

8-1965

# The Movement for Home Rule in Prince Georges County, Maryland 1961-1964

Paul A. Clark Jr.

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/masters-theses>



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Clark, Paul A. Jr., "The Movement for Home Rule in Prince Georges County, Maryland 1961-1964" (1965). *Master's Theses*. 1285.  
<http://scholarship.richmond.edu/masters-theses/1285>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact [scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu](mailto:scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu).

THE MOVEMENT FOR HOME RULE IN  
PRINCE GEORGES COUNTY, MARYLAND  
1961-1964

---

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Graduate Faculty  
Department of Political Science  
University of Richmond

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

LIBRARY  
UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND  
VIRGINIA

by  
Paul A. Clark, Jr.

August, 1965

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The purpose of this paper has been to trace the movement for constitutional home rule in Prince Georges County, Maryland. Special attention has been given to the effects of the movement on Prince Georges County government. As a conclusion to this study, several more recommendations are suggested as improvements on the local government administration.

It should be pointed out that the author is not an outsider looking in at the County government, but a County resident whose total pre-college education was received in Prince Georges County. Furthermore he has witnessed the tremendous growth and expansion of this County in recent years which undoubtedly provided the emphasis for the home rule movement.

An effort has been made to present as impartial a picture possible without distorting the facts. It is hoped that those concerned, pro and con home rule, will not find that injustice has been done to their cause.

Since considerable importance was given to the examination of those persons actually involved in the home rule movement, there are many with whom I owe recognition and appreciation. Among these are the following persons: Mrs. Louise Brook, Dr. Albert S. Ford, Jr., Mr. Joseph H. Deckman, Honorable Francis B. Francois, Mrs. Mildred Harkness, Mr. and Mrs. Julian Holmes, Mr. Del Maikie, Mr. Walter H. Maloney, Jr., Mrs. David A. Patterson, Honorable Gladys Noun Spellman, Mr. Al Swiger, and Mr. James Vance.

Without the understanding and support from my mother, Inez Clark, and my father, Paul A. Clark, Sr., my task this year would have been considerably more difficult.

Appreciation should always be expressed to my wonderful wife, Brenda, who encouraged and supported her husband while he was completing his graduate education.

My advisor, Professor Spenser D. Albright, Jr., gave freely of his advice and time during the year and more appreciably during his summer vacation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION TO COUNTY HOME RULE . . . . .	1
II. BACKGROUND AND <u>PROJECT MARLBORO</u> . . . . .	6
III. HOME RULE CAMPAIGN 1962. . . . .	15
IV. ROUND TWO - 1964 CAMPAIGN. . . . .	24
V. DEFEAT AND CONCLUSION. . . . .	42
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	49
APPENDIX . . . . .	53

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO COUNTY HOME RULE

"Home Rule in the sense of constitutionally granted authority to frame and adopt charters and thereby determine local organization has made less progress in the case of counties than in the municipal field."<sup>1</sup> Counties must have received state constitutional authority or else special legislative permission before home rule can be instituted. Even so, it has been affirmed that the popular interest in home rule has not been very widespread even in those counties where the privilege is already available.<sup>2</sup>

This lack of public interest in home rule might lead one to believe that our county governments are in no need of reform or public attention. But such is definitely not the case for most of our county governments. There are three important areas of county administration where reform is lagging.

Charles F. Snider, in his midcentury study on county government found that about every county faced the same administrative problems. "The most single weakness," he wrote, "is the lack of a county executive--an individual officer charged with general oversight of an integrated administrative system."<sup>3</sup>

---

1. Charles F. Snider, "American County Governments: A Mid-Century Review," American Political Science Review, XLVI (March, 1952), p. 69.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p. 71.

Admitting some progress in county personnel administration, he asserted secondly that, "Some ninety percent of the country's counties still lack even the form, to say nothing of the substance, of a merit system."<sup>4</sup> The extension of the merit principle thus remains one of the basic requirements of county reform.

"Along with governmental cost," he discovered in his third area of disclosure, "county expenditures have undergone a phenomenal rise."<sup>5</sup> Yet systematic budgeting continued to be overlooked in county affairs; most counties still purchased their materials and supplies in piecemeal fashion without centralized purchasing.<sup>6</sup>

These criticisms and many others have led civic minded individuals to turn to the idea of county home rule as a means for reform. Some reformers doubtlessly desired to see county home rule enacted; while others, through a home rule campaign, only wanted to apply pressure on local units for change.

Oregon, with its spreading population and rural development, sought home rule as the possible solution to its county governmental problems. Legislation was enacted in 1958 that provided for the appointment of a committee in each county to propose a charter.<sup>7</sup> By 1963,

---

4. Ibid., p. 72.

5. Ibid., p. 76.

6. Ibid.

7. Russel W. Maddox, "County Home Rule in Oregon," Western Political Quarterly, XVI (September 1963), p. 22.

however, only seven counties had submitted the charters to popular vote and no more than two had passed.

As should have been expected, the rate of Oregon county urban growth seemed to influence the outcome of the charter campaign. The two Oregon counties approving a charter had an increase in urban population within the last ten years of 169 percent and ninety eight percent. The counties defeating charter had rates of increase from thirty four percent to minus one percent.<sup>8</sup>

Looking now to the charter campaign itself, one must emphasize its continuous nature. It starts before the members of the charter commission are selected, and its effects continue long after the charter is adopted.<sup>9</sup>

The most important aspect of the campaign is the process of public education.<sup>10</sup> The education of the public should have an early start and be a continuous one with speeches before clubs and radio and television stations. Furthermore, potential contributors to the charter campaign fund should be well educated on the charter problems, especially the need for adequate campaign funds, by the time the campaign is begun.

The five members of the charter commission have a responsibility to the campaign. They must not only write a good charter but write the

---

8. Ibid.

9. Charlton F. Chute, "Charter Campaigning," National Municipal Review, XLV (December, 1956), p. 537.

10. Ibid., p. 538.



best one that can be adopted.<sup>11</sup> Then they must be available after its adoption to insure that the charter is put into proper function.

County home rule, if adopted, is not without its benefits to the state as well as to the county. One authority acknowledged, "Home rule has helped state legislatures by relieving them of many of the local bills that used to be a great burden to their predecessors."<sup>12</sup>

It also has encouraged local governments to attempt solutions to their problems without constantly running to the state legislature. This dependence on local solutions to problems has encouraged many able people to participate in local government that might have backed away from accepting such responsibilities without the assurance of home rule.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, home rule is not without its dangers to county government. During the campaign many unrealistic promises are made in the name of home rule which receive the credit if they are fulfilled or the blame if they are not.<sup>14</sup>

There is also no clear-cut evidence that county home rule will provide better county government. The quality of government at any level depends on the persons elected to fill the public offices and not

---

11. Ibid., p. 539.

12. Lyle E. Schaller, "Home Rule--A Critical Appraisal," Political Science Quarterly, LXXXVI (September, 1961), p. 403.

13. Ibid., p. 404.

14. Ibid., p. 412.

on the structure of government. The best that home rule can possibly do is to encourage more able people to participate in local government.<sup>15</sup>

County home rule reform was undertaken in Prince Georges County, Maryland, in 1961. It is with this movement and its effects that this paper concerns itself.

---

15. Ibid.

## CHAPTER II

### BACKGROUND AND PROJECT MARLBORO

Thomas R. Hendrick asserted in the Washington Post on October 7, 1962, that, "As suburban communities grow into established neighborhoods, the conservative leaders of county courthouses across the United States find themselves faced with growing pressure for governmental reform."<sup>1</sup> These pressures, he stated, came mainly from the new residents of the suburban developments who generally have taken an active interest in local governmental affairs.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, the typical courthouse government was oriented toward the old line residents and business interests. It refused to listen to proposals to change its established form and method of operation. Internal reorganization was taken grudgingly and only at slow intervals.<sup>3</sup>

Hendrick further affirmed that, "In Prince Georges County, Maryland, one may observe what is taking place, or will be taking place, almost everywhere in suburbia."<sup>4</sup>

The National Capital Pack and Planning Commission issued its Washington Comprehensive Plan in 1950 which predicted that by 1980 the

---

1. Thomas R. Hendrick, "Shift to the Suburbs Stirs Cries for County Reform," Washington Post, October 7, 1962.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

Washington area would have two million inhabitants.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the two million mark was reached in 1960, striking down the projected growth of thirty years in only ten years. Today it is believed that the area will have doubled the population which was originally expected.<sup>6</sup>

Prince Georges County, as part of this area, is the fastest growing surrounding section. Since 1900, when the County had but a mere thirty thousand citizens, its population has increased twelvefold. More so, at the present rate of expansion, it is expected that by 1980 its population will exceed six hundred and seventy thousand.<sup>7</sup>

It was during this last decade of growth that much criticism was directed against the Prince Georges County government. One writer expressed his feelings of discontent when he declared, "With the change of governmental form still distant, Prince Georges lags at least ten years behind other area counties."<sup>8</sup> In essence, the writer was saying that all the other counties in the area, except Prince Georges, have shifted their form of government.<sup>9</sup>

---

5. William J. Avrutis and James Vance, "More Parklands for Prince Georges County," County Government Study Committee, Prince Georges County Civic Federation, 1963, p. 1.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid. It is further estimated that by the year two thousand the population will have reached 1.2 million in Prince Georges County.

