

Critics of Fire Truck Deal Demand City Rescind Purchase Action

COUNCIL AWAITS HITCHCOCK'S RETURN BEFORE ACTING ON ADVICE GIVEN BY CITIZENS

(Continued from Page 1-A) Its members were honest in their efforts.

Murray's question addressed to the citizen-critics of the deal "why didn't you give us any help when we were considering buying the truck?" was abruptly answered by Attorney Isen who said: "We didn't because we didn't know anything about it."

Murray then said he recalled talking to both Isen and Prewett before the negotiations were completed "because you asked me about it."

Prewett responded by saying "I told you to kill it because it was dynamite—and I told that to Tolson, too." Murray concluded his part in the proceedings by stating that "I'm just as anxious as you to get this thrashed out and cleaned up. But I'd suggest you put your questions in writing."

Says it was Poor Buy Isen, who opened the discussion of the fire truck deal two weeks ago, again started the Tuesday night debate. After expressing his pleasure at see-

ing such a large crowd present—"the largest, I believe, ever to attend a council session"—he said that he felt "it was my civic duty to open discussion on the fire truck purchase at the last meeting."

"I felt then that most people believed the truck was a new truck and since the history of the equipment has been revealed, it has become a topic of general interest. I'm still of the same opinion—that the city got a very poor buy. A great many citizens have expressed opinions to me that the truck should be returned."

Quotes Former Chief

The attorney then read a written statement from Ben Hannebrink, chief of the city fire department for 17 years (from 1916 to 1933) in which Hannebrink stated he "seriously doubted the need of a new truck at the present time. The present apparatus is sufficient and if new equipment is needed I would recommend competitive bids. I do not consider the purchase a good deal on ac-

count of the truck's age . . . Torrance should only buy brand-new equipment."

Isen continued with a report on what he said was the financial background of the truck deal. He said it was not a cash purchase as the document pertaining to the deal was a rental agreement on which the city has made the first payment of \$2,000, which will apply on the purchase price. He said the lease must be renewed annually and by 1942, when the last payment is made, the truck will have cost the city a total of \$9,611.77.

New Points Brought Out

He then reviewed the history of the truck as obtained from council records. This showed it was originally built in 1932 and has been used as

a show truck in several Pacific Coast cities; that it has had portions of its equipment removed at various times and these replaced from the Mack Truck factory. New points about the truck brought out by Isen were:

"The tires were manufactured many, many years prior to 1929. I think they are unsafe. The motor has three carburetors on it. I think other cities have made far better deals in acquiring new fire equipment. Ingelwood recently purchased a La France 750-gallon pumper which develops 1,000-gallons per minute (the same rated capacity as the city's Mack-Ed.) for \$9,400 less five percent for cash. Lynwood bought a Seagraves at Columbus, Ohio for \$9,609.85. This will be the first model of that make on the coast and it is a 750-gallon pumper that develops 1,000 gallons."

"The whole subject of our pump truck revolves itself into just what difference there may be in a 1932 product and a 1939 apparatus. I have obtained the following statement from an expert on fire trucks. I am withholding his name at his request at this time but if necessary I can get his permission to reveal it."

Don't Want Old Truck

This statement pointed out the improvements to body designs of fire truck—streamline effects which protect miscellaneous equipment; lighter and stronger metals in use today, complete cab enclosures which protect firemen in wet weather; lighter and stronger chassis design; improved motors that develop greater horsepower and better pump equipment that make a 750-gallon machine capable of equalling the older 1,000-gallon types.

Isen declared he was convinced the Mack truck can be returned to the dealer. "The deal is not a popular one and it should be dropped. Then open the purchase of a new truck to competitive bidding. That is what we're here for tonight. We don't want that old truck."

Introduced by Isen as a Navy man of 20 years' service, B. M. Prewett continued the discussion by stating he wanted to "correct an erroneous statement in the Herald. I did not say two weeks ago that the Mack truck now in the city fire department broke down on a test run in San Diego. I only asked the council if that was true. It was a question, not a statement of fact. I was merely quoting a report I heard."

(Mayor Tolson was quoted in last week's Herald as having a written statement from the Mack Truck company that the truck's mechanism did not break down in San Diego under a test, and had never been in the possession of the San Diego fire department.)

"I want to ask the council what guarantee on this truck accompanies its purchase?" Prewett questioned. "I can find no mention of a guarantee. Yet the same truck was offered to Gardena—and turned down—with an unconditional three-year guarantee at the same price we're paying for it. Why has the truck three carburetors on it?"

