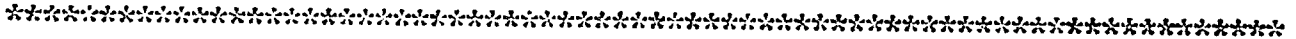


A HISTORY OF
THE
CITIZENS COALITION



NORTH BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT



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PRESS RELEASE - FEBRUARY 1, 1970

A Citizens Coalition has been organized for the purpose of defeating the proposed Charter Revision for the Town of North Branford. This Coalition is a non-political organization. It is headed by the following spokesmen for interested groups: Mr. Newt D'Addetta, Mrs. Regina Smith and Mrs. Veronica Jordan.

It is our position that the proposed revision falls far short of the much-needed changes hoped for by citizens of our town. In the coming weeks it is our intention to educate the people of North Branford as to the shortcomings and pitfalls included in this proposal.

We request all interested citizens to contact one of the above individuals.

On March 24, 1969, when I was a member of The League of Women Voters, a study committee was voted to be formed to make a study of the local government in light of the recent appointment by the Board of Selectmen of a Charter Revision Commission. Believing our present form of government needed up-dating, having an interest in government with comparatively little knowledge of the various forms of governments and many questions, I believed it would be a good opportunity to better develop and acquaint myself in this area.

The first meeting was held April 15, 1969. Various forms of government were assigned to different women who, in turn, would report their findings to the group.

Literature, published by the National Municipal League, which originated and advocates the council-manager form of government, and CPEC statistics, were made available. I never saw any literature which even hinted at the possibility of the council-manager form of government having a single drawback. I became rather alarmed as the study progressed.

In May, 1969, the report on five forms of governments (including the then-present form) was presented in a mimeographed booklet to all League members to study for concensus. It was most interesting to see that each form of government contained pros and cons with the exception of the council-manager form - it had no cons - no drawbacks. Basically, this same report was published in the newspapers as the League's information service to the public. I could not rationalize the fact that there was a perfect form of government - the council-manager form. Being imperfect human beings, all forms of government had to have pros and cons and I viewed certain aspects of this form as definite drawbacks. On June 9, 1969, less than two months from the first study meeting, a consensus meeting was held. It was all too obvious that the one perfect, no-drawback form of government would win the League of Women Voters' approval and the League was now prepared to be the only organized support urging the Charter Revision Commission, which was chaired by an active member of the League, to propose a council-manager government.

I was most disturbed with this type of study. I did not feel it properly informed fellow League members nor the public. It seemed to me to have been predetermined by a few who geared the whole study in one direction. I felt this was most undemocratic - a facade - I made my views known to the co-chairman of the study before and after concensus

and became all the more determined to follow through on the Charter and learn as many facts as I could.

In March of 1970, the Charter Revision Commission proposed a charter based on the "Model City Charter" of the aforementioned National Municipal League, for council-manager government to the Board of Selectmen.

My interest and concern mounted as the time drew nearer for the charter referendum.

I most strongly and sincerely believed the voters should be made aware of the drawbacks of the proposed charter so they might be in a better position to make an intelligent decision on such an important issue. For this purpose I joined with two other North Branford citizens to form the Citizens Coalition to oppose the proposed charter.

- Mrs. Regina Smith

My involvement in the charter referendum came about after I had read the proposed charter. My active role did not stem from opposition to the council-manager concept, but rather to specific provisions of the charter. These provisions included:

1.) Specifically prohibiting a referendum to set the tax rate. The charter does provide for a maximum of two town meetings on the budget; however, these are not binding. 2.) At large election of council members. 3.) No specific provision for minority representation on the council. 4.) While the charter states that the manager will serve at the pleasure of the council, it also provides for hearings to be held on the matter and also that the council may not speak to town employees unless the manager is

present. It appears that the council has broad investigative powers over everyone but the manager. This aspect of the charter is particularly distressing in view of the problems experienced by Milford and Stratford. Milford had to change its form of government to divest itself of a manager and Stratford lost a court fight to fire its manager. The judge ruled in the Stratford case that while the manager was inept he could not be fired for this reason because in the spirit of the charter, he was serving to the best of his ability.

Had it not been for the charter provisions mentioned above I would not have become a member of the Citizens Coalition and would not have strenuously opposed the new charter.

- Mr. Newt D'Addetta

After attending a public hearing in January of 1970, I realized that individual rights which are so vital to freedom, were being seriously threatened by the proposed charter change. Objections to the abolition of our Board of Selectmen-Town Meeting form of government, which has traditionally provided every individual with the greatest possible scope of opportunity to cast his vote as he chose and to convince his neighbors to join him, were met with an air of disdain. The valid questions of concerned townspeople were treated as trivial and one came away with the impression that the proponents were not going to be bothered with any questions or opposition.