8. Hendrick, op. cit.

9. The Arlington fight led the way and this urban county won home rule in 1932. The Fairfax County home rule referendum failed in 1942 but succeeded by a narrow margin in 1950. Although the Montgomery County pro-

The counties of Maryland are governed by public local law, with the exception of Montgomery, Baltimore, Wicomico, and Anne Arundel Counties. That is, those laws enacted specifically for each county are approved by all the members of the State Legislature.<sup>10</sup>

Prince Georges County has operated under the commission form of government since 1927.<sup>11</sup> The chairman of the commissioners is full time, while the other four officers are part time. These commissioners must appropriate all the revenue for the County expenditures, as well as pass local ordinances and determine County policy. Furthermore, their time is divided by the many functions they perform on the various boards and departments within the County.

Yet, as Prince Georges officials will point out, they now have many local powers. During the 1940's, due to the growth of Prince Georges County and the indications of further urbanization, it was recognized that the local government would need to be modernized.<sup>12</sup> In

---

charter forces were defeated in 1942, they returned victorious in 1946 with the approval of a county manager form of government. Ibid.

10. Maryland State Commission on Administrative Reorganization, Local Legislation in Maryland, (Second Report, 1962), p. 17. A bill is introduced by the Senator or Delegate from the county affected and given its first reading; then it is referred to a committee. If the committee report is favorable, the bill is passed by the House and Senate, usually without any real discussion. Even so, the committee report must be given two readings, and a vote must be taken.

11. Committee on County Government, "Legislative History of Prince Georges County," Prince Georges Chamber of Commerce, September 24, 1962.

12. Ibid.

1949 the commissioners began revising the laws under which the County operated. The subsequent legislation, better known as the Lillian Home Rule Bill, was approved when the County was under the control of the Democratic Party.<sup>13</sup> Following the 1950 legislation, a study was made again by the Republican County Commissioners with additional changes being enacted in the Lillard Home Rule Bill of 1953.<sup>14</sup>

It was during the Republican administration of 1952 that the drive to reform the County Commission by means of a home rule charter was first attempted. Supported then by the Prince Georges County Civic Federation and the League of Women Voters, the movement lacked the necessary public appeal and political support. The effort ended in a decisive defeat for home rule at that time.<sup>15</sup>

Project Marlboro: A Report

The Prince Georges County Civic Federation, in January, 1961, established a local government organization composed of delegates from

---

13. Ibid.

14. The commissioners were given the power to control all rules of procedure for their meetings, construction and repair of public transportation media, and collection of county taxes. They were authorized to provide an adequate county police force, and devise regulations for county purchases and budgetary control. They were empowered to provide for a system of competitive bidding and to enact regulations that would insure the health and safety of county citizens.

15. Thomas R. Hendrick, "Shift to the Suburbs Stirs Cries for County Reform," Washington Post, October 7, 1962.

the various civic associations in the County.<sup>16</sup> Its objectives were to study and discuss the problems faced by the Prince Georges County government. From this initial effort was to develop a County Government Study Committee under the directorship of Mr. William Overton as chairman and Mr. William Avrutis as co-chairman.<sup>17</sup> After eight months of examination, this committee published their findings known as Project Marlboro.

The heart of the Prince Georges Civic Federation criticism centered on the inability of the commission form of county government to provide the necessary functions to an expanding and demanding area. The Government Study Committee found that the "County's form of government was designed to meet simpler requirements, long since outgrown."<sup>18</sup> The remaining report proceeded to point out the conditions found unsatisfactory toward the function and development of County government.

One of the principal drawbacks to the commission form of government was its lack of a chief executive.<sup>19</sup> The Prince Georges County Commission was directed by a chairman who was elected by his fellow commissioners. He had no specific term as chairman and was considered an

---

16. Statement by Mr. James Vance, Co-author, Project Marlboro, Prince Georges County Civic Federation, personal interviews, Washington, D. C., July 5, 1965-July 6, 1965.

17. Ibid.

18. County Government Study Committee, Project Marlboro, Prince Georges County Civic Federation, September 7, 1961, p. x

19. Ibid., p. 11.

equal among equals. It was impossible, the study stated, to find who held the responsibility for Prince Georges County in the present situation.<sup>20</sup>

Also, the County had not hired the authorized administrative assistant who was to carry out the policies of the commission, as well as to coordinate the various departments and agencies.<sup>21</sup>

Because the commissioners were both legislators and executives, policy makers and administrators, the commission form of government provided for no separation of powers.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, in addition to a chief executive, Prince Georges County needed an elective council to determine policy and insure a balance of power.<sup>23</sup>

Another disadvantage of this non-separation of powers was the unlimited governmental spending; the commissioners appropriated as well as levied the taxes they spent.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, there was the need for improved cooperative purchasing, central warehousing, and central inventory.<sup>25</sup> In Prince Georges County the purchasing agent makes purchases for some of the county agencies but not for all of them. Subsequently,

---

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., p. 14.

22. Ibid., p. 12.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., p. 21.



it was pointed out that Prince Georges County itself paid a half cent more per gallon of gasoline than did the County Board of Education.<sup>26</sup>

The commissioners had not taken advantage of all their opportunities under public local law, as was evident in their failure to enact a merit system. Although the Maryland Legislature had authorized the commission to establish a merit system, they had continued their policy of political appointments and patronages.<sup>27</sup>

Next to be criticized by the Committee was the investment policy of the commission that allowed large balances to be left idle in the County banks for long periods of time at no interest, while the County borrowed money on short term loans.<sup>28</sup>

Restricted by public local law, Prince Georges County was prohibited from investing its money on short terms. This restrictive provision should be removed and then the County would be able to take advantage of this needless loss of income. Nevertheless, the County was still misusing funds by lending money to banks on time deposits at interest rates below what it could have received.<sup>29</sup>

No area of scrutiny was to receive more study than the zoning policy used in Prince Georges County. There was some fear of what the

---

26. Ibid., p. xi.

27. Ibid., p. 29.

28. Ibid., p. 33.

29. Ibid.

continued policy of haphazard zoning, speculative zoning, and spot zoning would do to the future development of the County.<sup>30</sup>

#### Civic Federation Recommendations

Of the twenty-nine recommendations, the first two were the most important and necessary before the desired reform would take place. The first authorized the enactment of a charter, "under Article XI-A of the Maryland Constitution which will provide Home Rule"; while the second established a full time executive with a part time council.<sup>31</sup> The subsequent recommendations modified the first two by qualifying that the council should have odd numbered members in order to avoid deadlocks and an administrative assistant to be appointed with specified qualifications and tenure.<sup>32</sup>

Thereafter, the other recommendations called for the public inspection of the proposed County budget, cooperative purchasing with the other local government units, adoption of a merit system, establishment of a central warehouse, removal of the present ninety-day restriction on investment of County funds, and the enactment of conflict of interest laws.<sup>33</sup> The committee called for the encouragement of non-partisan candidacy for local offices, and for the establishment of

---

30. Ibid., p. 38.

31. Ibid., xiii.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., p. xiii-xiv.

off-year elections for office in the County government.<sup>34</sup>

The majority of the proposals concerned zoning, with the need for certain specified safeguards against the misuse of zoning procedure.<sup>35</sup> Such protections provided for the thorough investigation of all applications for zoning change and adequate counsel by the County before zoning approval was given.

The Project Marlboro Report was released to the public on September 7, 1961, and it was immediately a controversial document. The politicians and business interests were opposed to any changes in the County government and they began organizing rebuttal information. Some community members may have thought of reforming the commission government but the Civic Federation Committee rejected any such suggestions. It was preparing for a political confrontation with the announced problems, using home rule as their goal and Project Marlboro as their ammunition.<sup>36</sup> The commission undoubtedly considered the Charterites as a passing phase who would become overwhelmed by public apathy or soundly defeated by the general electorate.

