

MAJOR GREGORY VIGEANT, JR.

205 EAST WINTHROP
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

July 9, 1940

Board of Election Commissioners
Jackson County Court House
12th & Oak Street
Kansas City, Missouri

Mr. J. E. Woodmansee, Chairman
Mr. Lewis Ellis, Secretary
Mr. Paul G. Koontz, Member
Mr. Bruce Forrester, Member

Attention: Mr. Woodmansee:

Gentlemen:

As I mentioned to Mr. Woodmansee and Mr. Forrester on election day, April 2, 1940, a very bad condition has existed in the 26th precinct of the 8th ward since the August 1936 primary. I am advised that this can only be cleared up by Mr. Woodmansee and Mr. Koontz who are the Democratic Election Commissioners.

Not only in the 26th precinct, but allthrough the eighth ward it is the general opinion that a very bad condition exists in the various precincts. The machine deliberately put numerous workers in this ward who were not the type of workers that should be around any polling place, either as judges or in any other position.

Citizens have been threatened and told if they did not vote as by machine members they were told to by the machine that taxes would be raised and I, myself; have been threatened by violence, that efforts would be made to discredit me with J. C. Nichols with whom I have been associated for 2 years. (Fortunately there is no danger in this.) I have also been threatened with suit for slander.

There is no doubt that in the April 2 election that a lot of people were kept away from the polls by similar threats, also threats of loss of business and other things.

It is the general opinion that had not these conditions existed throughout the city Jack Gage, a good Democrat, and his ticket would have won by 50,000 votes.

I am attaching hereto to original letter a copy of the Kansas City Star dated Tuesday, February 27, 1940. You will note in this copy of the Star there is a picture and an article headed "Halted by Old Charge - William Lowman's Bond is Fixed at \$10,000. A Preliminary on 1937 Allegation is Set for March 6 for Jackson County Coroner's Aid---William Lowman, Jackson County deputy

-2-

coroner, today was in jail in Liberty facing charges of having stolen property in his possession three years ago".

The conditions which I am writing about were first brought to my attention, as I said, in the August primary, 1936.

It is the opinion of good citizens that primaries are in a way more important than elections because if we don't get good candidates we are not going to have good office holders.

As there is another primary coming on, numerous people in the 26th precinct of the 8th ward feel that it is essential that something be done. The deplorable conditions that I am about to set forth were brought to the attention of John P. Swift, Bruce Forrester's

assistant, by me on March 21 and again on March 30 at which time I called Mr. Roy Roberts of the Kansas City Star and he told me to talk to Bruce Forrester about it, which I did. When I talked to you on election day, April 2, you said you didn't know anything about it, but Mr. Forrester said that he brought it to your attention on March 30. You may have been too busy and it escaped your attention for you said you had never heard about it and asked me why I didn't take it up with you.

On April 2 you said that the condition would be investigated and cleaned up. I again brought it to Mr. Swift's attention on May 23, 1940 when I personally called at the Election Commissioners. As far as I can find to date, conditions are exactly As they were. The following is an outline of what occurred:

August 1936 Primary

I was asked by Captain Charles Griesa with whom I served in the Army, to assist him in the 26th precinct, 8th ward. When I got over there he told me things were pretty rotten, that 134 more had voted than had appeared at the polls and a dead man and his wife, William T. McCarthy, who died on April 7, 1936 and Cecelia B. McCarthy were voted and signed on lines 27 and 15 of the poll book and had been voted and they had lived at 301 E. 66th Terr. We investigated, the house was vacant and there were several agent's "for sale and rent signs" out.

On returning to the polls I asked the various clerks and judges how many they had voted and in all cases 134 more had voted than had appeared at the polls and had been checked off of Captain Griesa's book. He had been there since the polls opened.

William Lowman whom I mentioned above was there with a big deputy election commissioner's badge on. He did not like ray inquiring about the conditions and ordered me from the premises.

I am a disabled veteran of the World War, being a battle casualty for 22 years and had

returned from the hospital just a month or so before where I had my fifth attack of penumonia, ruptured appendix, and other complications & peritonitis and was naturally in no condition to get into an argument so I left.

