IT COSTS TO DEAL WITH CASES OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY. OF COURSE, THAT MUST BE PAID FOR IN TAXES. BUT DOES THAT MEAN ██████ IT IS SUFFICIENT? IS IT WHAT YOU MAY REALLY CALL PUBLIC WELFARE? I SAY NO.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO ELIMINATE OR AT LEAST REDUCE THOSE CASES OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY. LET US PROVIDE ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE KIDS. GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO KEEP AWAY FROM MISCHIEF. LET OUR GOVERNMENT BE NOT ONLY HONEST AND FAIR TO EVERYONE, BUT HUMANITARIAN. LET US HAVE A CITY WITH A SOUL SO IT CAN BE CONSIDERED ONCE AND FOR ALL A LIVING COMMUNITY WHOSE CITIZENS REALIZE THAT THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR, SOMETHING WORTHWHILE. PAYING FOR, ^{SOMEONE} ~~XXXX~~/TO BE MADE HAPPY.

AS I SAID BEFORE, I PROPOSE TO KEEP ON PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE. THE ONLY INTEREST I HAVE IN BEING MAYOR IS TO SEE LEWISTON BECOME THE BEST COMMUNITY IN MAINE. IN A VERY SHORT PERIOD OF TIME YOU HAVE WITNESSED SOME IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS CITY. MORE ARE COMING. NO DOUBT IN MY MIND THAT LEWISTON IS THE CITY OF TO-MORROW. WE HAVE ALL THE NECESSARY ELEMENTS TO MAKE IT SO.

A PART OF THE PROGRAM I PROPOSE TO SUGGEST TO THE PROPER BOARDS IN THE NEAR FUTURE INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING: THE BUILDING OF A NEW RESERVOIR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, FOR THE PROTECTION OF A VERY WIDE SECTION OF THE CITY; A NEW SUB-STATION FOR THE LISBON ROAD AREA; STREET LIGHTS EVERYWHERE WITHIN THE CITY LIMITS; NEW STREET SIGNS; MORE AND MORE SIDEWALK REPAIRS OR NEW SIDEWALKS.

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IN ABOUT TWO MONTHS, THE LAND ~~BE~~ PRESENTLY OCCUPIED BY THE PUBLIC WORKS WILL BE VACANT. THAT AREA BETWEEN BATES AND BLAKE STREETS IS 200 FEET ~~WIDE~~ WIDE BY 200 FEET LONG. I SUGGEST THAT IT BE CONVERTED INTO A BEAUTIFUL PARK WITH SWIMMING POOLS FOR ADULTS AS WELL AS FOR YOUNGSTERS.

AS FOR THE CITY PARK SWIMMING POOL, I UNDERSTAND IT MIGHT BE CONDEMNED BY THE STATE FOR SAFETY REASONS. I WOULD SUGGEST THAT A NEW ONE, ~~WIDE~~ ~~WIDE~~ A BETTER ONE BE BUILT. THEN ^{معلم} WHY NOT GET RID OF THE OLD BAND STAND AND HAVE A PERMANENT STAGE ON THE PARK STREET SIDE OF THE PARK?

THERE IS ANOTHER PROBLEM AND THAT'S THE ONE CONCERNING THE PLAYGROUNDS. THE CITY IS QUITE BEHIND IN THAT FIELD AND SOMETHING MUST BE DONE ABOUT IT. RIGHT NOW A NEW PLAYGROUND IS DEVELOPPING ON CEDAR STREET, NEXT TO THE SOUTH BRIDGE. THAT WILL SERVE THE CHILDREN LIVING IN THAT SECTION OF THE CITY ~~WIDE~~ SO THEY WILL NOT HAVE TO CROSS CEDAR STREET RIGHT IN THE PATH OF TRAFFIC TO ENJOY THE LINCOLN STREET PLAYGROUND FACILITIES. IN A FEW DAYS THE CITY WILL BUY NEW EQUIPMENT FOR THAT CEDAR STREET PLAYGROUND.

NOW A WORD ABOUT THE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES IN THIS COMMUNITY.