---

34. Ibid., p. xvi.

35. See index table, recommendations 12-26.

36. Statement by Mr. James Vance, op. cit.

### CHAPTER III

#### HOME RULE CAMPAIGN 1962

With the opposition that was gathering, the Project Marlboro supporters had to have the endorsement of the County Civic Association that was meeting on December 7, 1961. For several months now the Report had been debated or discussed before the member organizations.

At this meeting the home rule issue was rehashed before the 350 delegates with the question of constitutional home rule and an elective executive with council being approved 130 to 88.<sup>1</sup> An editorialist claimed that, "Strong dissention, emotional outburst, and charges of railroading...failed to keep the Prince Georges County Charter Government drive from getting over its first hurdle."<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the voting method used by the Association was severely criticized by some of the delegates. One delegate stated, "The method of voting on the motion of home rule was a farce."<sup>3</sup> Another representative acclaimed that it was impossible to distinguish between the delegates and the non-delegates.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Graham Lewis, a member of the Board of Directors of Volunteer Firemen, thereafter expressed his opposition to the handling of the meeting and he vowed

- 
1. News Item, Washington Star, December 8, 1961.
  2. Editorial, Ibid.
  3. News Item, Enquirer Gazette, December 21, 1961.
  4. Ibid.

to work at organizing the Volunteer Firemen's Association of the County against a charter, a vow he fulfilled, incidentally.<sup>5</sup>

Before the termination of the Civic Association meeting, a Project Marlboro County Government Committee was organized to take command of the signature campaign that would be necessary to put charter on the 1962 ballot.<sup>6</sup> John B. Murray of Greenbelt was elected executive-secretary of the Committee. However, in January this Government Committee was changed to the Project Marlboro Home Rule Charter Committee with Mr. Walter Mulligan, president of the Prince Georges County Civic Federation, as honorary chairman. Also at this January meeting, thirteen of the remaining twenty-seven recommendations of Project Marlboro were given approval:

These recommendations urged on odd numbered council, hired administrator, release of proposed budget before public hearings, co-operative purchasing, a central warehouse, and an employee merit system.

Also investment of more idle county money, evening zoning hearings, and legal justification for rezoning stated in all applications.<sup>7</sup>

#### Opposition to Home Rule

Expectedly, the County Commissioners opposed any change in their status. The chairman of the commission, Jesse S. Baggett, led the attack on the charter forces when on October 11, 1961, he called the Civic

---

5. News Item, Prince Georges Post, December 14, 1961.

6. News Item, Washington Star, December 8, 1961.

7. Ibid., January 5, 1962.

Federation Study a "hit or miss report written by the outs who want in."<sup>8</sup>  
 He expressed his opinion that the people of Prince Georges County did not need or want a manager type of government.<sup>9</sup>

Support for the commission in its opposition to a charter came from the business community. A basic summary of the business community's position was delivered by Norman Sabatini of the Progress and Publicity Committee. He recalled to the citizens of Prince Georges the favorable tax rate, educational system, health department, A bond rating, and highways which they enjoyed under the commission.<sup>10</sup>

Affirming its opposition to a charter, the Chamber of Commerce became the spokesman for the businessmen. It called the commission form of government the "most democratic and least expensive type of government in the metropolitan area."<sup>11</sup>

After the Civic Association's endorsement of Project Marlboro, the remaining opposing forces of home rule issued statements of their policy. As in 1952, both political parties refused to endorse the home rule effort. The Citizens Democratic Club of Prince Georges County expressed its opposition to the charter efforts.<sup>12</sup> Next, the County

---

8. Ibid., October 11, 1961.

9. Ibid.

10. News Item, Washington Post, November 29, 1961.

11. News Item, Washington Star, March 28, 1962. Also working against a charter was the Prince Georges County Farm Bureau. The Prince Georges Chapter of the Maryland Municipal League voted not to take a stand on the charter issue.

12. News Item, Enquirer Gazette, January 25, 1962. As insurgent Democrats gained influence in the Democratic Party after the May Primaries,

Republican State Central Committee split over the charter government controversy and it finally voted to remain neutral during the coming campaign. On the other hand, Frank Lillard, Jr., chairman of the Committee, resigned over the affair and announced that, "Unless the Party adopts a charter, it will have discarded the major issue in the coming campaign."<sup>13</sup>

A surprise occurred to the Charterites when on March 22 a grand jury delivered its report praising the County government. This jury reported, in reply to commission critics, that the operations of the County government were administered in a satisfactory manner. It also found:

Inspite of the tremendous increase in tax revenue required to keep pace with a constantly growing demand for such services as schools...it is the belief of this jury that the County Commissioners have continued to provide the necessary funds without over burdening the County taxpayers.<sup>14</sup>

#### Campaign Officially Begins

Before the charter question could be placed on the November ballot, Maryland Constitutional Law required that ten thousand charter referendum signatures be petitioned. Two thousand more signatures were necessary before a charter slate could be entered on the ballot. This latter qualification did not apply to the County Commissioners, which

---

the Democratic Party became non-committal. The old guard faction continued to work for charter defeat.

13. News Item, Washington Post, February 25, 1962.

14. News Item, Charter Facts, October, 1962.

could forego the petition campaign but still enter its own slate.

Having already begun their signature campaign, the Charterites looked to the Maryland primaries on May 15 as an excellent opportunity to raise the necessary endorsement.<sup>15</sup> Also involved in the May primaries were a group of insurgent Democrats, many of whom were associated with the charter movement. They were attempting to overthrow the established County political organization, otherwise known as the Sasser Machine.<sup>16</sup>

The next several months following the primaries were spent in gathering the remaining signatures until by July 13, the Project Marlboro Home Rule Charter Committee confirmed that a list of fifteen thousand charter signatures had been collected.<sup>17</sup>

One newspaper editor summarized the work that now remained, thusly:

To put through their program, the Charterites are going to have to draft a workable governmental plan, elect a charter board to put it through, and then convince an electorate that doesn't give a tinkers damn that it is better than what they now have.<sup>18</sup>

After announcing a committee to nominate the members of their charter board, the Project Marlboro Home Rule Charter Committee developed

---

15. Statement by Mr. Julian Holmes, Vice-Chairman, Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee, personal interview, Oxon Hill, Maryland, May 19, 1965.

16. The insurgent Democrats gained a controlling number of seats in the State Central Committee, five nominations to the County's legislative delegation, and two County commission nominations. News Item, Washington Post, June 6, 1962.

17. Ibid., July 14, 1962.

18. Editorial, Citizen News, June 29, 1962.



their platform as follows:

- (1) Home Rule for the County to be obtained in the manner set out in our State Constitution.
- (2) A County government to meet modern needs: an elected chief executive and a separate elected chief council to make local laws.
- (3) A Public Bill of Rights in the Home Rule Charter.<sup>19</sup>

### Charter and the Courts

Left out in the cold by both political parties and fighting organized efforts to confuse and block the issue, the Charterites faced a new roadblock. On August 30, the County Board of Election Supervisors refused to certify the charter petitions for the November referendum. The supervisors claimed that one unqualified voter on a petition sheet invalidated the entire sheet.<sup>20</sup> The courts were left to decide on the merits of the case.

Following several adverse decisions, the Charterites won a decisive victory when Circuit Judge Roscoe H. Parker ordered that the home rule question be put on the November ballot unless the opponents could prove that the petition signatures were invalid.<sup>21</sup>

---

19. The selected members of the charter board included: Paul B. Garbleman of Oxon Hill, Dean of Strayer Junior College of Finance; Walter H. Maloney of Chillum, a practicing attorney; Samuel W. H. Melay of Upper Marlboro, a United States Commissioner; Theodore L. Miazga, University Park Trail Magistrate; Francis J. Wilson of Bowie, Mayor of Bowie. News Item, Washington Star, July 20, 1962.