-3-

I called Charley Orr and Fred Bellemere, election commissioners, and could get no action. I also called the Kansas City Star and could not get Roy Roberts or any one I knew, and I called the Jornal Post and could not get Larry Dickey or Marion Sharp whom I also know. Senator "Cap" Manvel Davis who was in the Army with me and who lived with me at the above address for a number of years also investigated conditions and found them as I have set forth.

I also believe that Senator Davis investigated the poll book and found that the names of William T. and Cecelia B. McCarthy had been erased from the books as voted, but it was impossible to get in to the vote ballot boxes. The people working in the 26th precinct of the 8th ward at this time, as records I have follow, were a democratic judge, Fred Lamb at 6635 Edgevale, a republican woman clerk, Mary J. Thomason, 7520 Harrison, a democratic clerk with a blue shirt, Charles Parker, 24 W. 74th, a republican judge, John Warrington, 6015 Cherry, a republican clerk, Edna Ennis, 27 E. 70th Terrace, a democratic judge, George Scoville, 20 East 69th. These can be verified from your records. This data was given me from supposedly reliable sources.

The trouble with we American citizens at the time of election and when these things come up is that we get all aroused and indignant and then get busy and forget them, and the conditions continue to grow worse.

I later was advised after my objections, that the pad was cut from 134 votes to 125 votes and that 75 votes were taken by the democrats and 50 were given to the republicans. Both parties are equally guilty.

In 1937 and 1938 I was very busy working on the Plaza Medical Building and in bad health. In February 1938 I was at the Veterans Hospital at Excelsior Springs and in October and November 1938, I was at the Diagnostic Center of the Veterans Hospital at Hines, Illinois. In fact, every time there was a registration I was either running a fever and ill and could not register and did not vote again until February 1940.

Prior to February 1940 workers in the 26th precinct of the 8th ward complained that there was the wife of an ex-judge of this precinct who is now an election judge of the precinct, as she had been appointed in her husband's place after he had been removed because, as the workers in the precinct told me, he had voted a paid of three from his house, namely; William Lowman, his wife and brother-in-law all from Linden Mo.

When this was discussed with Jack Swift on March 21, he told me that not only had this judge voted a paid from his house but had also voted one from his feed store. It is not necessary for me to mention this man and his wife's name because you know them as they were discussed on election day, April 2, in your office before Mr. Bruce Forrester, Mr. Swift, and other members of your organization.

When this judge who voted the pad and others were removed, the son of a very good democrat, Mr. Graham, the postmaster, was appointed. There are plenty of good democrats like Mr. Graham who will work at the polls. Then the machine turned right around and appointed the wife of this man as judge.

-4-

The workers in the 26th precinct of the 8th ward are complaining about this woman being judge and also about this man Lowman being sent to the polls as an outside and inside worker. At the last election on April 2, he came in with orders just after polls opened from the democratic precinct or ward captain so that he was able to work inside the polls. Mr. Swift told me on March 22 and March 29, 1940 that Lowman could not work inside the Polls.

There is evidently some good machine democrat in the 8th ward with a lot of power who deliberately sends men and women workers who are not a credit to the organization into the 8th ward precincts. It seems that possibly there have been numerous powerful machine democrats because the picture has changed considerably each year since 1936.

To show you how this man Lowman and the machine works, on National election day, November 1936, he was at the polls and when the votes were counted they were laid out on the table and marked for Landon and the rest of the tickets straight through were for Stark and the other democratic candidates.

Lowman made this remark: "they told me I couldn't carry this precinct but I will" (but he didn't). He further said, "all you have to do is to tell these people you will raise their taxes and they will vote the way you want them to". The joke was that he was working for and the votes were marked straight through for Stark. And Stark is the one who gave us "a real police force" and uncovered and started the investigation that cleaned up the city.

Personally Lowman is a very likeable fellow. He told me on Friday, March 29 that he didn't want to work at the 26th precinct, 8th ward and on election day, April 2, Bob Lyons told me that he told the proper democratic officials that they ought not to have him work there. They all know about his arrests and it was embarrassing for him.

