

The Danbury Reporter

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MR. OLIVER LOSES HIS BEARINGS.

Some of the writers on good roads have been uncharitable to Mr. Oliver. They have been too personal. It is not in harmony with the rules of debate to bring into a discussion extraneous and irrelevant matter, but the question must be discussed strictly on its merits. What connection could the facts that Mr. Oliver is one of the wealthiest men in the county, that he lives in sight of a railway station, and is exempt from duty on the public roads of the county, have on this argument. The writers should have refrained from mentioning the fact that Mr. Oliver was silent when Sauratown was voting for good roads a few years ago, but becomes very active when Yadkin tries it, and should have informed the readers of the Reporter that he is inspired in his efforts solely by patriotism and his love for the downtrodden common people. One writer was so irreverent as to hint that Mr. Oliver smiles complacently when six per cent is coming his way, but frowns terribly when its course is changed from his pockets to the public roads.

It is true that Mr. Oliver himself set the pace for the personalities. In his first letter to the Reporter he cautioned everybody to discuss the question with minds devoid of passion, like himself, in "the even tenor of one's way," with only the commendable purpose in heart to strive to make the good old county the best place in which we and those who come after us might live. It was only by a lapse of memory that in the same paragraph he forgot himself and pitched into the editors of the Reporter for lo, these years, preaching only one side of the question, and in effect denying to those who think differently any means of expressing themselves, hinting that in the years to come they (the editors) might be held personally responsible for the great body of death of good roads hung to the necks of the people, and being blamed by the future generations for the part they played in the crime of 1913. He did not give the editors time to plead in defense their ignorance that there was more than one side to bad roads—and that a mighty bad side, and that they thought they had been treating bad roads fairly. Mr. Oliver proceeded to congratulate himself in gloomy platitudes that his ecclesiastical skirts would be clear of the sin of fastening to the necks of the people a system of roads which his figures indicate would cost nearly half as much as no roads at all, while if the good roads cranks would only keep silent and allow us to go on in our present even tenor of mud, even Mr. Petree admits would not cost much more than \$2,900,000.

The good roads writers have also been unfair to Mr. Oliver in double-teaming on him. Here he is, according to his own statement, pitted one against "five or more," and short on ammunition by being "in a manner disarmed for a time," (referring to one week when one of his letters was omitted to make room for replies to his first.) Pushed for time, with his space denied him, the sole defender of bad roads battles heroically for his views, while no succor comes. Of course, while this position argues badly for his cause, it speaks eloquently for his valor. The good Lord knows that it takes nerve to fight for bad roads, the greatest curse of the twentieth century civilization. Few men, especially few ministers of the Gospel of Love and Light, have the fortitude to battle under such a unhallowed flag. They can only justify themselves by being "for good roads, but don't like the plan." What a cause for congratulation it is that only a few years ago the very mention of a bond issue in Stokes county would have sent the victim to the insane asylum, while today the woods are full of men who claim that bonds are the only sensible way to build great public utilities, and who are able to PROVE their contentions by the testimony of other counties, cities and towns, and by an overwhelming number of the leaders in thought in the nation. It shows how the world is marching on and that the great battle of right against wrong, of truth against error, of light against darkness is gaining the victory. A few years ago poor old women were burned at the stake for being witches. Men now living remember when a hot, loathsome tea was given to cool the parched tongues of fever sufferers. The last generation heard the cry of "down with the steam cars, the agency of the devil." A short time since men (and some of them are fighting good roads today) claimed that we should be ruined by the bridges built across our turbulent streams, and who madly argued that to build a decent court house and a humane jail would be a "great business blunder," and that our youngest children would not live to bury the body of death which the debt would create. But the dark night is passing, and the sunshine of progress is gilding the tree-tops.

But we divert from the shameful treatment of Mr. Oliver by the critics. By their personalities and their keen arguments they have made him uncomfortable, and have even driven him from the "even tenor of his way." So who can blame him that his last letter fairly smoked. We can see from reading it that he even thought the Reporter was going to smother his views, and this week's issue of the paper is required to show him that all of his letters have been printed in full, and that his views have been laid complete before the people in good time, so that those readers who may have noticed his letters will vouch for the fact that he has certainly not been short on "space." We do not take much stock in the intimation of some of the writers that Mr. Oliver's cry of unfairness, and his bid for the sympathy of the public in his one-sided fight, were only a ruse to divert the attention of the readers

from the main issue—or an effort to muddy the waters so the big fish might get away. We prefer to believe that he is only floundering about in the water in an effort to learn just where he "at." When Mr. Oliver wrote the letter in question he was not aware of the presence in the field of another gallant defender of the faith, for Mr. McGee comes bravely to the rescue. But with abortive efforts. His gun went off backwards, and his charge against macadam roads was delivered to the empty air. Everybody agrees that the only medicine Mr. McGee needs is a more careful reading of the bill.

But to return again to Mr. Oliver. He became so disconcerted that he went to Iredell for figures, which however, Mr. Clark, editor of the Statesville Landmark, was not willing to let him juggle, and Mr. Clark says: "If Mr. Oliver intends, AS IS APPARENT, to hold up Iredell's bond issue for road work as a failure, he is very much mistaken as to the facts. * * * With our bond money a system of excellent top-soil roads is penetrating every section of the county. The people are well pleased. * * * Stokes county will make a great mistake if it fails to vote THE BOND ISSUE for roads."