20. News Item, Prince Georges Post, August 30, 1962.

21. News Item, Washington Post, October 12, 1962.

Seeing the useless nature of their struggle, the Board of Election Supervisors verified the signatures as the charter question left the legal arena to re-enter the political sphere. The Charterites, furthermore, had emerged with a good deal of free publicity that they could not have afforded otherwise.<sup>22</sup>

Commissioner Charter Board

The County Commissioners, moreover, incensed the Charter Committee leaders when they announced their own slate of candidates for a charter writing board, an anti-charter tactic used in 1952.<sup>23</sup> The leaders of the Home Rule Charter Committee called the commissioners' move an attempt to defeat home rule by confusing the electorate.<sup>24</sup> The Charterites claimed that the new nominees, if elected, would not want any change in the Prince Georges County form of government. Indeed, the League of Women Voters revealed that three of the commission candidates had lent their names to anti-charter publications.<sup>25</sup>

---

22. Statement by Mr. Julian Holmes, Vice-Chairman, Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee; personal interview, Oxon Hill, Maryland, May 19, 1965.

23. They nominated the following: T. Earle Bourne of University Park, President of Schindlers' Peanut Products, Incorporated; Dudley H. Smith of Mitchellville, President of the Prince Georges County Farm Bureau; Carlton G. Beall of Suitland, District of Columbia Postmaster; Merrill L. Harrison of Laurel, Superintendent of Kann's Department Store; Joseph F. Lilly of Hyattsville, Mayor of Hyattsville. News Item, Prince Georges Post, September 13, 1962.

24. News Item, Washington Star, September 15, 1962.

25. News Item, Washington Post, September 20, 1962.

With little more than a week left to the campaign, the Commission Charter Board published the following principles:

- (1) Hold public meetings at separate places throughout the County.
- (2) Present provisions of the law relating to existing County government will be studied carefully.
- (3) The Charter form of government in other cities and counties will be studied.
- (4) The impact of every proposal on cost will be studied.
- (5) Competent legal advice will be arranged for the duration of the Committee study.
- (6) A full consideration will be given the twenty-eight municipalities.<sup>26</sup>

#### Election Day

With the aid of considerable radio time and several pamphlets, the anti-charter forces initiated a powerful effort in the final week of the campaign. This last minute push was to have a decisive influence on the outcome of the election.<sup>27</sup>

Not to be outdone, the Charterites published several additions to the newspaper The Home Rule News and released a condensation of Project Marlboro in the form of "Instant Project Marlboro." Nonetheless, their desire for a county-wide mailing to counter the anti-charter crusade was vetoed by their lack of funds.<sup>28</sup>

---

26. News Item, Washington Star, September 22, 1962.

27. Statement by Mr. Julian Holmes, op. cit.

28. Ibid.

On election day of November 6, 1962, there were 47,609 votes cast out of 124,727 registered votes.<sup>29</sup> The home rule referendum was defeated by only 311 votes. To the contrary, the slate of charter board candidates backed by the Project Marlboro Home Rule Charter Committee easily defeated the commission sponsored candidates. The Charterites had confidentially expected defeat but not by so narrow a margin; their hopes for future success received immediate strength.<sup>30</sup>

As someone then observed, governmental change in Prince Georges County seems inevitable, "but when and what form it will take remains a question mark."<sup>31</sup> It was also pondered whether a group as controversial as the Project Marlboro Committee could attract the grass-root support so essential for victory.<sup>32</sup> However, the optimistic Charterite were ready to try again; as one charter candidate, Walter Maloney, declared, "It goes without saying, we will be back again in 1964."<sup>33</sup>

---

29. News Item, Enquirer Gazette, November 15, 1962.

30. Statement by Mr. Julian Holmes, op. cit.

31. Thomas R. Hendrick, "Shift to the Suburbs Stirs Cries for County Reform." Washington Post, October 7, 1962.

32. Ibid.

33. News Item, Washington Post, November 9, 1962.

## CHAPTER IV

### ROUND TWO - 1964 CAMPAIGN

Following the 1962 defeat there were three important developments that carried over into the 1964 campaign. The first of these concerned the failure of the charter factions to unite in support of a central concept on how the charter campaign should be fought.<sup>1</sup>

Several charter workers belonging to the County Civic Federation had resigned from the Project Marlboro Home Rule Committee just three weeks before the 1962 election.<sup>2</sup> Although still giving their support to the charter concept, they disassociated themselves from this Committee. In June of 1963, Walter F. Mulligan, president of the Civic Federation, also resigned from the Committee, as it decided to change its name to the Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee.<sup>3</sup> The Project Marlboro Committee meanwhile was reactivated by the Civic Federation leaders and continued in existence though it was not to play a substantial role in the next campaign.<sup>4</sup>

Efforts at reconciliation throughout 1963 terminated in failure. These rival groups for home rule were unified in their support for an

---

1. Statement by Mr. James Vance, co-author, Project Marlboro, member, Prince Georges County Civic Federation, personal interviews, Washington, D. C., July 5, 1965, and July 7, 1965.

2. News Item, Washington Star, January 10, 1963.

3. Statement by Mr. James Vance, op. cit.

4. Ibid.

elected executive of the County and in a charter approved by the County voters.<sup>5</sup> It was within these two areas that unity might have been encouraged but was never achieved.

The next development can be seen in the political reorganization of Prince Georges County. Two of the County Commissioners were insurgent Democrats and, as such, more favorable toward a charter. In fact, Commissioner Gladys Spellman was out-spokenly pro-charter.

Due to the charter effort, definite administrative reforms had come about in Prince Georges County.<sup>6</sup> A merit system had been adopted with a personnel director. The competitive bidding system was given new enforcement. Along with these a five point revision in general zoning procedure received authorization.

The third development was the announced support of the charter concept given by the League of Women Voters. The League had not previously spoken publicly in favor of charter because its charter study was incomplete for 1963.<sup>7</sup> But by November 1963, the League membership had voiced their approval of a charter for Prince Georges County. They expressed the following desire:

To seek a government consisting of a County Council to be the legislative and policy making body, and a

---

5. News Item, Washington Post, November 24, 1963.

6. Memorandum from Del Malkie, Community Relations Director, Prince Georges County, June 7, 1963.

7. Statement by Mrs. David Patterson, Secretary, Prince Georges County Home Rule Charter Committee, member, Prince Georges County League of Women Voters, personal interview, Temple Hills, Maryland, June 29, 1965.

separate elected head of government to take control of administration with the aid of a professional administrator responsible to him.<sup>8</sup>

#### 1964 Campaign

As soon as the 1962 defeat occurred, the Charterites announced their intentions to try again in 1964. With the 1964 campaign nearing, the home rule leaders seemed to possess more confidence of victory. Walter Maloney, chairman of the Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee, affirmed on February 5, 1964, that the organization "is larger and better organized than in 1962."<sup>9</sup>

The drive to collect the necessary ten thousand charter referendum signatures for the November 1964 elections began on February 10. At the kick-off rally the featured speaker was Spiro T. Agnew, elected executive of Baltimore County, who explained the operation of the Baltimore charter.<sup>10</sup> Another speaker was Gordon Gemeny, a Greenbelt insurance underwriter, who accused Prince Georges County officials of wasting tax dollars because of mismanagement and political patronage in the purchase of County insurance.<sup>11</sup>

---

8. Prince Georges County League of Women Voters, "The Voter," March, 1964.

9. News Item, Washington Post, February 5, 1964.

10. Ibid., February 11, 1964.

11. Ibid.

Editorialists now took time to state their opinions as to the virtue of a charter for Prince Georges County. The Enquirer Gazette on February 13 published the following:

Their cry of more home rule under charter is just as misleading in our opinion as their demand for an elected County executive....We cannot see merit in turning over our government to one administrator who may veto the Board, when we now have a Board, which twice a week can veto the full time administrator, the Chairman.<sup>12</sup>

A pro-charter view can be seen in the following editorial from the Washington Post:

It is a petition deserving the support of every citizen who wants businesslike public administration in a county that has long since outgrown the loose, uncoordinated, carefree customs of a system devised for the rural communities of the last century.<sup>13</sup>

### Three Charter Group Platforms

As soon as it became evident that the necessary referendum signatures would be achieved, the Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee began making preparations for their selection of candidates.<sup>14</sup> On May 13 the Committee adopted the following platform:

- (1) An elected County executive who would appoint his own administrative assistant.
- (2) A separately elected council...