SOME OF YOU MAY KNOW ABOUT THE PROPOSED CIVIC CENTER. SOME OF YOU MAY THINK IT'S ONLY A PIPE-DREAM. WELL I WISH TO STATE RIGHT NOW THAT THE PROPOSED CIVIC AND SPORTS CENTER WILL BECOME A REALITY. AND I TAKE THIS OCCASION RIGHT HERE TO MAKE A DOUBLE STATEMENT:

NOT ONE PENNY OF THE TAXPAYERS' MONEY ~~WIDE~~ IS GOING TO BE USED FOR THAT PROJECT. FURTHERMORE, THE CIVIC CENTER WILL SAVE FROM \$25,000 TO \$30,000 EVERY YEAR TO THE CITY, THAT IS TO THE TAXPAYERS. THAT MAY SOUND RIDICULOUS, FOOLISH AND EXAGGERATED, BUT I AM NO DREAMER.

THERE ARE CERTAIN FACTS THAT THE MAYOR AND THE MEMBERS OF THE MEMORIAL COMMITTEE ARE PLEDGED NOT TO REVEAL FOR THE PRESENT. I SHALL KEEP THAT PLEDGE. I REALIZE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO HEAR ABOUT THAT PROPOSED MEMORIAL ARENA AND CIVIC CENTER. THE ONLY THING I MAY ASK YOU IS TO BE PATIENT AND VERY CONFIDENT FOR A FEW MORE WEEKS. I KNOW THAT THE SPORTS FANS OF BOTH CITIES ARE GOING TO WITNESS IN THE NEAR FUTURE SOMETHING

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REALLY EXCITING.

DETERMINATION IS THE WATCH-WORD. THE FUTURE OF LEWISTON IS OUR ONLY AMBITION. THE WELFARE OF OUR YOUTH IS OUR AIM. AND NOTHING SHALL INTERFERE WITH IT IF EVERYONE OF YOU HAS THE SAME FAITH, THE SAME CONFIDENCE.

SOME OF YOU MAY WONDER AT THIS MOMENT WHAT I AM TALKING ABOUT. WELL, GENTLEMEN, I ONLY SPEAK YOUR OWN LANGUAGE, THE LANGUAGE OF ANY CITIZEN WHO BELIEVES IN TO-MORROW AND IS READY AND WILLING TO GIVE A BREAK TO HIS COMMUNITY; I SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF YOUNG VETERANS WHO FOUGHT AND DIED SO THAT YOU MAY LIVE A BETTER LIFE; THE LANGUAGE OF YOUTH; THE LANGUAGE OF ALL THOSE WHO REALIZE THAT THE DAY HAS COME WHEN OUR YOUNG ELEMENT SHOULD BE BETTER TAKEN CARE OF.

BE OPTIMISTIC; HAVE FAITH IN YOUR CITY; HELP TO MAKE IT THE BEST AND THE MOST REMARKABLE CITY IN THE WORLD. YOU CAN DO IT, I KNOW.

IN CLOSING, MAY I SAY THAT BEING YOUR MAYOR IS QUITE AN HONOR BUT ALSO QUITE A ~~REMARKABLE~~ RESPONSIBILITY. ~~I HAVE~~ ~~BEEN~~ ~~DOING~~ ~~MY~~ ~~BEST~~ ~~TO~~ ~~BE~~ ~~OF~~ ~~SERVICE~~ ~~TO~~ ~~ALL~~ ~~AND~~ ~~WHEN~~ ~~MY~~ ~~TIME~~ ~~TO~~ ~~SERVE~~ ~~YOU~~ ~~IS~~ ~~UP~~ I WISH TO LEAVE A GOOD CLEAN RECORD. ~~THANK YOU.~~ THANK YOU.

at the present time we are organizing the visit of the Freedom Train for October 26; we are getting ready ~~to give~~ ~~to~~ for the day when the first body of ~~and~~ a Lewiston boy killed in action in Europe will ~~arrive~~ arrive here. The ship will be at New York on October 26 and the body of that first local boy should be here 10 days later. We may be called upon to-morrow to sit at a settlement meeting in the threatened bus strike. Then there are housing problems, eviction cases, ~~after~~ interviews, meetings every day, fire drills, banquets, social calls and, of course, my personal business to attend to. And there you have it.

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