

FROM REV. P. OLIVER

Wealthy Citizen of Yadkin Township, and Minister of Missionary Baptist Church, Writes Strong Letter Against Good Roads.

King, Feb. 20.

Editor Danbury Reporter :

In our day of nervous unrest and get-rich quick inclinations, which propensities it seems become more marked each year, it behooves all good citizens having the true and abiding welfare of our county at heart, and who want to continue to stay here and to continue the county as the best place possible under all the circumstances in which for those coming after us to stay and work out a decent existence, to study carefully, seriously and soberly every phase of both sides of the question so tremendously large and vital to all our well-being as that one embodied in the proposition to bind our county to a debt in the stupendous sum of \$300,000 with which to improve our system of public roads. The question, when stripped of all song, sentiment and poetry, is nothing but a cold business proposition, and the decision rendered by the voters will produce an effect infinitely more real and lasting than either a ball game or a rabbit chase, like which some seem to regard it. Therefore, let us with a mind void of any passion or prejudice, and with nothing save a desire for the truth and with good will and only the best interests of each other at heart, having in mind all the while every citizen is entitled to his honest convictions and to the right to express those convictions, strive with all our might to determine what is the best course to pursue in this election on the question of roads bonds. As the sentiment supporting the affirmative side of this proposition has been so ably and systematically built up and encouraged year in and year out by your paper till about all the expressions now coming through your columns are on the one side and favorable to the proposed scheme of issuing "good roads bonds" in a big amount, thus evidencing the powerful influence a newspaper exercises in a community, I feel justified in asking you to donate a few columns in which for those viewing the whole matter differently to express their views, and I believe you will willingly grant the request, feeling as no doubt you do, the great responsibility of the county's welfare which under the peculiar circumstances certainly rests largely upon you, for in the years to come, in case the bonds are voted, you will be praised or condemned, as the case may be, as the scheme pleases or displeases the people, by those who remember the chief propelling force that made the result possible. With power there always comes responsibility, and this is no exceptional case as to the Reporter, for into thousands of homes it goes every week ably advocating the doctrines of its two editors, while hundreds of other citizens have neither the time nor the means of placing their ideas before the public.

It seems to me that under all the circumstances to vote the large amount of bonds now under consideration would be a well-nigh fatal mistake,—to put it mildly, a great business blunder. It would involve our county in a debt that would be a burden and a menace to our own welfare, and a "body of death" financially speaking, buckled to the back of an unborn generation from which they would hardly free themselves,—all for the sake of having a brief period of borrowed prosperity at a time when we are already too prosperous to take advantage of it, and in the hopes of a great system of roads which would evidently fail by

one-half to turn out as expected and promised to the voters at this time by the enthusiastic and ever present "spell binders." Yes, the reckless turn loose of three hundred thousand dollars in Stokes inside of a few brief months would bring a degree of prosperity for the time, on the same principle that a farmer can bring temporary prosperity to his family by placing on their home a mortgage for a sum of money to be paid back by his children, and he spend it unguardedly and largely for things that he can do without. But the last state of that man and family is worse than the first, for as a rule the home finally goes to pay the ever increasing debt. In lining up as I am on this proposition I wish it understood that I am not "voting against good roads" as so many are fond of expressing it, those who are disposed to attach so very much importance to a name only, but rather I am opposed to the method of getting the so-called "good roads" and will give my reasons if space is granted me till I get through with the subject. To illustrate, if I visit a store for the purpose of purchasing some wearing apparel and the obliging merchant informs me that he will part with an ordinary fifteen dollar suit of clothes provided I will pay him \$42 for it, I would without much ceremony, part company with such merchant and straightway visit another vender of clothes, neither would I feel that my conduct warranted any one in crying out: "You are opposed to good clothes." Figure the comparison and see if it is not an exact one to a cent. It appeals to me as poor business for Stokes county, in her mucky condition, to send out of the county, and into the pockets of the "Money Kings," exactly \$1.80 in order to spend \$1.00 inside the county, and this is what the proposition means when figured, for in 30 years three hundred thousand dollars at 6 per cent, produce in interest five hundred and forty thousand dollars, or nearly twice the amount of the principal. Friends, if we are going to raise by taxation this staggering sum of \$840,000, why not keep every cent of it inside the county and spend it on our roads instead of sending nearly two-thirds of it out of the county to fill the coffers of the "bloated land holders" as we sometimes hear the trust magnates called, and spending only the other third

