VOTERS ARGUE CITY CHARTER PRO AND CON

Debate Meeting Held At Labor Temple Wednesday

The public meeting held at the large hall in the Labor Temple Wednesday to educate city voters on arguments for and against the proposed new charter was almost an anti-charter affair with all but one speaker voicing reasons why the city manager form of government should not come into being in Klamath Falls.

At the beginning of the meeting, H. B. Moss, who was a member of the charter committee, answered the objection of many that too much power is concentrated in one man in the city manager plan by pointing out that there are five commissioners elected by the voters and these men retain powers of the council. However, Moss practically admitted he had little to say in the drawing up of the new charter.

MacRea Is Speaker

W. C. MacRea, president of the Anti-Charter league, was the main speaker of the evening, stating that he lived in Dayton, Ohio, when it was under a city manager form of government. The people were dissatisfied, but it took four years to get rid of the manager, and after he was put out of office he was able to retire.

He pointed out that no one opposing the charter has ever asked for a city office, although proponents of it have advanced the argument that this is one of the main objections. He stated that a majority of the present city officers are in favor of the charter.

May Be Candidate

However, when a man in the audience asked MacRea if it was not a fact that his name had been mentioned as a possible candidate for the office of mayor in the last election, the speaker admitted it was so, and stated furthermore that if the people wanted him for mayor he would take the office.

C. D. Long, president of the Central Labor Council, who was acting as chairman, objected to the personal question, but MacRea expressed his willingness to answer.

Says Records Complete

In the past five years, said the speaker, quoting from statistics, 1,621 cities have voted against the city manager form of government, while only 489 have voted for it.

Taking the argument of the affirmative side that records which are kept in the present form of government are not complete, he said he has had the privilege of examining the records at the city hall and that they are as complete as any kept by a city.

Denver Comparison

He insisted that there can be no comparison between a principal of a high school or county school superintendent and a city manager, for the principal or superintendent absolutely cannot hire or fire employes without the consent of the school board, while the city manager is given the power to hire city employes or fire them without cause.

MacRae stated that only one man drew up the city charter, and he was paid for it, although 15 men had signed their names to the document.

Someone in the audience asked who it was, and after a slight pause, the speaker answered, "Claud McColloch."

He said that according to law, the affirmative argument should have been drawn up and submitted to the voters 30 days before the election, but it was not handed to the printer until July 22.

Re-Reads Negative Side

He then re-read the negative arguments which were also heard by those attending a similar mass meeting a week ago. In this one of the main points is the people are deprived of the right to say what salary the manager or any city employe shall receive; that the only salaries set by the charter is the $6 a week to be paid the commissioners.

The city manager form of government is called a step backward by the Anti-Charter league.

Directing his remarks to the women present, he asked if they intended to lose their right of franchise after fighting for it 60 years.

Affirmative Not Present

Long urged someone to talk in favor of the charter and W. G. Smith, who termed himself a comparative stranger, took the floor to answer some of the arguments, but he ended his talk by a slap at the charter when he said it is evident the matter is doomed when no arguments are advanced stronger than those of the negative side.

He contended that if the members of the charter committee were honest in fixing their names to it, some of them should be present to champion their cause; that he and many others present really wished to know how to vote but now they could only leave with the feeling it would be easier to be against it.

Napier Speaks

His only good word for the proposed change was that those who are in favor of the charter are going on the inference that capable honest men will be put in as commissioners and manager and if the manager wishes the good will of the city he will fulfill the duties of his job.

J. H. Napier, attorney, said he believes the people are working under a smoke screen instead of getting at the major point, which is, the plan as proposed takes away their democracy in city government, the only government which directly affects their homes and happiness. He said it seems ridiculous that there is no local man capable of fulfilling the wishes of the people in his city, so that an outside man has to be imported.

Argument Heated

He referred to the clause in the charter which gives the mayor, an officer elected by the commissioners from one of their own group, power to act as host of the city, lead celebrations, banquets and such, as an English tinge, and if the voters desire such a person, what they really need is an English lord mayor. He challenged the good sense of the men who had drawn up such a charter, and stated such a government would be run for the gang.

At this junction, Moss jumped to his feet and hotly objected to Napier's words, saying he refused to be insulted and have it inferred that he and all those whose names were on the charter are dishonest.

Says Judgment Lacking

Napier smilingly answered that he did not intend to convey the idea they were dishonest, but that they just lacked judgment, from his viewpoint.

He went on to point out another assertedly vicious point in the charter which makes the police judge appointive by the commission. He said this really means the judge is appointed by the manager, for if the manager is strong enough to be appointed, he is strong enough to dominate the five commissioners; then if the police judge refuses to "play ball" he is fired.

Mrs. Dennis Talks

Mrs. C. E. Dennis, present city treasurer, announced that she, like many others, has decided, after holding one public office, to let someone else be the goat, and she will not run again for the treasurer's office.

In the proposed charter, Mrs. Dennis said, the treasurer is supposed to assist with the work of the police judge's office. She explained her present duties, that she is getting only $135 a month to handle funds which last year amounted to nearly a $3,000,000 turn over, and that she gets very little money with which to hire extra help, notwithstanding that the duties of her office are extremely heavy some seasons.

Balentine Not To Run

When called upon to speak, U. S. Balentine, present police judge and secretary of the anti-charter league, stated he had not intended to do any of the talking, but since members of the press were present he would take the opportunity to announce that he is not a candidate for any office of the city, and that his name appears as secretary of the league because he is sincere in his beliefs. He said the only reason the league was formed is because advocates of the charter had been giving it so much publicity and a few men wished to enlighten the public on the negative arguments.

At a hit at two arguments of charter proponents, Mrs. L. H. Hague asked why the city council does not remedy the matter if it is a fact there is incompetent help in the city offices; that a new charter is not needed for this.

There is an amendment in the present charter which provides for civil service in the police and fire department so a new charter is not needed for this, she announced.

Mrs. Hague voiced the belief that if proponents of the charter had known it was to get so much publicity, they would call off the coming election, if they had the power.

W. E. Scott, carpenter, insisted a city manager government would provide a chance for the formation of a political ring whose members would practically rob the citizens, and said if the voter wishes to keep his liberty he can do so only by exercising eternal vigilance.

ENGINEER KILLED

DAYTON, Wash., Aug. 8. (AP)—W. H. Reborn, Walla Walla city engineer, was killed and Stanley Royster, his assistant, gravely injured, when their automobile plunged down an embankment.

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