

# THE HICKORY DEMOCRAT

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## Commission Form at Greensboro

**NOTHING LESS THAN DEATH OF ALL HER INTELLIGENT CITIZENS WOULD CAUSE THAT CITY TO GO BACK TO OLD GOVERNMENT**

**Tax Rate Same as Under Old Form of Government—City's Conduct Same as that of Any Successful Corporation—Expenses of Government Are No Greater than Before, while Waste and Loss Practically Nothing, Whereas Under Old Conditions They were a Large but Unknown Amount—Commissions Paid to Previous Tax Collectors Now Pay Salary of one Commissioner, who Does Five or Six Times the Work of Previous Tax Collectors—Purchases for City Made in a Systematic Manner—Nothing to Condemn but Everything to Commend Commission Form of Government.**

Greensboro, N. C., Feb. 25, 1913.

Mr. A. K. Joy, Hickory, N. C.

Dear Sir: Replying to your esteemed favor of the 24th inst., beg to thank you for your action in handling the resolution in regard to freight discrimination and also to further state in regard to the working of the commission form of government in Greensboro that it has more than met our most sanguine hopes. It is almost sickening to contemplate the old slipshod methods of handling the city's affairs. Committees were appointed ad libitum which usually did nothing; aldermanic meetings were held about one night every two weeks; responsibility for failure to perform anything could never be placed upon anyone in particular, and if so, the plea was that one's own business could not be neglected, in order to give gratuitous service to the city, and all the other ills to which an impracticable system of so-called government is subject.

The city's business is now conducted as is that of any of our successful corporations by men who are paid to stay on the job and do nothing else. They hold a public meeting every day at half-past two and each of the three commissioners has certain specific duties for which he and he alone is held responsible. The expenses of the city are no greater than before and the waste and loss directly are practically nothing, where under previous conditions they amounted to a large but unknown amount. We have paved more streets and with better paving in the last two years than in all our previous history. We have added to and improved our water system until we probably have the best in the state, certainly as good as any. The 20-acre park within six blocks of the Court House, which had previously been neglected, has by the expenditure of a very small amount of money and proper attention added at least \$75,000.00 to the tax value. We have built in the last twelve months new and modern school houses, thereby enabling us to vacate some of the antiquated ones. The tax rate is identically the same as it was before. The assessed values have not been changed except where new properties have come into existence, but the taxes have been collected for a very much smaller expense than before; in fact, the commissions paid to the previous tax collector, now pay the full salary of one commissioner, who by giving his full time to the city is able to look after a large amount of other business, in addition to collecting taxes; in fact, he does probably five or six times as much work as the tax collector used to do. What we formerly paid the water commissioner, we now pay the commissioner who looks after all streets and street-work and sewer, as well as the water works.

The purchases for the city are made in a systematic and proper manner, whereas, before each department made its own purchases at such prices as a haphazard method happened to obtain. The bookkeeping is done in a better manner and the books are regularly audited and a statement of the city's condition and affairs is published in the newspapers at frequent intervals. We formerly obtained no interest on the city's deposit, but the amount obtained each twelve months will now more than pay the salary of one of the commissioners.

Without going into further details, I will simply state that

### WORKING MEN WAKE UP.

**We Have Been Fooled Long Enough—Get Busy Now and Fall in Line for the New Charter.**

The fellows that are trying to down the new Charter have had us all fooled for some time with the yarns they have been telling about how it will increase our poll tax and make every mother's son of us have to pay a special license tax. Gus Self is the boy that made us straight. We know he is honest and has no axe to grind, so when he let us know that the taxes don't have to be as high under the new charter as made under the old, and that the special license tax is the same under the old charter as under the new, and are even provided for under the State Law, why then we began to look for some other reason than the dope they have been handing out to us. And what do you think we have settled on as the reason? Just the one thing that these dope artists say the least about—the FRANCHISE clause.

We working people know that the only chance we have of getting anything out of any corporation that wants to get something for nothing from our city in the way of franchises (and it is just as much our city as it is the wealthy Nabob's), is to get them to pay us as much as we can get for their franchises.

Thanks to Gus Self and Mr. Harvey Geitner, we have finally got straightened out on the taxing part of the Charter, and we are just finding out the good things for that are in what J. D. Elliott calls a "Dangerous" Charter. We find upon examination that it is a dangerous Charter, but as we said before here is no danger in it for the common ordinary working man whose day's wages are eaten up almost before earned. We have no capital that we can use to exploit the city for our selfish interests. However, under this dangerous new charter we can see that "Jones pays the freight," for we know enough to understand that the freight belongs to every citizen of Hickory, rich man, poor man, beggar man or thief.

