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307 W. 6th St.  
Bartlesville, Okla.  
September 18, 1950

Mr. John D. Upham  
Bartlesville, Oklahoma

Dear John:

This account, written in response to your telephone request, gives my recollections of the meeting held in the evening of August 7, 1950, in the ballroom of the Civic Center.

My impression is that there were about 150 persons in the audience -- about three times the number reported the next day in the local newspaper, whose account appeared to me to minimize the meeting.

At the start of the meeting, Mayor Dunaway announced that the meeting was for the purpose of presenting objections to the dismissal of Miss Brown as city librarian. This announcement seemed quite unexpected, since most of the audience, like myself, had come to the meeting with the distinct understanding and expectation that the city commissioners were going to make a statement of their reasons for the dismissal.

Throughout the meeting, no explicit objection to the dismissal was presented. Later, it appeared amazing and disconcerting to me that apparently there had been no one who represented Miss Brown to the extent of maintaining the questioning without long time gaps, or of expressing explicitly the conclusions to be drawn from the mayor's answers, or of expressing Miss Brown's position by presenting objections to her dismissal.

Those who questioned the mayor did so in an obvious search for the reasons for the dismissal. The first question, I believe, was by Mr. Charles Varvel, whose right to speak was at first challenged by the mayor because of his residence being on Tuxedo Road, but he was permitted to speak by the mayor saying in a disparaging manner "Let's hear what he's got to say." The mayor did not answer Mr. Varvel's question nor the similar questions of the next few persons, among whom I now seem to recall only Dr. H. L. McMurry.

The mayor seemed almost to request the audience to present objections to the dismissal. He stated that he understood that the meeting was for the purpose of presenting objections, and he seemed to indicate that apparently there were no objections. After the first few persons had asked only the reasons for the dismissal, and the audience was silent because no answer had come, he asked "Is that all?", as if implying that very few persons indeed were interested in the matter.

At about this point someone in the audience made the pertinent remark that no one could present objections without knowing to what he was objecting.

When it appeared that no answer to the question repeatedly presented by the audience was forthcoming from the mayor, Mr. J. W. McCaslin arose and spoke at some length in a propitiating manner, explaining that many of the persons had come to the meeting because they had heard many statements and rumors that seemed to present conflicting views and that they were present to learn the actual facts of the dismissal; in the course of his remarks, he made the comment that the voters of Bartlesville would have an opportunity in the spring to vote on new city commissioners, a comment to which the mayor assented with a nodding of his head.

Two other gentlemen -- Mr. W. A. Talmage and a gentleman whose name I do not recall -- spoke similarly. Mr. Talmage, who spoke several times, indicated in the course of his remarks that he had asked each of the city commissioners for the reasons and had received different answers from them without getting a satisfactory answer from



any of them; he made mention of the rumors, including one that involved the question of persons more heavily pigmented than those present in the audience. The other gentleman also pleaded several times for information, saying that he had been out of the city at the time of the dismissal, had returned to hear many conflicting rumors, and was anxious to learn the facts.

In spite of all the pleading, the mayor continued not to give a direct answer to the questions. An elderly lady, whose name I did not catch, spoke up to support the mayor in his silence; she expressed her belief that an employer was under no need to furnish reasons for dismissing an employee.

The stalemate was broken at last by a Mr. Etter, who is, so I learned later, a son of Dr. F. S. Etter ~~and who seemed to be the only one present that wore dark glasses.~~ As I recall the matter, he had previously made some comment that everyone knew why Miss Brown had been dismissed and he now appeared goaded by the questions fired at him by others in the audience to arise and state that the reason was a closet full of Communistic literature that Miss Brown kept in the library.

This statement by young Mr. Etter led the aforementioned gentleman, whose name I don't recall, to declare emphatically that Communism was a satisfactory reason for dismissal.

But the accusation of Communism disappeared when the mayor, shortly thereafter, made a definite statement that neither Communism nor the colored question had anything to do with the dismissal. The reason for dismissal, the mayor said, was insubordination.

The audience appeared uncertain as to what was meant by this reason, but the mayor did not offer to elucidate further. Consequently, on observing that the mayor seemed ready to adjourn the meeting and that apparently no one else in the audience was ready to elicit further information, I arose, introduced myself as a citizen and taxpayer of Bartlesville for over a dozen years, stated that many of the persons present were obviously not fully satisfied with the reason given and were anxious to determine the reasons for the dismissal in some detail, and asked if the mayor would give some specific examples of Miss Brown's insubordination. The mayor answered that he couldn't recall any example offhand but that if he were given a week he could doubtless think of some. Then I asked if those around him could recall any specific example. The mayor looked at the city commissioners, who shook their heads. Thereby, it seems to me, the city commissioners publicly confessed that they could not substantiate the charge of insubordination.

Shortly after I sat down, a young lady, whose name I didn't catch, evoked general applause from the audience by saying, in effect, that the city commissioners were apparently guilty of insubordination themselves, inasmuch as they had dismissed an employee without furnishing their own employer, the voters and taxpayers of Bartlesville, with a reason for the dismissal.

Almost immediately thereafter the mayor hurriedly adjourned the meeting.

Very truly yours,

M. P. Matuszak