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14 Queries About Mack Pumper Put In Writing

- In accordance with Mayor Tolson's suggestion to "put it in writing," B. M. Prewett yesterday submitted a copy of the 14 questions he asked the city council Tuesday night concerning mechanical features of the much-criticized Mack pumper truck for the fire department. These were:
1. What is the guarantee on this truck incorporated in the purchase contract?
 2. What year was the motor manufactured now in this truck?
 3. When was it installed in this truck?
 4. What was its original horsepower rating?
 5. Why does it have three carburetors?
 6. How many miles had this motor been driven prior to its delivery to Torrance?
 7. How many pumping hours had it been run?
 8. What year was the pump manufactured and when was it installed?
 9. What vacuum does this pump develop at 120 pounds pressure?
 10. How many hours had it been operated prior to delivery to Torrance?
 11. If this was new truck

12. If this was a new truck that had been used for show purposes as stated in the seller's letter to the council, why was it necessary to dismantle the pump and motor? Also, to put new piston rings in the motor?
13. Has this truck ever been registered as a demonstrator, in accordance with the California Motor Vehicle requirement, which requires the registration of all demonstrators and payment of sales tax?
14. When were the tires installed on this truck?

change was made in 1934. City Clerk A. H. Bartlett, at the request of Isen, re-read the letter from the Mack Truck company which detailed the equipment's history since 1932 and affirmed it was in excellent condition and approved by the Board of Fire Underwriters.

Howard P. Raymond, unsuccessful candidate for city council in 1938 and National Supply employee, opined that the purchase of the truck "sounds like we've paid or intend to pay the price of a new truck for an old one. If we can get a new truck for \$12,000 we should do that rather than pay for a second-hand one."

Later Raymond suggested the creation of a special committee to go into the truck deal. "It's hard to work out and decide just what to do in helping a city council which is reluctant to take action, but I propose that we get some qualified truck salesmen, Mr. Isen and a committee of local men who understand motors to get the facts and figures and work out a solution. The taxpayers don't want this old truck."

Favors Reconsideration

Ed Thompson, in reply to Raymond's suggestion, pointed out that "I don't believe you will get any salesmen from any other agency to come and serve on such a committee because that isn't being done."

"Why can't we give the truck back?" Isen persisted. "Why can't you (referring to the city council) look at it our way? Let's start all over again, contact the Mack Truck people and get rid of this old equipment. Who's going to be hurt. I want to see the taxpayers get a full 100 cents on the dollar."

Councilman Powell re-entered the discussion by saying he appreciated the interest shown by the large crowd present—"it shows that a spirit of democracy still exists in America. If the people take an interest in government, you'll have good government. We're your servants. I'm in favor of reconsidering this proposition when the council is in the whole again."

Thompson Offers Help

But Isen insisted on immediate action, saying: "I can't see any reason to postpone the thing a month or six weeks. It's going to cost us money." Speaking as a businessman

who has been in the automobile business for 18 years, Ed Thompson told the council: "I don't think you knew much about that truck. But it's the same proposition as a man who has been dead for 10 years and came back to life—he wouldn't look the same. That's the condition of your fire truck. If you want, I'll be glad to show you how to return that truck and I believe the Mack people will refund your money less the rental cost. If they don't take it back, then give it back to them and we citizens will stand the \$2,000 lost on the deal."

After inquiring if there were any more comments and none being offered, Mayor Tolson his statement.

Eliminated Tax Increase

"I'm glad the people are showing an interest in the affairs of the city. If I wasn't a city official and I saw that ad in the paper (referring to the advertisement published in last week's Herald by the "Citizens' Investigating Committee" urging attendance at the Tuesday night council session) I would have been here like the rest of you."

"When the municipal budget was set up in July, a small amount, \$3,650, was put aside for fire department equipment. The council had no idea at that time of acquiring any fire trucks. Then we got prices on necessary repairs to our present equipment and found it would cost about \$2,000."

"About that time the Mack Truck company contacted us and proposed that we take this 1000-gallon Type 95 Mack pumper in such a way that we would not have to upset our budget. You realize, don't you that an expenditure of \$8,000 would mean about four cents on the tax rate?"

No "High-Pressure"

"We discussed the matter for six weeks or two months, running every report for or against. I saw that ad in the Herald. Mr. Hitchcock and Mr. McGuire put in considerable work investigating it and the whole council questioned the Los Angeles manager of the Mack Truck company and concluded it was a good truck."

"We have letters from the company that the equipment is the same type, same in all details, performance and design, as trucks of current manufacture. So we went ahead and made the lease arrangements. A \$2,000 payment was not exorbitant to pay for such equipment for a year—I know what truck rentals are."

Raps Rumor-Runners

"I've also talked with representatives of other fire truck manufacturers and they told me the city made a good buy—so it appears just a difference of opinion on the part of some of our citizens here. I'm satisfied now that we got a good deal. I know what I'm talking about. I know the Mack Truck company because I have dealt with the firm for years, buying my first Mack truck in 1915 and that firm doesn't misrepresent."

Tolson then quoted the prices paid in Signal Hill (for a Seagraves) \$13,842.20 and Huntington Park (also for a Seagraves), \$14,960 with an alternative bid of \$10,690. Noting an under-

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