LOWMAN IS ONE OF THOSE LESS FORTUNATE INDIVIDUALS, POSSIBLY WITHOUT THE ADVANTAGES OF EDUCATION THAT OTHERS HAVE. HE IS A SMALL TOM BOY USED AND EXPLOITED BY THE BOSSES. HE THINKS HE IS A BIG SHOT AND TAKES THE LUGS AND CUTS AND POSSIBLE PRISON TERMS AND SEEMS TO LIKE THEM AND WILL DO ANYTHING FOR THE GOOD OF THE PARTY.

FROM RECENT HAPPENINGS IN KANSAS CITY AND JACKSON COUNTY THERE SEEM TO BE PLENTY OF MEN AND WOMEN AS WELL OF THIS TYPE.

Had I not been ill and busy all of this would have been put in the hands of Maurice Milligan and other proper authorities.

On April 2 I voted for Jack Gage, a good democrat, and his ticket. I am a native of Illinois and a republican. Isn't it possible for you democratic election commissioners to see these conditions, such as the above, and clean them up and that we have judges and workers who have in no way been involved in questionable election practices?

After elections everything is forgotten and there was supposed to be a lot of action & works done in cleaning up and getting convictions on election frauds April 2, 1940. I saw a lot of talk & articles in the papers but only regarding minor offenders. Never heard or saw anything about any convictions. It will be the same story again this Fall.

-5-

After taling to you about noon on April 2 regarding conditions in the 26th precinct of the 8th ward, I called you at 2 o'clock regarding the conditions at the polling place on 13th between Harrison and Troost.

What I am referring to is when a drink of whiskey and a dollar were given to voters in deputy Fred Muehlhauser's garage in the alley between 13th and 14th on Harrison and Troost. Was there ever a conviction or anything done on this?

Another interesting sidelight on the county grand jury inpaneled by Judge Emory H. Wright to probe vote frauds on April 2, 1940, I haven't seen in the papers or otherwise anything this jury did or any conviction that was obtained. We all know there were plenty of frauds.

On this jury was W. J. Glynn, a machine man, who made the so-called non-partisan veteran's league appeals over the radio several times to veterans to vote for the machine

ticket as there were so many veteran councilmen on the ticket.

The veterans knew and found out and were advised that Section 115 of the City Charter states that ex-service men have the first preference for city jobs provided other qualifications are equal. They knew that for 13 years the machine had not done anything for service men and it was not likely they were going to become philanthropists suddenly.

You gentlemen have cleaned up conditions and improved them a lot in this city, but there is a lot more to be done and it seems to me that you are either being imposed upon by some of your organization or that something is wrong somewhere when conditions such as the above still exist.

As I understand it, there are only 462 precincts in Kansas City and it seems that it shouldn't be difficult to organize and check back on all the judges and workers in each of these precincts. For your information as a matter of record, the following is interesting:

The voting in the 26th precinct of the 8th ward since 1934 follows:

1934 city election - Hill 448, Smith 274.

1936 primary - (I do not have this count but this is when the pad of 125 occurred.)

1936 national election - Landon 485, Roosevelt 334.

1938 city election - Whitten 493, Smith 260.

1940 February - Charter Party 587, machine 38.

1940 city election - Gage 638, Robertson 156.

THE MAN OR MEN WHO INFLUENCE AND URGE ANOTHER MAN TO STEAL OR PAD THE VOTES IS WORSE THAN THE MAN WHO ACTUALLY DOES THE DIRTY WORK AND HE IS DESPICABLE ENOUGH. AMERICANS OF THIS TYPE DO NOT REALIZE OR APPRECIATE THEIR FREEDOM OR LIBERTIES.

THEY SHOULD SEE HOW PEOPLE GET ON IN EUROPE - NO CONVENIENCES, NO

NEW CARS, WITH SMALL SELECTION OF FOOD, ETC., SOMETIMES EVEN COOKING POTATO PEELINGS DUE TO ECONOMIC NECESSITY.

SOME DAY SOON A FEDERAL LAW WILL BE PASSED EXILING OR EQUALLY SEVERELY PUNISHING PADDERS AND VOTE THIEVES AND THAT WILL BE A MILD SENTENCE IN COMPARISON WITH WHAT THEY DESERVE.