I decided that in order for the people of North Branford to cast intelligent votes on such a vital issue, our concerns and questions

must be treated with respect and satisfactorily answered. Discussions with neighbors and friends clearly indicated interest in investigating the matter further. Contact with Mrs. Regina Smith and Mr. Newt D'Addetta re-affirmed my belief that we could best serve our own interests and the interests of our town by forming an organization whose function it would be to make available as much information as possible regarding this issue.

We joined together in an effort to provide our town with ALL the truth. We believe we succeeded.

- Mrs. Veronica Jordan

The issue before us is whether or not the proposed charter provides the best form of government for our town at this time. We are going to point out the flaws and shortcomings that will be ours to live with if this charter is accepted.

To begin with - the charter under Section 2-5 provides for minority representation on the two elective boards but does not - I repeat, DOES NOT provide for any minority representation on the most important - the policy-making governing body - THE COUNCIL. Therefore, we can have all the council members belonging to one political party or another.

It further states that there shall be elected a council of nine (9) members AT LARGE. At large means we are not guaranteed representation by district - and regardless of how many times the proponents of the charter say the council members will come from all parts of North Branford, they simply have no basis for this statement - it is guaranteed NOWHERE

in the charter and it is too vital an issue to assume.

So we now have a situation where not only can all the council members be from one political party by they can all be from one district.

During the charter hearings and in news releases we heard about the merits of the short ballot we were going to have, enabling the voters to learn more about the candidates for whom they were voting. It was a worthy idea and I would love to know whatever became of it. As it stands, there will be more candidates under the proposed charter than we now have - with at least 18 for the council alone and it might be more than 18 - there is no way of knowing. Here again, the charter neglects to spell these little items out for us. They also failed to spell out the powers and duties of all our appointed boards and commissions. The charter vests all these powers and duties to the Town Council that our boards and commissions are now functioning under and we have no idea what the Town Council is going to do with them. For example - under Section 6-4 it would not be in conflict with the General Statutes for the council to give themselves the powers and duties designated to the Planning and Zoning Commission in the Connecticut Statutes.

Under Section 4-2 and 3, the council shall meet on the second Monday following the election and at this meeting appoint a clerk of the council. The council is not a recognized legal body until December 1st and certainly cannot be expected to meet and function as one prior to that date.

Under Section 4-4, special meetings of the council may be called by the Mayor upon reasonable written notice to all council members. The

Connecticut State Statutes specify minimum notice requirements for the calling of special meetings.

The Town Council has virtually no power to make any town employee answerable to it without the approval of the manager.

A manager can resign with a mere (60) day notice - there is no contract - in effect this can prove to be a very unstable situation.

The manager, with the council's approval, can perform the duties of any office under his jurisdiction, except those of the town treasurer. Needless to say, this can put one man in a very powerful position.

Why didn't the charter provide us with a merit system rather than simply directing the council to initiate one by a certain date? While we are awaiting this merit system, the manager has the power to fire anyone he'd like to and we're still left with if and when a merit system is instituted, what will it be?

Under Section 8-5 - annual budget meeting - if the annual budget meeting fails to adopt a budget, it is referred back to the council. They must come back to a second continued annual budget meeting. Might I point out that they can come back with the same budget! If this meeting fails to adopt the budget, it is automatically deemed adopted. In other words, you can go to two town meetings, reject what is presented and be completely ignored. This is the fantastic control you have over your purse strings.

Section 4-11 - power of initiative - effectively eliminates your right to petition for referendum on most town issues when it excludes the appointment or removal of officials, authorization of the levy of taxes, and fixing the tax rate. The adoption of the budget automatically fixes the tax rate - therefore, under this sub-section, the people automatically

lose their power or waive their right to referendum on the town budget. This is reinforced by Section 4-12.

Another interesting point is the fact that the Mayor is designated the moderator of this budget meeting. The Mayor, being a council member, prepares the budget and presents it at the town meeting and then - we hope - is an impartial moderator. Under our present system, the taxpayers and electors have the right to select their moderator.

So, to briefly recap - we can attend two town meetings, reject the budget, and have it adopted. We can attend these meetings and possibly not even have the opportunity to be heard, and we have no power to petition for referendum. I must say, this is real control, but obviously NOT by the people.

It is fantastic how statistics can mislead. The proponents of the charter would like us to believe that this is the popular form of government sweeping the state and it just isn't so! The vast majority of towns in the State of Connecticut - (146) out of (169) DO NOT HAVE the council-manager form of government.

