

HOW GOV. BLEASE REWARDS HIS FRIENDS AT THE EXPENSE OF HIS ENEMIES.

Overrides Law and Public Sentiment Without Rhyme or Reason—Correspondence Between Senator Epps and His Excellency Setting Forth Facts in Magisterial Muddle at Trio.

Having heard that there was considerable feeling at Trio on account of the course of action pursued by Governor Blease in ignoring the recommendation of the Legislative delegation in the matter of appointing a Magistrate for that section, and further refusing to act on a numerous signed petition praying for the appointment of another man, a representative of The Record interviewed Senator Epps, asking for full information as to the situation, whereupon Senator Epps kindly gave us copies of all the letters between himself and the Governor, which correspondence covers the incident to this date and very plainly sets forth the attitude of Governor Blease in the matter, which, in the light of his official conduct since the beginning of his term of office, is not very surprising. The correspondence which follows is given in seriatim, as the letters were written:

EXHIBIT A.
Kingstree, S C, March 22, 1911.

Mr W D Crooks, Trio, S C.

Dear Sir:—I have just received a letter from Mr J B Files stating that he has turned over the books and office of Magistrate at Trio to you, believing that your commission from the Governor was regular and according to law, which, no doubt, you yourself believed to be right and proper. However, as a matter of fact, Mr Files had been duly recommended by the county delegation for this office, and the information that he was not appointed has just reached us.

The law seems to be plain on this point and places upon the Senator the duty of recommending for appointment such persons as in his opinion will fill the various positions of Magistrate throughout the county, and upon such recommendation has the Governor authority to appoint.

Before arranging the recommendations for the county, the delegation held a meeting for considering the several applications and at this meeting it was decided to make only such changes as had been asked for by petition or otherwise. We heard no word of complaint from Trio, where the law provides for a Magistrate; besides, it was questionable whether you were eligible for appointment, living so far from the town. All things considered, admitting your qualifications and fitness for the office, the delegation decided that Mr Files should be re-appointed and so recommended. I wish to say here, however, that personally I knew you much better than I did Mr Files, and I have always counted you among my personal friends, yet I do not believe that a public office should be used as a means of reward for either personal or political friendships unless all things are equal.

Now, under these circumstances, I am writing to you to ascertain whether or not you would want to continue in said office. My opinion is, that, knowing these facts, you will at once send in your resignation to the Governor.

As a matter of principle I shall not allow Governor Blease or any other Governor to ignore authority or privileges vested in me under the law while serving as Senator of our county, and therefore I trust that you will decline to serve as Magistrate and so notify Governor Blease at once, thus avoiding further necessary steps which shall be taken in order to vindicate the rights and authority which belong to the delegation and which Governor Blease must recognize.

With kindest personal regards and hoping to hear from you at an early date, I remain,

Yours very truly, E C EPPS.

EXHIBIT B.
Kingstree, S C, March 30, 1911.

Hon Cole L Blease, Governor of South Carolina,
Columbia, S C.

Dear Sir:—I learned several days ago that you had ignored the recommendation of our delegation for the appointment of a Magistrate at Trio, in this county, and that you had commissioned one for this position without even our knowledge of your intention to do so, or even the courtesy of informing us that our recommendation was distasteful to you. Immediately upon learning that Mr Crooks had been commissioned I wrote to him, as per the enclosed letter, hoping that when advised of the manner of his appointment he would send in his resignation to you, and thus avoid the necessity of other steps which I feel that it is my duty to take under the existing circumstances.

Mr Crooks has not seen fit to reply to my letter and I now wish to call your attention to the actual conditions as they exist, trusting that you will correct what we believe to be an injustice not only to our delegation but to the whole community affected by your appointment.

The Magistrate at Trio has quite a large territory to look after and should be located near the central point. Mr J B Files, whom we recommended and who lives at Trio, meets this condition, while your appointee lives at the extreme edge of the territory to be served. Mr Files has held this office for several years and eighty or ninety per cent of the citizens of the community, were they consulted in the matter, would ask that he be re-appointed. Our delegation laid aside personal friendships and recommended the man whom we believed the community desired, and who by service has proved his fitness for the position.