---

12. Editorial, Enquirer Gazette, February 13, 1964.

13. Editorial, Washington Post, May 19, 1964.

14. See earlier list on p. 20.



- (3) A Code of Ethics outlawing...conflict of interests.
- (4) Zoning reforms requiring written justifications for all decisions...
- (5) A new County accounting system, with records made available to the public showing the cost of capital assets.
- (6) A mandatory merit system for all County employees.
- (7) Recognition and support of volunteer firemen.
- (8) Competitive purchasing by sealed bids.
- (9) Referendums on County bond issues...
- (10) Advanced publication of proposed laws, except in emergencies; prior announcement of budgets; and regular publication of certified financial statements.<sup>15</sup>

The Citizens for Charter Convention became the next group to enter the charter campaign.<sup>16</sup> This group pledged to contact representatives of the sundry County organizations and discuss with them the various types of County government available under a charter.<sup>17</sup> Their charter board, which would be selected by a convention, was to be non-committal to any particular form of local government.<sup>18</sup>

---

15. News Item, Washington Star, May 5, 1964.

16. It was charged that this group was formed by Democratic State Central Committee chairman, James J. Casey, as an anti-charter tactic. A spokesman for the Home Rule Charter Committee announced: "Now that many Prince Georges politicians feel that the charter movement will succeed, a few are seeking to blunt its effectiveness by promoting a blank-check charter board." News Item, County News, June 18, 1964.

17. News Item, Washington Star, June 15, 1964.

18. Their slate consisted of: Edgar L. Smith, mayor of Greenbelt; Richard E. Painter, substitute People's Court Judge; Sherman Funk, Bowie councilman; J. Theodore Bailey, a teacher at Francis Scott

As in the preceding campaign, the County Commissioners planned to enter a charter writing board. Community Relations Director, Del Malkie, sent a letter to the leadership of twenty-two County-wide organizations inviting them to help in the selection of the Commissioner's charter board.<sup>19</sup>

Not all of the County organizations accepted these invitations, but twelve sent in thirty nine nominations. Five of these were finally approved by the Commissioners.<sup>20</sup> Of these Nonpartisan candidates, two reportedly approved a charter, one was opposed, and the other two approved a charter because they felt County voters desired one, not because they saw it as the best form of government.<sup>21</sup>

Claiming independence from any political party or faction in the County, the Nonpartisan candidates published the following platform:

- (1) Your Charter Board will consist of a businessman, a Federal Employee, and three lawyers - no politicians.
- (2) You will get the charter wanted by the majority of the people - not the prefab job which some are trying to see.
- (3) Your charter will emphasize simplicity and economy -

---

Key Junior High; Harold J. Rodgers, attorney from Carrollton. News Item, Washington Post, August 17, 1964.

19. News Item, Enquirer Gazette, August 20, 1964.

20. Memorandum from Del Malkie, Community Relations Director, Prince Georges County, September 15, 1964. Commissioner Gladys Spellman abstained from voting with the other Commissioners. She disapproved of the Commissioners entering a charter board.

21. News Item, Washington Post, September 22, 1964.

out with overlapping functions and needless complex government; in

- (4) with a commonsense system of management and budgets.
- (5) You will get an honest job of charter writing from able people with no ax to grind.
- (6) Your Charter Board will hold hearings and take action where indicated necessary.<sup>22</sup>

Which of the charter groups was best qualified to represent the County in the formation of home rule? This question became the issue for the next several months. County Commissioner Gladys Spellman accused the opposition of resorting to measures to create confusion in their attempts to defeat charter. At a charter rally she affirmed: "Intended to confuse the voter...are the formation of the Citizens Charter Committee and another slate placed in the field by the County Commissioners themselves."<sup>23</sup>

Charter candidates in a series of debates could agree on only one point, that a charter was necessary.<sup>24</sup> Walter Maloney of the Home Rule Charter Committee criticized the other charter groups for not favoring a strong executive-council type of County government.<sup>25</sup>

---

22. Their candidates were: Irving H. Fisher, Oxon Hill attorney; M. Dale Hill, Suitland attorney; Norman Lawrence, United States Census Bureau statistician; Hayden S. Melvin, insurance and real estate man from Bowie; Thomas V. Moore, Cheverly attorney. News Item, Washington Star, September 16, 1964.

23. News Item, Washington Post, September 28, 1964.

24. Ibid., October 2, 1964.

25. Ibid.

Meanwhile, the Citizens for Charter Convention and the Nonpartisan Committee criticized the Home Rule Charter Committee for publicly sanctioning a specific type of charter government.<sup>26</sup>

Vigorously opposed to the Home Rule Charter Committee, the Citizens for Charter Convention accused that Committee has "constantly misrepresented every item related to the issue."<sup>27</sup> They further claimed, "These people don't want to reform the County. They only want to take it over. It is a naked play for power."<sup>28</sup>

One of the purposes of the Citizens for Charter Convention and the Nonpartisan Committee was to discredit the Home Rule Charter Committee. This was evident in the public debates where the former two combined in attacking the latter.<sup>29</sup> But in attempting to do so, they also did damage to the charter movement by creating confusion and disgust among the voters.<sup>30</sup>

---

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., October 5, 1964.

28. News Item, Chesapeake Times, October 8, 1964. It is the opinion of the author that these charges were unsubstantiated but must be accepted in the political context.

29. News Item, Washington Post, October 2, 1964.

30. Statement by Mrs. David Patterson, Secretary, Prince Georges County Home Rule Charter Committee, member, Prince Georges County League of Women Voters, personal interview, Temple Hills, Maryland, June 23, 1965. Also, statement by Mrs. Gladys Noon Spellman, Board of Directors, Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee, Prince Georges County Commissioners, personal interview, Upper Marlboro, Maryland, July 12, 1965.

### Anti-Charter Organization

With the divergent charter committees struggling among themselves, the anti-charter representatives were organizing to defeat the home rule proposal. Remaining silent until almost a month before the November election, the Committee to Maintain and Improve the Present System of Government held a breakfast meeting on October 21, where over thirty thousand dollars were reportedly pledged to fight charter.<sup>31</sup>

This Committee was organized under the leadership of Mrs. Mildred Harkness and Mr. Harry E. Hasslinger. It was their opinion that the County voters did not really support a charter but would stay away from the polls unless aroused by anti-charter leadership.<sup>32</sup>

Within the last week of the campaign, this Committee mailed to the County residents a pamphlet entitled "A Pig-in-a-Poke." As its theme it stated: "Charter is a Pig-in-a Poke. Let it loose and you, the taxpayer, must pay its high price of living."<sup>33</sup>

It warned of three important effects that charter would have on Prince Georges County. Of primary concern was the tax rate that would invariably go up under a charter; next, was the school board that would become elective as in Montgomery, instead of remaining appointive. The

---

31. News Item, Washington Star, October 22, 1964.

32. Statement by Mrs. Mildred Harkness, Treasurer, Committee to Maintain and Improve Present System of Government in Prince Georges County, personal interview, Temple Hills, Maryland, June 29, 1965.

33. Committee to Maintain and Improve Present System of Government in Prince Georges County, "A Pig-in-a Poke," Hyattsville, Maryland, October, 1964.

third threat was to the municipalities that would be abolished by a charter.<sup>34</sup>

"Pig-in-a Poke" was an effective piece of anti-charter propaganda, especially since it was issued just before election time and while the charter groups did not have the finances to counter its accusations.<sup>35</sup>

### Zoning Opinion

James Vance, a charter advocate and one of the authors of Project Marlboro, wrote of home rule and zoning:

The Public is little interested in home rule for its own sake. They are interested in the reforms that will go with it, particularly zoning reforms. Perhaps two-thirds of our movement's best workers were and are people eager for zoning reforms....The other reforms were relatively minor.<sup>36</sup>

Zoning was a very important issue in the movement for home rule in Prince Georges County. To many charter leaders zoning was their motivating force. On the other hand, many anti-charter leaders opposed home rule because of the proposed zoning reforms that a charter would bring.

The original Project Marlboro recommended a considerable amount of zoning reforms for Prince Georges County. The Report criticized the

---

34. Ibid.

35. Statement by Dr. Elbert M. Byrd, Jr., member, Board of Directors, Home Rule Charter Committee, personal interview, Riverdale, Maryland, July 12, 1965.

36. Statement by Mr. James Vance, Co-author, Project Marlboro, member, Prince Georges County Civic Federation, personal letter, July 16, 1965.

County's policy on zoning, warning against the dangers that haphazard zoning sanctions would bring to the County's future development.<sup>37</sup>

Another study was completed after the 1962 election by the County Economic Development Committee. Several of its members had vocations connected with the building and industrial trades of Prince Georges County. Other members were concerned with the future development of Prince Georges County if the zoning policy should be altered.<sup>38</sup>

Headed by Joseph H. Deckman, the Economic Development Committee produced a report relating the costs of services in Prince Georges County to the dwelling units or business units that received these services. From this analysis of income and costs, the report demonstrated that the business community more than paid their share of taxes for services received.<sup>39</sup> Residential units, meanwhile, lagged behind in paying for their services and were a burden to the County, as far as revenue raising was concerned.<sup>40</sup>

"The most dramatic discovery in the report is the fact that the much maligned apartment units more than pay their way, by an ample

---

37. County Government Study Committee, Project Marlboro, Prince Georges County Civic Federation, September 7, 1961, p. xi.