-6-

THE LOWEST CLASS OF HUMANITY ARE PEOPLE WHO DO THIS. MOST SELF-RESPECTING PATRIOTIC AMERICANS HAVE MORE RESPECT FOR A THEIVING CRIMINAL FOR THEY ARE THE VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCES, THE RESULT OF A TERRIBLE ENVIRONMENT. THE ONES TO BLAME ARE THE SELFISH POLITICAL BOSSES AT THE TOP WHO KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING AND ARE USING AND DILUTING IGNORANT, LOYAL ADMIRERS AND WORKERS.

Sincerely yours

Major Gregory Vigeant, Jr.

205 East Winthrop

GV IJP

I would say that the same condition that exists in the 26th Precinct of the 8th Ward exists to an equal or lesser and often greater degree in every precinct in Kansas City.

In the North End wards that were carried in the April, 1940 election by the Machine I'll bet conditions smell to Heaven.

Note Addenda Attached

I am taking the time and trouble to write and send you this letter as I feel it is my duty as a citizen and Tax Payer. We voters and citizens have been careless for years and have

not protested and followed up bad conditions such as set forth above. These have to be followed up like we do our business details. It's no one's fault but our own that we do not have proper and capable public officials in local, city, state, and national offices, and we have little right to complain regarding inefficient and wasteful government and high taxes.

[page 7]

Attached to Board of Election Commissioners Letters 7/9/40

ADDENDA

On page 5, paragraphs 1 and 2, I mentioned the conditions on April 2, 1940 during the city election in the 21st precinct of the second ward when a drink of whiskey and a dollar bill were given to voters in deputy sheriff Fred Muehlhauser's garage.

The other day I talked to John P. Swift who is assistant to Election Commissioner Bruce Forrester, and asked if any convictions were obtained by Judge Emory H. Wright's grand jury on the conditions found there.

He said, "No, they were not able to get any of the principal witnesses to testify and that their hands were practically tied."

Mr. Swift further stated that Jimmy Delaney, who was either a worker or a judge in the 21st precinct of the second ward, admitted that he had given voters a drink of whiskey or that he knew that someone had given voters a drink of whiskey and that there was no law that prevented anyone on election day from giving drinks.

Now Jimmy Delaney is no doubt a very brilliant and resourceful Irishman and I admire the Irish because my mother's name was Donahue, but we can all be too smart and too resourceful.

Mr. Swift further said that they had taken this up with the law firm of Ingram Hook's - I believe they are the Election Board's attorneys or who were consulted and Mr. Swift says that he was advised that there was no law where you can get a conviction because anyone gave voters a drink of whiskey on election day. This may be the truth in the case.

It is time that our city council or state legislature put some teeth in the election laws if such a thing is legal. We know that saloons are closed by law on election day and no one can sell liquor. In fact if they do, it is my understanding that it is a serious offense.

It is just conditions and smartaleck tricks by the machine that has caused their down fall and has aroused the citizens of Kansas City, and it is time that these conditions stop.

In paragraphs 3, 4, and 5 of page 5 I mentioned Judge Emory Wright's grand jury that was instructed to probe vote frauds. The following information may be of interest to you:

On this jury there were two other machine men besides W. J. Glynn whom I mentioned in paragraph 4 of page 5. I don't need to tell you who they were because you know. A jury of this sort has 12 men on it and needs 9 votes to convict. This was a very narrow margin, for if these 3 men could sway any of the other 9 it would be difficult to get convictions.

On this jury there were 9 men who were for good government. Two of them wobbled a little and a number of them were very strong. It is remarkable that under these conditions 28 convictions were obtained but I don't believe that the flagrant violators who should have been convicted were.

Attenda -2-

This brings up our jury wheel which is a disgrace and I should think that our judges would feel a little red in the face. I don't see how there were not more than 3 machine men on this jury.

It looks like this jury wheel is almost as bad as it was when my friend and buddy, Joe Damico, handled it. He is another victim of circumstances. We were in the same training company at Port Riley, Kansas, in 1917 and in the same hospital in Bordeaux, France, in 1918. He was a good soldier.

There is another grand jury that made a probe recently. You all know about this jury wheel which was also bad.

