

HOW THE CITY MANAGER PLAN WAS DEFEATED IN ATLANTA

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Political machinations united with irregularities at elections to defeat C. M. government in Atlanta. The majority, however, was only 1,000 out of 14,000 and manager advocates are not downhearted. The fight was led by the women. :: :: :: :: :: :: :: ::

ABOUT fifteen years ago Atlanta voted upon and defeated the commission form of government two to one. Since that time there has been continual talk of charter revision with one or two spasmodic and abortive attempts. In the city elections of 1921 there was considerable talk of a new charter and the League of Women Voters sent a question relative to charter change to every candidate and received his written answer. Out of the eleven elected (one-third of council) nine answered the question favorably and this turned political thought somewhat in the direction of a new charter.

MAYOR'S COMMITTEE TO FORESTALL CITY MANAGER

At the first meeting of council in January 1922, Mr. Edgar Watkins, a newly elected councilman, introduced a city manager charter which he had worked upon for several months. The council for the purpose of defeating this charter instructed the mayor to appoint a committee of citizens and councilmen to report on a proper charter for Atlanta. The mayor was most astute in the appointment of the citizens on this committee, selecting some in whom everyone had confidence as sound thinking, non-political men and women, but in no case choosing anyone with any knowledge of city

government or of much independence of thought or of action. The committee, in good faith and without realizing the full import of what it did, acted exactly as the mayor wished.

When the mayor's committee announced that it would report a charter embodying the federal form of government, the League of Women Voters came out for the Watkins' city manager charter. For a year the League had carried on an educational campaign on city government, espousing no one form, but perfecting an organization through which it hoped to be able to acquire a new charter though it did not expect to be plunged into a campaign at quite such an early date nor to take the leadership. When the League endorsed the city manager charter there was not one reason to believe it was fighting anything but a losing battle but it acted in the belief that permanently to better politics there must be some organization which would work for the very best interests of the community regardless of what would seem at the moment expedient or politic.

COUNCIL FORCED TO CALL ELECTION

It was evident through interviews with all of the councilmen that the council was unwilling to submit the city manager charter to a vote. But

finally under the pressure of petitions being circulated demanding an election, council voted to hold an election on May 16 and submit to a vote three charters, the present one amended; the federal form, reported by the mayor's committee; and the Watkins city manager charter. Public opinion soon forced council to provide also for a "run-off" election two weeks after the first in the event that no one charter received a majority of the total vote.

It soon became evident that the business men as a whole were going to vote for the federal charter because of the business men on the mayor's committee. Some were intimidated into expressing no opinion at all and prevented from giving help to manager campaign. There were, of course, a number of men (especially toward the end) who gave money and made speeches for the manager charter but no group could be gotten together to do active work or planning. The fact that the women were leading the fight and that business men espoused the other charter made it easy to ridicule the men who favored the manager plan. One ardent supporter was asked when he began to wear petticoats. On the other hand some were found who reasoned that the women were right because they had nothing to gain personally.

Two elections were necessary, since none of the three proposed charters received a majority at the first. In the first election the old charter ran first and the manager charter second. In the final election two weeks later the old charter won by one thousand votes out of a total of 14,000.

THE ELECTION VERY IRREGULAR

The election was to be conducted along regular city election lines. To such little attention is ever paid owing

to the fact that city elections are generally only a ratification of the primary which is in the south the real election. There were many irregularities on election day, and the city attorney ruled that for most of them there was no redress. Clerks and managers marked the ballots for voters when so requested (in one instance the city manager representative found the clerk marking the ballot differently from that directed by voter and when called to account he corrected the "mistake"). There was absolutely no privacy for the voter. He had to mark his ballot at the polls with any number of people about him and this proved a most serious handicap. After the first election many of the polling places were changed but notice was not given until two days before election. The most flagrant case was in a large ward which was solidly for the manager plan and where the polls had been in one place for more than twenty years. Workers for the federal charter in the first election and for the old charter in the second had marked ballots outside the polls in the negro districts and got practically every negro vote. It was an interesting fact that the mayor was espousing the side in each case where the ballots were thus handed out. The night before election and on election day false rumors carrying great weight were circulated among the negroes. On the day before the second election a leaflet saying that the manager government would put them back into slavery was scattered broadcast. It should be stated, however, that many of the negroes of the more intelligent class did vote for the manager in the last election. The total negro vote was not large.

An important factor in the result was that the street railway was working for the old charter but positive proof of this fact did not come out until two days

before the final election. For this reason sufficient publicity could not be given to it to turn the tide as might have been possible if known sooner. All the employees of the railway apparently voted and voted against the manager plan.

Two other factors worked considerable against the new charter. The ballots were worded in a way most favorable to the old charter. And double voting was easy owing to the fact that every ward had two precincts

and all voters were allowed to vote in either precinct they chose. This, however, is a usual custom. The managers are supposed to meet immediately after the election and check the lists but this was not done as far as could be discovered.

In spite of all this, however, there were many things about the campaign that were encouraging and there is no question but that the charter fight will be pursued and that next time victory will be achieved.

FUTURE STATESMEN

THE POLITICAL AMBITIONS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

BY MARGARET BYRD

Do our college men and women, in securing their training for professional or business life, leave their preparation for the great tasks of intelligent citizenship in our democracy to mere chance?

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Some light may be thrown on the subject by a test recently held in a class of sixty-four students who were sufficiently interested in politics to have elected a course offered at Swathmore College in "American Political Parties and Party Problems." The class consisted of thirty-four young women ranging in age from seventeen to twenty-three years, the average being nineteen years and six months, and thirty young men of from seventeen to twenty-five years of age, averaging twenty years and four months. Of these students only two were members of the freshman class, while the other classes were represented by approximately equal numbers, the number of men and women from each class being about equal also. The students were

asked without warning for a written statement covering about ten minutes time and answering two questions, as follows:

(1) What political ambitions or activities have you in mind for your life after graduation?

(2) What advice have you received on this subject?

In twenty-nine cases the women's answers to the first question are definite on the matter of intelligent voting as the duty of a citizen, while in the other five instances the intention of performing this duty is implied. No doubt the newly won suffrage is responsible for this emphasis. The men's answers are less definite with regard to voting, mainly, however, because they take the use of the ballot for granted and hasten on to more exacting political duties. The two young women who are otherwise opposed to political activity on the part of members of their sex, nevertheless mention their purpose to vote intelligently. The only young man who seems to have any doubts as to his future with respect to this primary