While we do not question the ability of your appointee, or the fact that he is highly respected by his people, we do question your right to interfere in this manner in a matter which, as we understand the law, devolves upon us not only as a privilege but as a duty. This law may be faulty, and, as you contend, unconstitutional. It is probable that it is unconstitutional; yet its unconstitutionality has not been declared by the court which is vested with the power to pass upon such questions, and until such is done, both you and I, as law-abiding citizens, should respect and obey this law.

The copy of my letter to Mr Crooks states fairly well my feelings in this matter, and I hope that the affair can be adjusted without adding notoriety or publicity to simple a proposition. Should you, for personal reasons, dislike to commission the one whom we have recommended for this office, we shall not insist that you do, inasmuch as he is already Magistrate and that a new commission is not absolutely necessary. However, we do respectfully request that you revoke the commission of Mr Crooks, issued without our recommendation, and that you advise us whether or not you will do so.

Very respectfully,
E C EPPS, Senator of Williamsburg county.

EXHIBIT C.
Executive Chamber, Columbia, April 1, 1911,

Hon E C Epps, Kingstree, South Carolina.

Dear Sir:—Your letter received. I understand that Magistrate Files is postmaster at Trio and, under our Constitution, he cannot hold both positions. Furthermore, just after the first primary last summer, Mr Files sent me a State ticket, marking opposite the name of each candidate for Governor the vote received at

Trio. Opposite my name was a zero, and written on the ticket was the following: "You see what I did for you at my box," and signed by him.

Now, I mean no discourtesy to your delegation, but when I sign a commission for Files, crows will be white and the angels of heaven will be on earth singing, "Hallelujah, it is done."

I am surprised at the tone of your letter,—you who confess to be a friend of mine. This appointment will stand. If the Senate does not wish to confirm it, then I shall appoint another, but no Files.

Very respectfully,
COLE L BLEASE, Governor.

EXHIBIT D.
Kingstree, S C, April 4, 1911.

Hon Cole L Blease, Governor of South Carolina,
Columbia, S C.

Dear Sir:—Your letter of the 1st instant has been received and the information contained in it was not known to our delegation when the recommendation of Mr Files was made. Had these points been raised at the time of our recommendation the matter might have very easily been adjusted to the satisfaction of all parties concerned.

The conditions, however, are such that, in my opinion, the Magistrate for this section should live in the town of Trio, and I believe this is the judgment of a very large majority of the people who live in the territory. However, since you have raised the constitutional point against Mr Files, he being a postmaster, I shall not insist upon his appointment, but will reserve the right to recommend some other than Mr Crooks, should we decide that the interests of the community warrant this course. I also wish to call your attention to the fact that your appointee is just as ineligible for appointment as is Mr Files, he being a school trustee for the district in which he lives. Yet, if the people who are to be served by your appointee are willing to submit to what I consider an inconvenience of which I have heard many expressions of disapproval, I shall not press the matter further. But, as suggested above, if evidences of dissatisfaction warrant it, we shall certainly ask for another appointment and for the recall of the commission of Mr Crooks. Very truly,

E C EPPS, Senator from Williamsburg.

EXHIBIT E.
Kingstree, S C, April 17, 1911.

Hon Cole L Bease, Governor, Columbia, S C.

Dear Sir:—We wish to call your attention again to the conditions caused by your appointment of Mr W D Crooks as Magistrate at Trio, S C, with the request that you recall his commission. In your last letter to me you suggested that you might appoint some other than Mr Files, whom we recommended, and who could not serve on account of being postmaster.

We now wish to recommend Mr W T Rowell for this position, with an earnest request that you take up the matter at once and have him commissioned in lieu of the commission issued to Mr Crooks which you will revoke. We ask this in order to secure for a large community of our people a fair and just deal which they deserve, and which we determine, if possible, to obtain for them.

We have looked into your appointment very carefully and are fully persuaded that it will be wrong for you to force upon a people an officer who, in the very natural order of things, cannot serve and protect their interests in a proper manner. We enclose a petition in behalf of Mr Rowell, and, making this showing, we believe you will grant our request. (Petition enclosed containing names of 86 citizens of Trio and vicinity, asking for Rowell's appointment).

Respectfully,
E C EPPS, Senator from Williamsburg.

EXHIBIT F.
Kingstree, S C, April 22, 1911.

Hon Cole L Blease, Columbia, S C.

Dear Sir:—Will you kindly advise me whether or not you have decided to make the change of Magistrate at Trio, S C?

Yours truly,
E C EPPS.