The majority of towns in the New Haven area looking into charter revision have rejected this concept of government, such as Branford, North Haven and Hamden. We needn't look far to find Milford, a fine example of a town that had a council-manager and abolished it. In fact, we have no towns in the greater New Haven and east shore areas with this form of government.

The proponents of this charter would like us to believe that this form of government will be more economical or more efficient than our present one. I would like to refer to statistics presented by our Board

of Tax Assessors, who would not, based on these and other statistics, endorse this charter.

Taking the estimated population of the towns having council-manager forms of government - based on a per-capita cost for town services provided - that must be covered by taxation - the average cost for these towns was \$233 per person. The average cost per person for the town of Monroe, which most nearly approximates the population of our town, was \$245. For the town of Bloomfield, \$278 - for North Branford the cost was \$207. These are facts - not vague thoughts.

If you're not satisfied with this charter or find the flaws contained within as serious as we do, then it must be defeated. If it passes, we may find ourselves living with it for a very long time. If it is defeated, there will be ample opportunity for the formation of a new charter revision commission that will far more adequately meet our needs.

Ladies and gentlemen, PLEASE take a long, hard look at what is being proposed in this document. Keep in mind its' most basic threats to a responsible government: ONE party, ONE district, an INEFFECTIVE TOWN MEETING, lack of the power to petition to vital issues. No control.

- Mrs. Regina Smith

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In order to support the proposed charter revision for the Town of North Branford, one must accept the concept that the people of his town are incapable of making intelligent, rational decisions regarding their own lives and futures.

We believe that this proposed revision presents a serious threat to the rights and freedoms of the individual voter and taxpayer.

We are outraged that a few individuals expect us to consolidate the thoughts, opinions, rights and VOTES of 4,846 people into one neat package and hand it over permanently to NINE individuals, who will, in turn, pass many of these responsibilities on to a town manager of their own choosing. By his inaccessability, he remains one step removed from the effects of democracy and the people can possibly remain for all of their days, the victims of "efficiency" in exchange for freedom.

We believe we have an obligation to ourselves and our neighbors to inform the people that this proposed revision contains features that are totally unacceptable to anyone who strongly believes in INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS!

It is a FACT that all nine members of YOUR COUNCIL can be from ONE party and there is no guarantee that the minority party will be represented at all. It is a FACT that all nine members of YOUR COUNCIL can come from ONE district. It is a FACT that the annual budget meeting is totally ineffective and can be completely ignored by the council.

Under this proposed charter, your Board of Education budget, which constitutes OVER 80% of our total expenditures, is UNTOUCHABLE and we will not have the power to petition for referendum.

And the most important fact of all is that you have no control over the man responsible for running your town. You CANNOT go to the polls on election day and vote the Town Manager IN or OUT of office.

This is NOT our last chance for change. A new charter revision commission can be appointed immediately.

Don't vote for an unsuitable outline - let's design a workable constitution for the people of North Branford.

EDITORIAL - WELI RADIO
MARCH 5, 1971

Mrs. Veronica Jordan

The issue before the citizens of North Branford is whether or not the proposed charter provides the best form of government for our town at this time. The Citizens' Coalition feels most strongly that it does not.

We believe that this proposed revision presents a serious threat to the rights and freedoms of the individual voter and taxpayer. Please - DON'T VOTE BLINDLY - be absolutely certain of what you are voting for and what you are giving up, If you are not completely satisfied with this charter then it must be defeated - for if it passes, we may find ourselves living with it for a very long time.

This is NOT our last chance for change. A new charter revision commission can be appointed immediately.

DON'T vote for an unsuitable outline - let's design a workable constitution that will meet the needs of the people of North Branford.

EDITORIAL - WNHC RADIO & TELEVISION
MARCH 5, 1971
- Mrs. Regina Smith

NEEDLESS TO SAY WE WERE NOT ALONE IN OUR BELIEFS AND EFFORTS
IN PREVENTING THE PASSAGE OF THE PROPOSED CHARTER. THAT 3,260
CITIZENS CHOSE TO EXERCISE THEIR RIGHT TO VOTE WITH ONLY A 166
VOTE DIFFERENCE IS TESTIMONY TO THAT FACT.

WE WOULD HOPE THAT THE EFFORTS OF ALL THE PEOPLE INVOLVED
IN OUR CAMPAIGN SERVED TO THE BETTERMENT OF OUR COMMUNITY, IN
MAKING SO MANY CITIZENS AWARE AND A PART OF OUR GREAT DEMOCRATIC-
AMERICAN PROCESS.

WE HAVE MUCH TO BE PROUD OF.