The little talk Thursday night about Click's editorial on the City Attorney's salary, and how easy it would have been for Click to go to the books and find out how much he did get every year started us going some on page 48 of new charter, and do you know we are all hungry for that monthly itemized statement. We get our statement every month from the grocer and the butcher, why not from the city, when we help to pay the bills?

We may be easily gulled sometimes but when our eyes begin to open, why, well they OPEN.

J. E. ABBE.

there is nothing to condemn, but everything commends the commission form of government. Nothing less than the death of practically all of our intelligent citizens would ever cause us to go back to the old conditions, and while stating this, I may as well state also that Greensboro probably had as good or a better local government than any other town in the state, but even though good comparatively, it was poor enough to be condemned and consigned to the scrap heap.

I certainly wish you every success in your undertaking and with kindest personal regards, I beg to remain,

Yours very truly,  
R. C. Hood.

P. S. Will say further that because of the system and its controlling influence, the same men will render better service than under looser methods.

## Maximum Limit of Taxing Power Under New Charter

Figures in the first column represent the amount of taxes which may be levied and collected on each one hundred dollars "valuation" of property, and those in second column represent amount of taxes which may be levied and collected on each poll:

For general purposes, Art. XIII, Sec. 9,	\$ .95	\$2.85
For payment interest, Art. XIII, Sec. 9,	.35	1.05
For schools, Art. XVI, Sec. 8,	.40	1.20
Total	\$1.70	\$5.10
Street exemption,		2.00
Aggregate poll, or personal, tax,		\$7.10

Annual license or privilege tax, Art. XIII, Sec. 15, on a number of subjects therein named and, generally, on "any business, trade, profession or avocation."

### Under Old Charter

For general purposes, old charter, Sec. 29,	\$1.00	\$3.00
For schools, Public Laws 1897, Chap. 179	.20	.60
For water, sewerage, light and improvement bonds, \$100,000, Private Laws, 1901, Ch. 171	.30	.90
For electric lights and street improvement, bonds, \$50,000 Private Laws, 1907, Ch. 222	.30	.90
For sewerage extension bonds, \$11,000, Private Laws 1907, Ch. 223	.15	.45
For schools, additional tax, bonds, \$15,000, Private Acts 1909, Ch. 313	.30	.90
For sewerage extension bonds, \$7,000, Private Laws 1911, Ch. 6	.10	.30
Total	\$2.35	\$7.05
Street exemption		3.00
Aggregate poll, or personal, tax,		\$10.05

### As to License and Special Taxes:

The Constitution provides, Art. 5, Sec. 3, that the general assembly may "tax trades, professions, franchises and incomes . . ."

The old charter, section 37, provides that taxes may be levied on " . . . trades, licenses and other subjects of taxation, as provided in Section 3, Article 5, of the State Constitution."

The Supreme Court says, in case of State vs. Worth, 116 M. C., page 1007, that "The word 'trade' when used in defining the power to tax, includes any employment or business for gain or profit."

March 1, 1913

### THE GERM OF THE PROPOSED NEW CHARTER.

Speech of Mr. John A. McRae Here Two Years Ago.

### CHARLOTTE LAWYER'S APPEAL

Splendid Argument for Commission Government at Chamber of Commerce Two Years Ago, which Resulted in the Charter now Submitted to Hickory voters.

(Speech of Mr. John A. McRae at Chamber of Commerce Banquet, Jan. 11, 1911.)

Mr. McRae was introduced by Judge W. B. Council, who said: I esteem it a source of great honor to make my first public utterance as a private citizen before the Chamber of Commerce of the city of Hickory, and an additional honor was conferred upon me in having been chosen to present to you tonight a gentleman who is here for the purpose of enlightening us upon the question of city government, who perhaps has given the subject as much thought, and I believe is capacitated to tell us as much about how to run a city government as any man in North Carolina.

We have with us a Scotch-Irishman, a long, lean, lank, rugged—and I think a very good looking young man. You can judge for yourself when he gets up. He has been city attorney of Charlotte, but I think he hails from old Robeson county. Mr. Jno. A. McRae, of Charlotte, Mecklenburg county.

Mr. McRae began his speech by saying he felt somewhat like the school teacher who appeared before an old time school committee and in answer to a question as to the shape of the earth said he could teach it "either round or flat." The speaker didn't know whether the majority of the lanqueters were commission or non-commission men. Continuing he said:

As I look upon the faces of the strong, stalwart men here tonight, I realize that it is a big fact that Hickory has a commercial organization which is pulsating with energy that will make it one of the greatest towns in

North Carolina. (Applause.)