38. Statement by Mr. Joseph H. Deckman, Vice-Chairman, Economic Development Committee, Prince Georges County, personal interview, Riverdale, Maryland, July 16, 1965.

39. Prince Georges County Economic Development Committee, A Study of Income and Expenditures by Family Dwelling, Apartment, and Business Unit, and Individual School Children for the Fiscal Year 1963-1964, October 7, 1963, (pages unnumbered).

40. Ibid.

margin, for all services..."<sup>41</sup> Apartment dwellers could be "recognized as responsible taxpaying citizens who are more than paying their fair share of the cost of all government services, as reflected through their rental fees."<sup>42</sup>

Disagreeing with the charter attacks on the recent zoning decisions, the building representatives based their rebuttal on the concept of supply and demand. Stated succinctly, when the County's development diminished, the amount of zoning appeals would fall off.<sup>43</sup>

They maintained that the development of Prince Georges County had created the necessity for zoning changes.<sup>44</sup> Numerous young couples moving into Prince Georges needed apartments.<sup>45</sup> Business and industrial concerns were acquiring more land for growth and expansion. Only through acquiescent zoning decisions could this expansion be maintained.<sup>46</sup>

On the contrary, a critical analysis of the Deckman study was made by the Prince Georges Citizens Planning Association. Containing

---

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Statement by Mr. Joseph H. Deckman. *op. cit.*

44. Statement by Mr. Al Swiger, Vice-President, Prince Georges County Chamber of Commerce, personal interview, Riverdale, Maryland. July 17, 1965.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.



several charter leaders, the Association study, in direct contrast to the Economic Development Committee's report, found that apartment units cost the County more in services than they provided in tax revenue.<sup>47</sup>

Increased apartment construction would inevitably generate a greater demand for services. As the Association commented:

It is therefore abundantly apparent that the tax base in Prince Georges County has not been keeping pace with the increased need for services and as more and more apartments are built...higher and higher taxes for Prince Georges County are almost a certainty.<sup>48</sup>

The Planning Association maintained that commercial development was getting out of balance with the rest of the County. "Unrestricted commercial development would not, invariably, be beneficial to the County treasury."<sup>49</sup>

Home owners, being exonerated by the Citizens Planning Association, were found to have paid their appropriate taxes for services received.<sup>50</sup> Other means of local revenue, such as automobile titling, car registration, and gasoline taxes were paid mostly by home owners and had been overlooked in the Deckman study.<sup>51</sup>

---

47. Prince Georges Citizens Planning Association, "Analysis... Revenues and Expenditures relating to the Business and Residential Community of Prince Georges County," May 4, 1964

48. Ibid., p. 20.

49. Ibid., p. 9.

50. Ibid., p. 16.

51. Ibid., pp. 11-13.

Leaving this analysis, charter adherents claimed that zoning had and still was being used by the politicians as a form of local patronage. One charter worker stated: "Zoning profits and favors are what makes the Sasser machine go."<sup>52</sup> Another claimed that zoning was being used to milk Prince Georges County officials.<sup>53</sup> The Home Rule Charter Committee reported: "In Prince Georges County millionaires are being made by zoning."<sup>54</sup>

This Committee called for a strong conflict of interest law to insure that zoning decisions will remain in the public interest.<sup>55</sup> A home rule charter, they assured, would contain specific zoning regulations that would guide the future development of Prince Georges County.

In my opinion, although many charter and anti-charter leaders were motivated by the zoning issue, the common voter cared less about zoning than he did taxes, education, or the government structure. Zoning should have been de-emphasized and more stress given to the other issues in the campaign, especially on the educational nature of what a charter could or could not do.

---

52. Statement by Mr. James Vance, op. cit.

53. Statement by Mr. Walter H. Maloney, Jr., Chairman, Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee, personal interview. Chillum, Maryland, July 12, 1965.

54. News Item, Washington Star, October 10, 1964.

55. Ibid.

Editorial Opinion

Although located in Washington D. C., the metropolitan newspapers have considerable influence among Prince Georges County readers.<sup>56</sup> They have the largest circulation in the County, as well as the ear of its better educated citizens. And they editorialized in endorsement of a home rule charter.

An interesting editorial among the pro-charter papers expressed the opinion that, "The big question about charter in Prince Georges this year is not whether it will be approved by the voters, but rather who will be chosen to develop the new form of County government."<sup>57</sup> This obvious expression of optimism for charter was shared to a degree by the other metropolitan newspapers. A Washington Star editorial voiced the following: "Two years ago in Prince Georges, the initial steps toward a charter narrowly missed approval. This time, with wider public exposure and far better organization among the Charterites, the prospects happily are brighter."<sup>58</sup> These editorials, significantly, were announced before the effective organization of the anti-charter campaign.

These pro-charter newspapers had to decide which of the various charter groups they would support. Almost invariably the Home Rule Charter Committee was enunciated "as the authentic voice of reform in

---

56. These papers were The Washington Star, The Washington Post, and The Washington Daily News.

57. Editorial, Washington News, September 22, 1964.

58. Editorial, Washington Star, September 5, 1964.

Prince Georges."<sup>59</sup> The Star, on October 28, labeled the group as "the long time, well informed workers in the charter movement."<sup>60</sup> WMAL radio, moreover, stated:

Since 1962 the Home Rule Charter Committee has led the fight to draft a Prince Georges County charter. The Committee best qualifies with experience which puts its members ahead of the preliminary work necessary to draft the document. We recommend the citizens of Prince Georges County vote for the following candidates: Garbleman, Maloney, Meloy, Miazga, and Wilson.<sup>61</sup>

With few exceptions the County newspapers in their editorials were opposed to a home rule charter.<sup>62</sup> No better representative for them could be found than the Enquirer Gazette, located directly across from the County courthouse. They published the following editorial on October 22:

You know What's What under our present elected Commissioner system. There's the lowest tax rate in the area, the finest schools, continued orderly progress and fiscal responsibility. The What's What of charter is impossible to predict.<sup>63</sup>

---

59. Editorial, Washington Post, September 19, 1964.

60. Editorial, Washington Star, October 28, 1964.

61. Editorial, WMAL Radio, October 25, 1964.

62. The newspapers covered in this study were the Enquirer Gazette, Chesapeake Times, Prince Georges Post, and Prince Georges Courier. As the exception, The County News was a charter advocate. It wrote, "Prince Georges County-perhaps the second fastest growing county in America...has outgrown the Board of County Commissioner system. It needs streamlined government."

63. Editorial, Enquirer Gazette, October 22, 1964.

Thus as the voters went to the polls, the newspapers had decreed their choice. Even more important was the fact established after the election that the most influential newspapers in the metropolitan area came up on the losing side of the issue. The County newspapers had selected what final tabulation would sustain.

#### Election 1964

The 1964 election campaign certainly stimulated the voting conscience in Prince Georges County. Governor Wallace had conducted his Maryland segregation primary and left: the race issue remained to have overtones in the local elections.<sup>64</sup>

Exhibiting their interest this year, one of the largest electorates in the history of Prince Georges County expressed their opinion. The charter writing proposal after final tabulation was defeated 51,597 to 45,234.<sup>65</sup> Among the sundry charter candidates the Home Rule Charter Board easily won but their victory was again in vain.

In direct contrast to the 1962 aftermath, the charter leadership was divided and uncertain about its future. Some were ready to try again in 1966.<sup>66</sup> Others were opposed to another effort in the near

---

64. Statement by Dr. Elbert M. Byrd, Jr., member, Board of Directors, Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee, personal interview, Riverdale, Maryland, July 12, 1965.

65. News Item, Washington Star, November 11, 1964.

66. Statement by Mr. James Vance, op. cit.

future.<sup>67</sup> Then there were those who decided reform must come from  
within the commission government since home rule had not been achieved.<sup>68</sup>

---

67. Statement by Dr. Elbert M. Byrd, Jr., op. cit.

68. Statement by Judge Francis B. Francois, member, Board of Directors, Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee, personal interview, Upper Marlboro, Maryland, July 12, 1965.