I understand that Judge Emory H. Wright, whose grand jury picture was in the Kansas City Star, Wednesday, April 17, 1940, helped and worked with the jury. This is common gossip in the city and every one knows about it.

Returning to deputy sheriff, Fred Muehlhauser. It is most amusing to read an article in the Journal Post on April 14, 1940 when he states that a lot of things happened when Chief Reed investigated the selling of liquor on election day, April 2, 1940, in Muehlhauser's garage.

I cannot understand how a man who has a position of trust as deputy sheriff in Jackson County can make the statements he did and about the things he said Chief Reed said and that happened.

He has misrepresented everything. I was there. If there ever was a Southern gentleman and a man who can keep his temper and conduct himself magnificently, it is our Chief of Police Reed.

It is lucky for deputy sheriff Muehlhauser that Charlie Edwards, who was first sergeant in my company at the Officers' Training Camp at Camp Riley in 1917, was not chief of police instead of Chief Reed. He has not the technique that Chief Reed has and I am afraid that Edwards would have been very rough with Muehlhauser.

Further regarding Muehlhauser. It is most amusing and interesting to read on page 1 of the Kansas City Times, April 3, 1940 as follows:

"MACHINE RALLIES IN COURT"

"Activity on the fifth floor of the Court House as the machine went to bat for Muehlhauser. Among those who were gathered in Judge Cook's chambers were Judge Albert Ridge, Judge Ray O. Cowan, Terence M. O'Brien, Ira McLaughlin, James Daleo, Michael Konomos, W. W. Graves, county prosecutor and Russell Boyle, an assistant prosecutor".

The public must have laughed when they read of the indignation of these judges and attorneys that deputy sheriff Muehlhauser should have even been questioned by the Police Commissioners and Chief Reed.

These judges and attorneys were no doubt much embarrassed the next day when they read on page 8 of the Kansas City Star, April 3, 1940

Addenda -3-

as follows: "DEPUTY OK HIS OWN - Sheriff says that Fred Muehlhauser was not on duty at time of rift with police".

This is to be expected for the sheriff found that whiskey and dollar bills were being given to voters in Muehlhauser's garage.

For your information I wish to refer to you gentlemen's attention the area of the 26th precinct, 8th ward. It is not by chance or it didn't happen accidentally that this precinct was picked by the machine for Lowman to operate in.

This precinct starts at the southwest corner of Meyer and Troost, goes west on Meyer to

Oak Street, south on Oak to 66th Street, west on 66th to Main, east on 69th St. to Troost, and north on Troost to Meyer. south on Main to 69th St.

In the first place this precinct covers a very large area and runs along Troost from Meyer to 69th Terr, where there is a lot of cemeteries, bushes, weeds and not many houses.

YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN THE VOTERS THAT THE MACHINE AND LOWMAN DRAGGED INTO THIS ARMOUR HILLS POLLING PLACE AT 316 EAST 67TH STREET IN A BASEMENT GARAGE ENTERING ON OAK STREET. I THINK A LOT OF THESE BABIES CAME FROM THE NORTH END OR UNDER THE ARMOUR-BURLINGTON-SWIFT BRIDGE.

It is just things like this that antagonize and arouse citizens and voters like myself, who nearly always voted the democratic ticket in Kansas City.

I am finally going to end this which is long but I feel it's necessary in order to cover all the details that should be brought out and as I can't express myself better than John B. Gage, mayor-elect of Kansas City did on page 2 of the Kansas City Times, Wednesday, April 3, 1940, I will quote what he said:

"NEIGHBOR ATTACKED"

"BUT WHEN MY NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR CAME HOME TONIGHT WITH THREE TEETH KNOCKED OUT AS A RESULT OF HAVING DISCOVERED AND CAUGHT HIGH-PLACED BUT MISGUIDED HENCHMEN OF THE MACHINE ON ACCOUNT OF EXTENSIVE VOTE BUYING AND BALLOT DEBAUCHERY, I AM CONVINCED THAT THERE ARE CERTAIN MALICIOUS ELEMENTS IN OUR CITY SO DEVOID OF EVERY ATTRIBUTE OF HUMAN DECENCY AS TO BE BEYOND REDEMPTION".

MAJOR GREGORY VIGEANT JR.

G.V.