Mr. Oliver then turned to Guilford for discouragement, but Mr. Douglas, Postmaster of Greensboro, and the chairman of the Guilford county commissioners, declared that the people of Guilford were well satisfied with the BOND PLAN of building roads. Mr. Oliver then said, oh, but Guilford and Iredell and Mecklenburg and Buncombe—they have so much more property than we, we are not able to compete with them. But who said we wanted to COMPETE with them, Mr. Oliver? Is building decent and safe roads trying to compete with these rich counties who have issued millions of dollars of bonds for waterworks, public roads, lighting systems, sewerage systems, etc.

Mr. Oliver in despair left the State and went to Patrick county, Va., to get evidence, but the only thing he could find there was a railroad bond issue, which is totally different. The people have to pay for all they get from a railroad corporation, and its benefits cannot be compared with a public road, which is the common property of everybody, and is used every day in the year by our poorest and humblest citizens. And there is absolutely no question but that before the people of Patrick county would do without their railroad that they would vote to double the cost it was to them.

So, in desperation, Mr. Oliver loses his equilibrium, and gets totally off his base. He turned around so much, and was thrown into such confusion, that he met himself coming back. To save one's life it is hard to tell just what his position is. There is an old saying that whom the gods would destroy they first make mad. So Mr. Oliver has allowed his contentions to become reversed, and is off his nut, as the machinists say. He showed in his first letter that he was against good roads because they cost too much, and ends by demonstrating that he is for bad roads because they cost more than good roads. How can you argue with a debater whose positions are so shifty. Those who read his first letter in the Reporter will remember that he started out by laying down the proposition that he was a good roads man, and felicitated the people on the fact that the issue in the campaign was not "For or Against Good Roads," but that it was "For or Against the Bond Issue." Thus, Mr. Oliver was a good roads man, mind you, but not a bond issue man, because building good roads by bonds costs too much money. He then proceeded to show that the things which he is so ostensibly for, but which he is really against because they cost too much money, are after all bad things because they are such failures in other counties. Good roads are really bad things, not what they are cracked up to be, he says, fit for drummers and other people who travel a great deal, and that "their disadvantages really outweigh their advantages." He constantly refers to the sad people of Iredell, Guilford, Mecklenburg and Buncombe, and warns Stokes people to shun good roads as they would the plague. Here Mr. Oliver, finding that his premises are out of plumb, goes back to his original proposition that he is for good roads, provided there exist such things as good roads, after claiming that they are bad things by stating that their "disadvantages outweigh their advantages, fit for drummers," etc. But he still admits that he is for what he has never seen, does not believe in, and which his statements endeavor to prove to be bad things. Finally in a dazed way and with an effort to recover his bearings, he frames a method by which we may have the bad things provided we shall pay every year for them DIRECT a sum of money which Mr. Petree shows would be too expensive, and too much, and more than needed to pay the interest on the bond issue. As a last resort, and in utter confusion, Mr. Oliver takes the position of being for bad roads because they cost more than good roads, when at the start he was against good roads because they cost more than bad roads.

We submit that if the election can be postponed another week that Mr. Oliver—the sole defender of bad roads in Stokes county—will be for good roads because they are cheaper than bad roads.

FROM MR. HELSABECK

Some Views On the Question of a Bond Issue For Roads.

Mr. Editor :

There are manifold reasons why in my opinion the voters of Stokes county in the several townships should vote the proposed bond issue on themselves in the coming election. Many of these reasons have been ably discussed heretofore in your paper by those writing in favor of the proposition. I do not even attempt to further the argument, but as a young man and one who, according to the mortuary tables, will be here to help take care of the bonded indebtedness when it is due, and as I hope with an equal opportunity with other young men of acquiring some little property on which to pay a tax at that time, I wish to appeal to my contemporaries to vote for the measure and plead with the older men not to be deceived into thinking that they are burdening us with a debt without an equal benefit. As I see it the man who wishes to confer a blessing upon his posterity will vote in favor of instead of against the measure.

I am now a resident of Stokes county. It was for 18 months that I debated seriously whether I should return to my native county to locate. My greatest reason for this hesitation was the non-accessibility of so much of our county for so long each year. I dare say the county would hold many more of its young men if the roads were put in a passable condition.

If Stokes county wishes to progress with other counties it must have better roads and better schools. The two go hand in hand. To put off building the roads now according to the best method we know and

have is like a man not buying a horse and buggy because the automobile is a faster way of travel and then not getting an automobile because the flying machine has been invented. Clearly enough that man will always walk. Such a spirit certainly is not progressive. There is a grave doubt in my mind as to the progressiveness of any man not in favor of the building of good roads, and the bond issue as the means, in a county like Stokes.

I wish every reader of the Reporter would take notice and when a man is against the bond issue to see from what his reason emanates. In my opinion and from my observation you will find an unpatriotic principle backing it. I would almost blush with shame if I had to name the two reasons almost all are traceable too. There is very little credit given the reason that it is for the sake and benefit of the coming generation that one is against it, because if it is not voted favorably now, I honestly believe it will be by the coming generation. Any man knowing the history of the progress of the good roads sentiment for the last few years in Stokes county and then say that it will not be accomplished shortly certainly has no prophetic eye.

Here's hoping that our good citizens will vote for progress.

CHAS. R. HELSABECK.

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