## CHAPTER V

### DEFEAT AND CONCLUSION

The overshadowing cause for defeat in both the 1962 and 1964 campaigns lies in the failure of the Charterites to educate the electorate on what home rule would mean. Given this fact, the opposition found it easier to confuse the voter and create issues against home rule.

One example of this educational failure was the campaign issue of taxes. The opposition maintained that home rule would bring about higher taxes through the establishment of an expensive bureaucracy, such as had been established in Montgomery County under home rule.<sup>1</sup>

Certainly the tax rate in Prince Georges County would remain about the same under home rule as with the commission form of government, if the same conservative fiscal policies were followed. On the other hand, the rapid rate of development in Prince Georges County will create demands for services that only higher taxes can satisfy. Therefore the tax rate has little to do with home rule and more to do with the fiscal administration of the County.

Another area of confusion was the relationship of home rule in Montgomery County to Prince Georges County.<sup>2</sup> Prince Georges County

---

1. Committee to Maintain and Improve Present System of Government in Prince Georges County, "A Pig In-a-Poke," Hyattsville, Maryland, October, 1964.

2. Statement by Mrs. Mildred Harkness, Treasurer, Committee to Maintain and Improve Present System of Government in Prince Georges County, personal interview, Temple Hills, Maryland, June 29, 1965.

was constantly being compared to Montgomery County. This comparison led some anti-charter leaders to state that home rule would change the Prince Georges County appointive school board system.<sup>3</sup>

Looking back we can see that charter had nothing to do with the school board. Many voters did not know this and they voted to protect the County's school system by opposing home rule.<sup>4</sup>

Montgomery County was also having problems with its charter that became associated with the charter movement in Prince Georges County.<sup>5</sup> Since charter had been presented in some quarters as a panacea, the efforts at revision in Montgomery County did harm to the home rule movement in Prince Georges County.<sup>6</sup>

It could be maintained that the Charterites did not have the necessary finances to conduct adequate political or educational campaigns.<sup>7</sup> It was this fact that enabled the opposition to conduct effective anti-charter campaigns just before election day without the fear of a counter-campaign by the Home Rule Charter Committee. The Charterites had to rely on door-by-door handouts and editorial support instead of

---

3. Ibid.

4. Statement by Mrs. Gladys Noon Spellman, member, Board of Directors, Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee, member, Prince Georges County Commissioners, personal interview, Upper Marlboro, Maryland, July 12, 1965.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Statement by Dr. Elbert M. Byrd, Jr., member, Board of Directors, Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee, personal interview, Riverdale, Maryland, July 12, 1965.



being able to use purchased newspaper space, radio time, or county-wide mailings.<sup>8</sup>

It can now be said that, "Any future campaign must be run on a strong bi-partisan basis with ample funds to conduct a thorough educational program to inform the electorate fully."<sup>9</sup> The sooner financial support can be encouraged to support a charter the sooner a new charter effort will be initiated.<sup>10</sup>

### Conclusion

Prince Georges County government is not directed by the same old "courthouse politicians" since the home rule movement began. Many varied innovations have been accepted and put into practice since 1961. Foremost among them have been reforms in the hiring of personnel. A merit law has been supplemented by the employment of the "Brain Trust" or "Campus Refugees," as they have been called.<sup>11</sup> These are the recent department heads, several of whom have come straight from Maryland University.<sup>12</sup>

---

8. It should be mentioned that the home rule effort did receive excellent editorial support and coverage of their views from the Washington newspapers, radio and television stations. Statement by Del Malkie, Community Relations Director, Prince Georges County, personal interview, Upper Marlboro, Maryland, June 28, 1965.

9. Editorial, WMAL Radio, November 5, 1964.

10. Statement by Mr. Walter H. Maloney, Jr., Chairman 1964 Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee, personal interview, Riverdale, Maryland, July 12, 1965.

11. News Item, Washington Daily News, July 12, 1965.

12. Ibid.

A different trend of thought is emerging from the commission itself.<sup>13</sup> New ideas are being accepted with less scepticism, and government for the benefit of the County is not always unheard of as a motive for local political action.

Charter in the future will find its efforts more difficult. Many of the original charter reform recommendations have been approved by the commission.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, future campaigns will have to face the problem of educating the tremendous influx of new individuals who are arriving each week without any knowledge of home rule. This crucial educational problem will grow more serious as the weeks pass.

Meanwhile home rule for Prince Georges County has a very uncertain future. This uncertainty is manifested in the attitude of the present leadership of the charter reformers. It is reenforced by the fact that previous charter workers have turned to relook at the commission form of government and see if it can be made responsive to local demands.

The County may be compelled to look at the commission form of government and make the necessary changes there. This may be the only feasible avenue remaining for County reform.

First Recommendation. That the chairman of the Commissioners be selected by the County electorate instead of by his fellow Commissioners.<sup>15</sup>

---

13. Statement by Mrs. Gladys Noon Spellman, op. cit.

14. Ibid.

15. Statement by Judge Francis B. Francois, Member, Board of Directors, Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee, personal interview, Upper Marlboro, Maryland, July 12, 1965.

County-wide election of the chairman would undoubtedly increase the chairman's base of political power but it would also make him more responsive to the demands of the local voters. The chairman could now appeal to the voters to support his program instead of to just several fellow commissioners.

By giving the chairman more prestige and power through popular election, it would also encourage more able residents to seek that position. The election would become comparable to the race for mayor in most of our cities.

Increased public interest in local elections would be stimulated since the electorate would play an active part in the selection of the chairman. Under the conditions now existing, the voters never know who will be chairman until the Commissioners announce their choice.

Second Recommendation. A Grand Jury Report published in March of 1965 recommended, "That the County government be headed by five full time Commissioners instead of the present system of one full time and four part time Commissioners."<sup>16</sup>

This recommendation would have many merits not the least of which would be to decrease the probability of conflict of interest.<sup>17</sup> Full time Commissioners with commensurate salaries would not be as inclined to maintain outside interests as are the part time Commissioners who must use outside employment to support their families. A conflict

---

16. News Item, Enquirer Gazette, March 25, 1965.

17. Ibid.

of interest law could be enacted whereby the Commissioners would be required to release their outside holdings that might develop into a conflict of interest.

Under the present part time commissioner system, only those individuals with independent incomes and spare time can participate on the commission. Full time commissioners would invite more civic minded individuals to enter local politics who presently could not afford to. These individuals could leave one vocation to become commissioner, something that is now impossible.

Not to be overlooked is the growth that Prince Georges County is facing. Within this century, the County has developed from one of rural character to an urban area. A government basically designed for a small rural county must be streamlined to administer a city. And only full time officials can administer this urban County.

Third Recommendation. It would be excellent for local government in Prince Georges County if there was to remain a group of active civic minded reformers. The local government would be pressured into acting in the best interest of the County. Reexamination periods for local government administration would be encouraged. While the generally complacent citizens of County government might be aroused to take more interest in local affairs at a time when national issues seem all important.

With the continued growth of counties due to the shift from urban to suburban areas, county governments will be forced to change their structure. Many of them will not be prepared for the new burdens

they will have to face and will seek solutions to their problems. Among these, some will lean toward county home rule; in fact, not all the future home rule attempts will end in defeat as we witnessed in Prince Georges County.

Even in defeat, if home rule efforts can produce the emphasis toward local reform as in Prince Georges County, they will be more than worth while.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### A. PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Publication of the Government, Learned Societies, and Other Organizations.

Avrutis, William J., and James Vance. Chairman and Co-Chairman, County Government Study Committee, "More Parklands for Prince Georges County," Prince Georges Civic Federation, 1963.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Six Months After the Election In Prince Georges County." Prince Georges County Civic Federation, June 6, 1963.

Citizens Committee for Preservation of Responsible Government in Prince Georges County, Maryland. Instant Common Sense. Prince Georges County, Maryland: Citizens Committee for Preservation of Responsible Government in Prince Georges County, Maryland, 1962.

Committee on County Government of the Prince Georges Chamber of Commerce. "The Legislative History of Prince Georges County," Prince Georges County, Maryland, September 24, 1962.

Committee to Maintain and Improve Present System of Government in Prince Georges County. "A Pig In-a-Poke?," Hyattsville, Maryland, 1964.

County Government Study Committee. Project Marlboro: A Report. Prince Georges County, Maryland: Prince Georges County Civic Federation, September 7, 1961.

League of Women Voters of Prince Georges County. A Guide to Maryland County Charters. Prince Georges County, Maryland: League of Women Voters, June, 1964.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Voter, IX (January, 1963) p. 2-3.