EXHIBIT G.
Executive Chamber, Columbia, April 27, 1911.

Hon E C Epps, Kingstree, South Carolina.

Dear Sir:—The Governor is in receipt of your letter of April 22. He directs me to state that he forwarded all the papers you sent him to Mr Crooks; received his reply, and that he cannot appoint Mr W T Rowell.

Yours very truly,
ALEX ROWLAND, Private Secretary.

EXHIBIT H.
Kingstree, S C, May 4, 1911.

Hon Cole L Blease, Governor, Columbia, S C.

Dear Sir:—Your refusal to commission Mr W T Rowell as Magistrate at Trio in lieu of the appointment of Mr Crooks, made without our recommendation and contrary to the wishes of practically the entire citizenship of the community, is a disappointment to us.

We first nominated Mr Files for re-appointment, not knowing your bitter personal feelings against him nor of the constitutional point which in your opinion would disqualify him. Having this information from you, we decided not to insist upon the appointment of Mr Files, but concluded that if the community, under the circumstances, wished your commission to Mr Crooks to stand, we would not oppose it, although made without our recommendation. Upon abundant evidence, however, of which you have been advised, it became our duty to recommend Mr W T Rowell. This was promptly done. You, however, after referring our request to your appointee and having received his reply, decided to ignore our judgment in the matter as well as the expressed desire of the whole community.

Now, under these circumstances, I shall oppose the confirmation of Mr Crooks; I shall also, if possible, hold up his salary pending his confirmation by the Senate; and I shall also take whatever other steps I find in order to annul his appointment. I believe that the Senate will stand by us in the position we have taken in the matter, and I am advising Mr Crooks that, should he hold on, he will do so in the face of an opposition which it might be well for him to recognize.

Yours very respectfully,
E C EPPS, Senator from Williamsburg.

EXHIBIT I.
Kingstree, S C, May 4, 1911.

Mr W D Crooks, Trio, S C,

Dear Sir:—Since my last conversation with you, Governor Blease has advised me that he will not appoint Mr Rowell as Magistrate. Governor Blease seems to have taken a very unusual stand in this matter, he having refused to consider either our judgment and recommendations or the wishes of the people at Trio and the surrounding community. He clearly demonstrates his determination to act independently in a matter where the law provides that he must act only by the advice and consent of the Senate.

I have fully determined to oppose your confirmation when the Senate next convenes; also to hold up the salary of any appointee which the Governor may make without our consent or recommendation; also such appointee's confirmation.

You suggested in our conversation that you would resign under certain

conditions, and it is my opinion that this would be the better course for you to take, for I feel absolutely sure that the Senate will not confirm your appointment. Of course, I regret that you have been placed in an embarrassing position, but we are not responsible for it, nor can we now avoid the consequences growing out of the unfortunate act of Governor Blease.

I would appreciate an early reply stating whether or not you have fully decided to resign, effective July 1, next. Yours very truly,
E C EPPS, Senator from Williamsburg.

EXHIBIT J.
Executive Chamber, Columbia, May 5, 1911.

Hon E C Epps, Kingstree, South Carolina.

Dear Sir:—Your letter of May 4 received. I am very sorry to note the temper of your letter. It is a small matter with me as to what you do in regard to Mr Crooks. I have commissioned him, and there being no vacancy there now, I cannot make any other appointment; but I hope you will cool off, as you are new in politics and you will find it does not do to get mad every time some little things do not go to suit you.

I did not appoint Mr Files; never intended to appoint him, no matter who recommended it. Very respectfully,
COLE L BLEASE, Governor.

As to losing votes, from Files' marked ticket sent me I had none at that box to loose. C.

EXHIBIT K.
Kingstree, S C, May 8, 1911.

Hon Cole L Blease, Governor, Columbia, S C.

Dear Sir:—I appreciate your letter of the 5th instant which has been received. It reveals to me more clearly than ever your purpose in refusing to perform a duty which you owe to our people by virtue of the obligation taken when you became Chief Executive of our State.

I am not mad. I did not ask for the appointment of either Mr Files or Mr Rowell as a personal favor nor for political profit, but in order to serve the interest of the people at Trio, exercising a privilege under the law which I appreciate and which as a privilege I shall defend, trusting that as I grow older in politics, I shall become more capable in defence of what in justice is due our people. Respectfully,
E C EPPS, Senator from Williamsburg.

[FINIS.]

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