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here? All can be spent inside the county if we will pay as we go, and if we are unwilling to pay our own way, we ought not to be allowed to go,—that is on the credit of future generations. It may be right and proper for the present generation to dig up all the minerals and cut down all the trees and in general gobble up and destroy everything in sight, all of which I, with many others, do not admit, but it certainly appears to be ill becoming in us to burden our posterity with a withering blighting debt to harass and pauperize them for unknown years, in order that we may use that money and profit by their sweat years before they are born into the world. I seem to hear the reply coming back: "O, the roads will be here always and for our descendants too." Friends, that all depends. This is one of the contentions that deluded voters of other counties into voting for bonds. Like an old colored man who, when he professed religion, explained, "I's thankful that the last row am hoed." They honestly thought, as many of our Stokes people now seem to think, that once good roads are made they will last almost forever. But the testimony of expert road builders is that it requires 10 per cent. of the original cost to be spent every year in repairing the roads in order to properly maintain and keep them to their former standard of excellence. If this be so as to macadam roads, and I have no right to question their expert testimony, then is it not reasonable that it would require the full 10 per cent. also to take care of and keep sand-clay roads? If so it means that we must in addition to paying the interest and principal of this debt if it is ever paid, also raise by special tax thirty thousand dollars each year, or a sum about the size of all our present taxes combined in order to keep our new roads repaired up to the condition existing when this bond issue is exhausted. In other words, we must entirely remake these roads every 10 years, or three times in the 30 years, at additional cost \$900,000 if the people after the expiration of 30 years are to benefit by our proposed issue of bonds. This means a special tax each year of forty-eight thousand dollars for the up-keep of the roads after being built and to meet the interest on the bonds, without being able to touch the principal debt. Now add this \$900,000 for keeping up the roads to the \$540,000 interest on the bonds for 40 years at 6 per cent and we have the staggering sum of \$1,440,000 expended in 30 years—a sum of money which is a little over two-thirds the present tax value of all the real estate listed for taxation in Stokes county, and yet the principal unpaid. Now is this the whole story; it appears to be only about half of it. Iredell county, as we all know, recently voted and issued bonds for \$400,000 for sand-clay roads. According to their official report not long since published in the papers, they have already spent about half of that money, \$40,000 of which was expended for mules and

machinery, and the chairman of the board of commissioners now states that in order to do as much road work as was promised the voters when the bonds were voted it will be necessary to vote another issue of bonds to the amount of \$300,000 and this too in face of the fact that they had already spent more than \$200,000 on macadam roads which he now states are so worn as to be only a waste of money. Is it not apparent therefore that Stokes would have to double her proposed bond issue in order to make the roads that are being promised by the advocates and expected by the enthusiasts? If so, would not this also double the interest and repairing expenses, changing from forty-eight to ninety-six thousand dollars per year? Guilford is plowing up and reworking her macadam roads, and Mecklenburg county is seriously considering what they are to do with their famous highways as they are wearing out rapidly. Kind voter, we might as well here and now face the stern facts as they really are, and act wisely by voting on this momentous question.

P. OLIVER.

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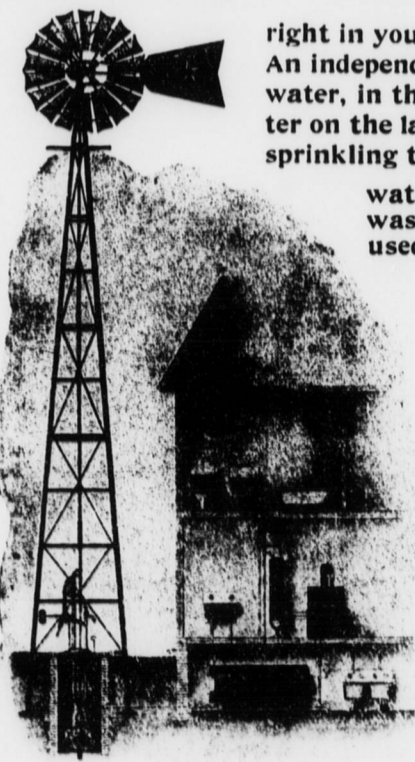
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