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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5TH, 1913

Letter From Mayor Brummitt.

EDITORS PUBLIC LEDGER:

As is well known to the editors of the Public Ledger and the citizens of Oxford I am not a candidate for re-election as Mayor. Several months ago I told Mr. Stem, the splendid young gentleman who is now a candidate for that position, that I would not seek a re-election and I have repeated that statement to numbers of friends who have been kind enough to enquire as to my intentions. Therefore I am not writing this article seeking anything for myself. I am writing it out of my feeling of loyalty to the seven splendid men who compose the present Board of Town Commissioners and because of my knowledge of faithfulness to the public interests in the trying and difficult positions they have held during the past two years. In a word, let me say that these gentlemen have authorized and requested me to say to the people of Oxford that they will accept re-election to membership on this Board.

And now in explanation of why they take this action... The people of Oxford know that not one of them sought the position they now hold. Fact is, the nomination and election had almost to be literally forced upon some of them. If they had consulted their own personal desire, their own ease and comfort, not one of them would now be serving the town. It is useless for me to say that the position of Commissioner of the town of Oxford is a thankless job for that is known of all men, and when I say that these men did not seek election two years ago, I am sure that I am saying what can with equal justice and truth be said of the various men who have this year been suggested as Commissioners. And neither can the munificent salary of \$2 00 per month attached to the office be a sufficient reason why any man who has other business to attend to should accept the office, attend the meetings of the Board, act as head of a department of the town government and look after the streets, light, sewers, the sanitation or the finances of the town as the case may be.

Notwithstanding the wearisome duties incumbent upon any man who serves as Town Commissioner there is a reason why the members of the present Board should say that they will accept a re-election. And that reason is to be found in the criticisms of the Board by the Public Ledger and some of its correspondents. I am authorized to say that the Board feels that this criticism, in so far as it can be traced, does not come from voters of the town. They feel this since, as is well known, neither of the editors of the Ledger is a qualified voter of Oxford and its correspondents who have attacked the Board have done so anonymously and therefore it cannot be known whether or not they are in a like condition. But regardless of where criticism may come from the members of this Board are not the kind of men to retire under fire. For fear that some of your readers may not have their names in mind, I will here name them over. They are R. W. Harris, C. W. Bryan, A. W. Graham, S. W. Parker, B. F. Taylor, R. S. Usry and W. T. Yancey. These men bear names honored throughout Granville county and their reputation as men of character, as men of good, sound business judgment extends into and even beyond the borders of this State. The people of Granville county and of Oxford, in whose presence these men have spent their lives, know that they are not grafters, and they are not insolent or slothful in business, that they are not "sleepy heads," that they are the kind of men who accept public positions and then neglect to perform the duties cast upon them. These men have been faithful to their oaths of office; they have endeavored to "truly and impartially perform the duties of Commissioners to the best of their skill, ability and judgement." And because they feel that they have tried to be faithful over the little that has been given them with which to work; because, from the expression of confidence that have reached them from the substantial business men and citizens of the town, they feel that their actions are approved by a great majority of the voters of Oxford, they now say to the people of Oxford that they are unwilling for those who are not voters to attack and to criticize them without fighting back. Therefore as a unit these men are now standing for re-election.

And now a word as to some of the criticisms. It is said that there is

some one man who is a "self-constituted adviser" to the Board, the implication being that this man controls the actions of the other members. Such an assertion is an insult to the intelligence and the independence of every one of the other members and they have just cause for so regarding it. No such condition exists on this Board for at all times there is the freest and fullest discussion of all measures and on numbers of occasions there have been clashes of opinion and the position of the gentlemen evidently referred to has been overriden by the action of the Board.