Mr. McRae told of the inception of the modern idea of commission government at Galveston after that town was storm-swept several years ago. In debt and with sickness prevalent, a better government was imperative. So five men were selected and in a few years had saved hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The city of Houston thought that if it was good for Galveston, it would be good for her. She elected a mayor and four commissioners. The mayor is paid \$4,000 and the Commissioners \$2,400 each, and devote their entire time to the city. Des Moines, Ia., has adopted it and other cities. Hundreds and thousands of dollars have been saved and no city has gone back to the old way.

A few years ago in Charlotte, a committee of 100 men was appointed to draft a charter that was suitable for Charlotte. These 100 men were composed of some of the ablest men in city affairs. Messrs. J. P. Caldwell, E. T. Canlier, T. C. Guthrie, and men of that character, were selected. They went to work and recommended this plan to provide for a mayor, who should devote his entire time to the government of the city. But this mayor was not to be elected by the people but by the Board of Aldermen, who should not receive a salary and should not be required to devote their entire time to the city, but should be required to meet at least once a month and have as many call meetings as they chose. Some objected, saying that the peoples' liberties were about to be taken from them. A few said, you will not allow the people of this city to elect their own mayor. With that hue and cry the measure was defeated.

Mr. McRae dwelt on certain safeguards. The referendum, which upon petition, gives the people the right to vote upon a measure which the city is about to adopt; and the initiative, which, upon petition, allows the people to pass a law which the governing body did not favor. It tends to keep a mayor from being arbitrary.

Mayor Rice, of Houston, Tex., who spoke in Charlotte, told Mr. McRae he did not believe in these.

W. A. SELF.

He said it made the people tremulous about doing their duty, and handicapped the commission in putting its best judgment into effect.

On the other hand Mayor Gibbs, of Columbia, S. C., told Mr. McRae that he firmly believed in these safeguards. Though they were seldom required to be used, yet they were there and if a few men who had the absolute governing of the city should form a ring or clique for personal benefit, then those safeguards would enable the people to put a stop to their authority. At first I was opposed to these safeguards, but I believe now that they are a wise thing, certainly to begin with.

Mr. McRae also spoke of the recall, whereby upon petition of say 25 per cent of the registered vote, an unsatisfactory officer must stand for re-election, and give the people a chance to say whether he shall continue in office.

Mr. McRae spoke of Charlotte's municipal troubles. Our Aldermen he said meet once every month; they have to have committee meetings almost every week; nearly every day some body is in altercation with them trying to get them to push for a certain thing; every few weeks a special session is held. They are not paid one penny. The Mayor does get a good salary. All through the week the Aldermen are thinking about their daily work.

A measure is brought up; they do not know anything about it or what they should do. I have seen them pass an ordinance at one meeting and repeal it at the next; pass an ordinance and repeal it within the next month—not because they were not honest and sincere, but simply because those men were over-worked and had not time to consider what was best. Now instead of that suppose we had one man who could give all his time, or say three or four men give part of their time to it; suppose we would have them meet around the table in the council chamber, they would have more time to consider a matter; they'd consider it better; there would not be as much confusion, and the city and the people would get the benefit of it. Some time ago a man had

## A Brilliant Debate on New Charter

Messrs. G. H. Geitner and Self Speak for and J. D. Elliott Against It.

### ATTORNEY SELF MAKES ABLE ADDRESS

He Takes Up Every Argument Made Against the Document Since it was Launched and Answers Them Seriatim—Tax Limits Will Be Lowered—Mr. Elliott Makes Characteristic Speech, Fearing Danger in Power Given to City Manager—Mr. Geitner's Cool Business Judgement Favors the Charter.

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+ LOCAL AND PERSONAL +  
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Mr. George McCorkle has sold 85 acres of the old Reinhardt farm to Mr. Miles Thornburg, says the News.

Grimes' Drug Store has in on trial the "F. P." gas lighting system, which is said to be very economical. The store is brilliant under this light.

Miss Lillie Heffner entertained on Friday evening a pleasant party at her home near Catawba Springs in honor of the birthday of Miss Maude Eckard. Miss Heffner made a charming host.

The Dutch College School taught by Misses Bolick and Arabella Johnston, has closed. They taught an excellent school. They are among our best teachers and have the respect of their patrons.

The Democrat Job Dept. has just completed printing the price lists of bull calves of the Dutch Dairy Farms, H. P. Lutz manager, Newton, Rt. No. 4 out of their two great bulls, Ora's Sultan and Raleigh of Ingleside, they have nine handsome bull calves for sale at prices ranging from \$30 to \$100.