Maryland State Commission on Administrative Organization. Local Legislation in Maryland. (Second Report) Maryland, 1952.

Prince Georges Citizens Planning Association. "Analysis...Revenues and Expenditures Relating to the Business and Residential Community of Prince Georges County," Prince Georges County, Maryland, May 4, 1964.

Project Marlboro Home Rule Charter Committee. "Instant Project Marlboro," Prince Georges County, Maryland, 1962.

Special Committee on Zoning and Planning. "Report on Zoning and Planning to the Prince Georges Progress and Publicity Committee," Prince Georges County Maryland, April, 1962.

Special Subcommittee on County Fiscal Affairs. A Study. Prince Georges County, Maryland: Economic Development Committee of Prince Georges County, October 7, 1963.

## 2. Unpublished Materials

Malkie, Del. Memorandum on Statements by Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners relating to Home Rule, Community Relations Office, Upper Marlboro, Maryland, May 12, 1964.

\_\_\_\_\_. Memorandum on Progress of Prince Georges County, Community Relations Office, Upper Marlboro, Maryland, June 7, 1964.

Debate Before the Prince Georges Chamber of Commerce, "Proposed Home Rule Charter VS. Commissioner Permissive Home Rule Form of Government," March 23, 1964.

## 3. Interviews

With Dr. Elbert M. Byrd, Jr., Board of Directors, Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee, Riverdale, Maryland, July 12, 1965.

With Mr. Joseph H. Deckman, Chairman, Special Subcommittee on County Fiscal Affairs, Economic Development Committee. Prince Georges County, Maryland, Hyattsville, Maryland, July 16, 1965.

With Judge Francis Francois, Board of Directors, Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee. Upper Marlboro, Maryland, July 12, 1965.

With Mrs. Mildred Harkness, Treasurer, Committee to Maintain and Improve Present System of Government in Prince Georges County, Temple Hills, Maryland, June 29, 1965.

With Mr. Julian Holmes, Vice-Chairman, Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee, Oxon Hill, Maryland, May 19, 1965.

With Mr. Del Malkie, Community Relations Director, Prince Georges County, Maryland, Upper Marlboro, Maryland, June 28, 1965.

With Mr. Walter H. Maloney, Jr., Chairman, Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee. Chillum, Maryland, July 12, 1965.

With Mrs. David A. Patterson, Secretary, Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee; and member of Prince Georges County League of Women Voters. Temple Hills, Maryland, June 29, 1965.

With Mrs. Gladys Noon Spellman, Board of Directors, Prince Georges Home Rule Charter Committee, and Commissioner, Prince Georges County Commission. Upper Marlboro, Maryland, July 12, 1965.

With Mr. Al Swiger, Vice-President, Prince Georges County Chamber of Commerce. Riverdale, Maryland. July 17, 1965.

With Mr. James Vance, Co-author, Project Marlboro, Prince Georges County Civic Federation. Washington D. C., July 5, 1965, and July 6, 1965.

#### 4. Newspapers

Charter Facts (Prince Georges County, Maryland), October, 1962.

Charter News (Prince Georges County, Maryland), October, 1964.

Citizen News (Riverdale, Maryland), October, 1961-November, 1964.

Chesapeake Times (Prince Georges County, Maryland), October 29, 1964.

Enquirer Gazette (Upper Marlboro, Maryland), October 1961-June 1965.

Prince Georges County Charter News (Hyattsville, Maryland), October, 1964.

Prince Georges County Home Rule News (Prince Georges County, Maryland), Fall, 1962.

Washington Daily News (Washington D. C.), October 1961-July 1965.

Washington Post (Washington D. C.), October 1961-July 1965.

Washington Star (Washington D. C.), October 1961-July 1965.

## B. SECONDARY SOURCES

### 1. Periodicals

Chute, Charlton F. "Charter Campaigning," National Municipal Review, XLV (December, 1956), pp. 537-540.

Maddox, Russell W. "County Home Rule in Oregon," Western Political Quarterly, XVI (September, 1963), pp. 22-23.



Schaller, Lyle E. "Home Rule--A Critical Appraisal," Political Science Quarterly, LXXXVI (September, 1961), pp. 402-415.

Snider, Charles F. "American County Government: A Mid-Century Review," American Political Science Review, XLVI (March, 1952), pp. 66-80.

## 2. Unpublished Materials

Anderson, Carol M. "Project Marlboro: The Fight For Charter In Prince Georges County, Maryland," (Unpublished Master's Thesis at American University), Washington D. C., January, 1963.

## 3. Newspapers

Dessoiff, Alan L. "County Charters May Grow like Crabgrass," Washington Post, October 4, 1964.

Hendrick, Thomas R. "Shift to the Suburbs Stirs Cries for Reform," Washington Post, October 7, 1962.

Porter, Francis. "Palace Revolution in Prince Georges," Washington Daily News, July 12, 1965.

Welsh, James. "Prince Georges Packs Them In," The Washington Star, June 20, 1965.

## APPENDIX

The table on the next several pages lists the original Project Marlboro recommendations as published in 1961. These recommendations became the reform measures that sparked the movement for home rule.

### Project Marlboro Recommendations

1. That a charter be adopted under Article XI-A of the Maryland Constitution which will provide Home Rule and the changes in Prince George's County government next recommended.
2. That the executive and legislative functions of the County Government be separated and given respectively to a full-time executive and a part-time council, all to be elected officials.
3. That the council have an odd number of members in order to avoid deadlocks.
4. That provision be made for appointment of a professional assistant for the executive.
5. That stated qualifications, such as those later set forth in this report, be required of such professional assistant.
6. That provision be made that such professional assistant shall have tenure of office for a stated period, and that his term of office shall overlap that of an executive.
7. That it be required that copies of the proposed budget for a given year shall be available for public inspection for a stated period of time before it shall be lawful to adopt a budget for that year.
8. That the Board of Education, the County Hospital, County municipalities, and other local government units be invited to enter into an effective agreement for cooperative purchasing with the County.
9. That the merit system be put into effect wherever possible in connection with employment by the County Government.
10. That a central warehouse be set up and maintained and central inventory control be put into effect.
11. That the present 90-day restriction upon the investment of idle County funds be removed and procedures for professional investment of all idle general funds be set up.
12. That public hearings in planning and zoning matters be held only during evening hours.

13. That the filing of applications in zoning matters be limited to periods during two months in the year, and that public hearings on such matters affecting the same community be held on the same evening or on successive evenings.
14. That applicants in zoning matters be required to show in their applications the legal basis and justification for their requested changes.
15. That applicants in zoning matters be required to disclose in their applications the present and contingent property interests of all persons in the land involved.
16. That applicants for zoning changes be required at the public hearing to establish the legal basis and justification for their requested changes by the greater weight of the evidence.
17. That the Planning Board's recommendation in zoning matters include statistics showing the current acreage and the acreage prospectively needed in the classification requested, within the county and within the neighborhood involved.
18. That the District Council be required to make findings on the record of facts and of conclusions reached regarding the applications for rezoning or special exceptions, and their justifications.
19. That the District Council adopt and publish a statement of rules and procedures for the conduct of public hearings on zoning matters, and provide for equal rights and treatment to all parties at such hearings.
20. That all communications to the Planning Board and to the District Council regarding pending or prospective applications in zoning matters be made a part of the public record and that private or ex parte communications on these matters be prohibited.
21. That counsel representing the County Planning Board appear and participate in zoning hearings in each case.
22. That the District Council Chairman make specific rulings as to the admission or exclusion of evidence, statements, questions, or answers at zoning hearings and that a record of the rulings adequate for a court review be preserved.

23. That the decision of the District Council in zoning matters be mailed to all parties filing an appearance in any case where the decision is not announced at the public hearing.
24. That applications in zoning matters which have been denied be barred from refileing regarding the same or substantially the same land for eighteen months after the date of the first denial, and for three years after the date of the second denial.
25. That the District Council adopt additional zoning classifications of land use, adequate to protect present development in the future.
26. That procedures be adopted adequate to correct zoning re-classifications which should not have been made.
27. That legislation be enacted barring conflict of interest on the part of all County officials and employees.
28. That nonpartisan candidacy for office in the County Government be encouraged to the end that persons in Federal Government employ shall be free to take active part in political campaigns affecting the County Government, and if they wish, to become candidates for office therein.
29. That elections for office in the County Government be held in off years, when they shall not be influenced by issues relating to the state and national elections.