Again it is said that there should be a publication in the newspapers of the expenditures made by the Board as is done by the county. The last financial exhibit of Granville county shows that the county paid \$423 75 for publishing its 1911 financial exhibit. This statement is not made as a criticism of the Board of County Commissioners for the law requires such publication. But the law does not require publications in a newspaper of the town's financial exhibit and the Board of Town Commissioners thought that better results would be had from expending \$423 75 or any proportionate part of such sum in other ways than by making such a publication. The minutes of the Board are kept in books prepared for that purpose and every bill paid is shown on the minutes. At any time that any citizen may so desire the Clerk to the Board will be glad to go over the town's accounts and exhibit vouchers for expenditures made, and this Board invites the fullest and freest examination of their books.

And then it is said that the Board should be composed of young men; that its members are not progressive enough. It is well to remember that progressive is as progressive does and not simply as he names himself. Roosevelt called himself a progressive and yet we people of Oxford did not vote for him. I confidently assert that this Board is progressive in the best sense of that much-abused word. Admittedly the streets of Oxford are not what we would like to see them. But even God's chosen people found it a rather difficult task to make brick without straw. Here let me say that a town is nothing more than a large family in many respects. If a family in the town of Oxford wants lights, water or sewerage, it must pay for them. If Oxford wants streets of bitulithic or some other permanent material, it must pay for them either by practically doubling its present tax rate or by mortgaging the future. To say this Board could give better streets with the money it has had to expend amounts to saying in effect that there has been grafting or that the Board has not applied its best judgment to the problems of our civic life. Permit me to call your attention to the fact that the members of this Board pay an average town tax of upwards of \$100 00 each. Is it likely that men spending their own money would recklessly mismanage or waste it. Many of the members have large real estate holdings here. Is it likely that they would adopt a policy that would cause Oxford to go backward, a course that would deprive them of tenants or cause depreciation in their property values? To ask such a question answers it.

In what I have said the members of this Board went it understood that no reflection is intended to be cast upon the various gentlemen whose names have been proposed for membership on the incoming Board nor is there any hostility on their part towards any of these men. It is known that some of these men instead of wanting to be elected have confidence in the present Board and are supporting it for re-election. Many of them are close friends of mine and of the members of the present Board, and all of us know that if elected these gentlemen would give of the best that is in them to the town's service.

But this Board has performed its duty faithfully and well with the means at hand. Sanitation has been so thoroughly enforced that Oxford has such a low death rate as to raise the suspicion that all deaths are not reported. We have been free from epidemic of disease such as visited some of our un-

fortunate sister towns last year. New macadam has been put down at several places and the old repaired insofar as the means at hand permitted. A new contract for lights has been made reducing the price paid for arc-lights from \$75 to \$60 per year and from \$35 to \$18 per year for incandescents, and this without working what might have been a practical confiscation of the plant already here. A franchise has been granted to a gas company and not upon the terms originally sought but upon the Board's own terms, a franchise highly advantageous to the town. I might say more but few things show that this Board has not been "asleep" or inactive.

The members of this Board have spent the best part of their lives here in the midst of the people. And come what will or may they are here to stay. They believe in Oxford. They are proud of its past and have hope for its future. They do not expect it to grow to the proportions of a Richmond or a Norfolk and therefore do not think it wise to attempt to judge the two by the same standards. Oxford has had a chance to become a "book town" for the past 150 years, the same chance that it now has, but has not done it. Its situation is such that we may as well content ourselves with the prospect of that sure, steady, solid growth to which it is accustomed and upon which its prosperity must be based. We would all like to see it blossom like the rose as the junior editor of Public Ledger has in such beautiful language prophesied it would when the new progressive board shall take charge or when a great bond issue is spent upon the streets. I doubt if such blossoming ever takes place, but I do believe that it is growing now in a sane and healthy way and that it will continue to so grow regardless of who may compose the membership of the next Board of Commissioners.

This much I have said because I have felt that the devotion to duty and the best interests of the town displayed by the members of the present Board justified its being said. These men are averse to seeking office but in view of what has been said they should ask for a vindication and that they are now seeking. And they would have the people of Oxford understand that they are asking for it as a Board and upon their record as a board. They are not seeking any personal votes but are standing by each other and as a unit asking an expression of confidence from the voters of this town.

D. G. BRUMMITT.

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