Mr. W. A. Stone, who has been here for the past year helping his brother, Mr. J. Lee Stone, in the Hub Theatre, will leave this week for Waynesville where he and his brother are establishing a moving picture show, Hickory regrets to give up Mr. and Mrs. Stone but wishes them well.

Mr. W. S. Pollard is just back from Lick Mountain in Caldwell county where Messrs. K. C. Menzies and J. L. Ciley have recently purchased some splendid orchard lands with 400 bearing trees from 5 to 25 years old. Mr. Pollard was there to spray the trees. He is enthusiastic over the orchard lands in this section. He picked up fine apples under the trees which had never been gathered, and they were in perfect condition. These orchards are four miles from Hudson.

The Democrat has its eye on an embryonic cartoonist. He probably doesn't know he is that. His name is Thomas Reep and he lives in Longview, and goes to school to Mrs. S. F. Watson. He brought the Democrat some of his pictures the other day, and they are excellent, considering the little lad never had any teacher in this art. Thomas is a son of Mrs. Barbara Reep and some day she will be proud of her boy.

personal property in McDowell county and he was taxed for it in Charlotte. I took the position that the personal property was taxable only in McDowell. He had paid his taxes there, but it took me about five months before I could get the matter straight. I went a dozen times before the board; he went a dozen times, I called them up over the 'phone a dozen times. A few commissioners would dispose of this at once.

I think in this modern age that one of the duties of the mayor is to look after the health of the town. A mayor cannot do that if he is not paid a salary. It might cost \$2,500, \$3,000, \$1500, or \$1,000, yet it may save human lives and thousands of dollars to the people of the city.

Mr. McRae estimated that in Charlotte \$25,000 worth of time a year is lost in aimless running after the aldermen, trying to get them to do something.

In one of the greatest speeches of his career, Mr. W. A. Self, speaking only as a private citizen, defended the new charter in a well attended meeting at the Thornton Opera House last Thursday night. Mr. G. H. Geitner spoke for it, and Mr. J. D. Elliott twice against it. Mr. W. J. Shuford presided.

Mr. G. F. Geitner said he was not "loaded," but nevertheless would give his opinion of the new charter. It was not perfect. At first he was inclined to oppose, but, the more carefully he studied it, the more he liked it. Tear it to pieces if you will, and yet enough good will remain to justify the intelligent voter in supporting it. One objection is that it does not create enough aldermen, yet he believed the fewer members of the Board, the better the service. The taxing power for special license tax remains the same as under the old charter. Mr. Geitner's address was a cool, judicial review of the new charter by a clear-headed business man who has the future welfare of the city close at heart, and as such was very impressive.

Mr. J. D. Elliott was next called upon. Mr. Elliott came to the front crying out that the new charter was a dangerous document, waving it in the air, and holding it off from him, as if he feared it was a stick of dynamite that might go off in his hands. He said the thing mystified him in its very title, "an act to appeal" the charter of Hickory. He didn't know what that meant [a typographical error for "repeal"]. The new charter provides too many primaries, and the city manager can hold up any man's nomination if he so chooses by refusing to issue the nomination blanks or refusing to certify in time, etc.

It made the city manager a Czar, giving dangerous power to one man. He heard that the new revenue bill in the Legislature would provide for assessing all property at its full cash value, and this would increase the tax values terribly. In a colloquy with Mr. W. J. Shuford, he did not deny that if valuations on property were increased, the tax rate would be reduced proportionately.

Mr. Elliott said he had no criticism of the Chamber of Commerce, and the charter having been prepared by it, was now out of its hands. He was the lone opponent to speak against the charter there that night. There were attorneys "on his side but they were afraid to "face the music."

He held that the franchise clause would keep out capital. The charter might work all right for a city of 50,000 people but not for a small town like ours. Mr. Elliott spoke in his vigorous, emphatic way, and in entire good nature.

Mr. Self said that Mr. Elliott's criticism of the typographical error "appeal" illustrated a point, viz: that the opponents of the charter were hard put to it to find arguments, and jumped at anything which gave them a chance to pick a flaw. It was being said the new charter was a reflection on the makers of the old one. They were able and true men and did well for their day. But the world could not stand still. Time was when men plowed with a forked stick and sailed in dug-outs. But is that any reason why we should not have chilled plows and ocean liners today? This is a glorious world as it is. It would be better if sin had never entered it, and shall we not try to make it better isn't it a reflection on the old world? (Continued on third page)