

Letter To The Herald Editor: Concerned Citizen Expresses Views Toward Local Political Picture

Two independent councilmen were defeated in the November 3rd municipal elections in Edenton. What does this mean?

First consider recent history.

A few years ago Hornthal and Fenner lost. Hornthal ran for the at-large seat. Then Roy got Fenner to run against Hornthal.

So Roy had not delivered his promise to put a black man on council.

In the meanwhile Harry Spruill had marriage difficulties. Roy harassed Spruill unmercifully regarding his residency during these moments and Spruill resigned.

So Roy got brother-in-law Fenner to nominate Fenner for Spruill's vacant seat. Burroughs, Ricks, Hornthal, and Hollowell elected W. Privott 4 to 1 to fill the vacancy.

Again Roy had failed to deliver a seat to Fenner and he Civic League.

But years earlier Roy had helped elect Burroughs. When it became obvious that he (Roy) could not keep up with his school teacher's questions, he reneged and tried a third time to elect Fenner. An apathetic public helped Roy succeed. In the exchange though Edenton lacks lost their best friend on council.

The poor turnout means the continuation of Roy Harrell as mayor. It also means that we will continue to see his immaturity as a community officer. For after several terms of office Roy still has not learned to work with independent and capable talent.

When a councilman questions an empty answer Roy works to defeat or reassign his instead of being grateful that the councilman was alert. This suggests jealousy of those independent of his clique. The latest example was recently when Roy appointed most experienced council left (Hornthal and Hollowell) to trivial committees mostly while the critical finance and utility committees are loaded with inexperienced people whom Roy helped elect and whom Roy may more easily guide as Roy thinks best.

Criticism has already emerged.

In the November 20 Daily Advance, Roy offers to "entertain any motion regarding appointments if a councilmember would bring it up at the next meeting."

Roy, that's a sham offer—you've got three votes (Fenner, Griffin, Hampton) and so who breaks a 3-3 tie vote but the mayor. An have you ever reversed yourself!

The losers in all of this will be the people and future of Edenton. No one, black or white, young or old, rich or poor, is well served by council composed of three yes-men and their tie-breaker sponsor.

What Roy Harrell has done by working against Burroughs and Ricks and by loading the most important committees of council with inexperience is say to all of Edenton, "Do it my way or else!"

Roy is saying, "Don't give Edenton the best of your experience and talent unless you clear it with me first!"

We join Edith Bunker in telling Archie Bunker and Roy Harrell, "Don't stifle us!"

Why is "my way or else" so dangerous?

It is dangerous because a council of "yes" men is a sterile affair, a council of moral midgets and intellectual dwarfs.

Everyone—black and white—worth his salt knows that he or she alone does not know enough about anything that he cannot profit from a second opinion. But how often will you give a second opinion to someone who will turn it against you? And will not the absence of skillfully expressed different views be the downfall of Edenton?

Clearly Roy Harrell's record does not sustain confidence that he

welcomes ideas or actions different from his own.

Does anyone therefore expect Fenner or Griffin to demonstrate backbone or original and independent thought in view of Roy's moves against Burroughs and Ricks? Can we expect them to be anything else other than rubber stamps for Roy?

And can you imagine what might happen if, wonder of wonders, Steve Hampton ever spoke out for an independent council? Would Roy purge his own family?

An so we ask, To what is Roy Harrell loyal? What is

his vision for Edenton?

It seems that his loyalty is only to winning for the sake of winning because the very men who press questions on timely topics and whose talents can assist in the solving of tough issues have been purged by Roy and his clique.

So the issues remain unsolved and the hour grows late.

Mark my words, even now Roy is planning to run someone against Hollowell and Hornthal in two years. He will charge them with not contributing to the council and bet the public will forget

that the contributions which Hornthal and Hollowell might make was limited by Roy himself when he put them on trivia committees. And this Roy does because he cannot work well with talents greater or different from his own.

Edenton as a beautiful and innovative town is slowly failing. Roy is not altogether to blame though. Apathetic voters (actually non-voters) must share this indictment because their silence implies consent to Roy's view of "Do it my way or else."

So what will happen in '82

and '83?

Will Hornthal continue to initiate new ideas or will the indifference of many bring him to the slow death of "Why should I care if no one else cares?"

"Will Hollowell eye the town's finances even though he has been purged from the Finance Committee and exiled to the "Trees"."

Will Privott bring out the diversity in the black community or will he be intimidated by the Civic League? Will Privott remember that Burroughs and Ricks sustained his nomination out of con-

viction, not convenience?

Will Fenner remember St. Paul's appreciation for the different members of the Body of Christ and the absolute necessity of each to the success of the whole and thereby show maturity lacking in his sponsor?

Or will Fenner let past disappointments govern him now?

Will Hampton remember that he is first a councilman for the people of his ward? Will he work to resolve difficulties in the Town Charter in favor of an independent and strong council—at least save the

taxpayers money by abolishing the council!

Will Griffin hide behind "listening to the people" and in effect listen only to Roy?

Will any of these men have enough guts to tell Roy when he is in order, when he is out of order, and so remain faithful to their obligation to vote their own ballot?

This whole matter concerns more than Edenton. It concerns all of Chowan County for the very simple reason that the reputation of Edenton sets that reputation of Chowan County and not

vice-versa. Maybe things should not be this way but that's how I see it. And so citizens beyond the city limits should chastize those who do not vote and speak to those who do, particularly to six councilmen.

For whatever Edenton needs now, it does not need a rubber stamp council of three yes-men and a tie-breaker.

Where is Edenton going? And does anyone care?

John A. Mitchener, III

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