

Friday, September 24, 1948.

Speakers Analyze Commission Rule

Called 'Undemocratic,' 'Efficient, Responsive'

A proposed commission form of government for Macon county last night was alternately censured as "undemocratic" and lauded as "an efficient rule more responsive to the will of the people."

The assertions came from an opponent and a proponent of the local November ballot issue who spoke in the Salvation Army hall before more than 100 interested citizens.

County Auditor Ellis B. Wheeler of Decatur, who said he appeared as a man "always interested in a better government," and Rev. Fr. Victor C. Goyke of Macon, who declared he is interested in a "proper voters' representation," were the men presenting sides of the top county issue.

FOLLOWING an explanation of the existing township government in Macon county by Attorney Thomas H. Armstrong, Mr. Wheeler rose to declare the township rule should be replaced in November by a county commission.

"This more efficient, more economical government would, in short, eliminate overlapping and duplication of authority in the county," he said.

Declaring that the trend in the state is toward a centralization of government, Mr. Wheeler pointed out that the city of Decatur in 1911 replaced its cumbersome aldermanic system with a five-man commission.

A further indication, he said, was a 1947 bill to abolish township assessors. They would be replaced with one county-wide superintendent of assessing. The bill was not made law but will again be placed before the General Assembly.

Again in 1947, Mr. Wheeler asserted, authority to combine townships into road districts was granted.

"THE TREND is definitely toward consolidation of services. Is Macon county to be left behind?"

While Mr. Wheeler was speaking of the proposal that would replace the 41-man board of supervisors with a three-man commission, it was noted that most of the local board members were part of the interested audience.

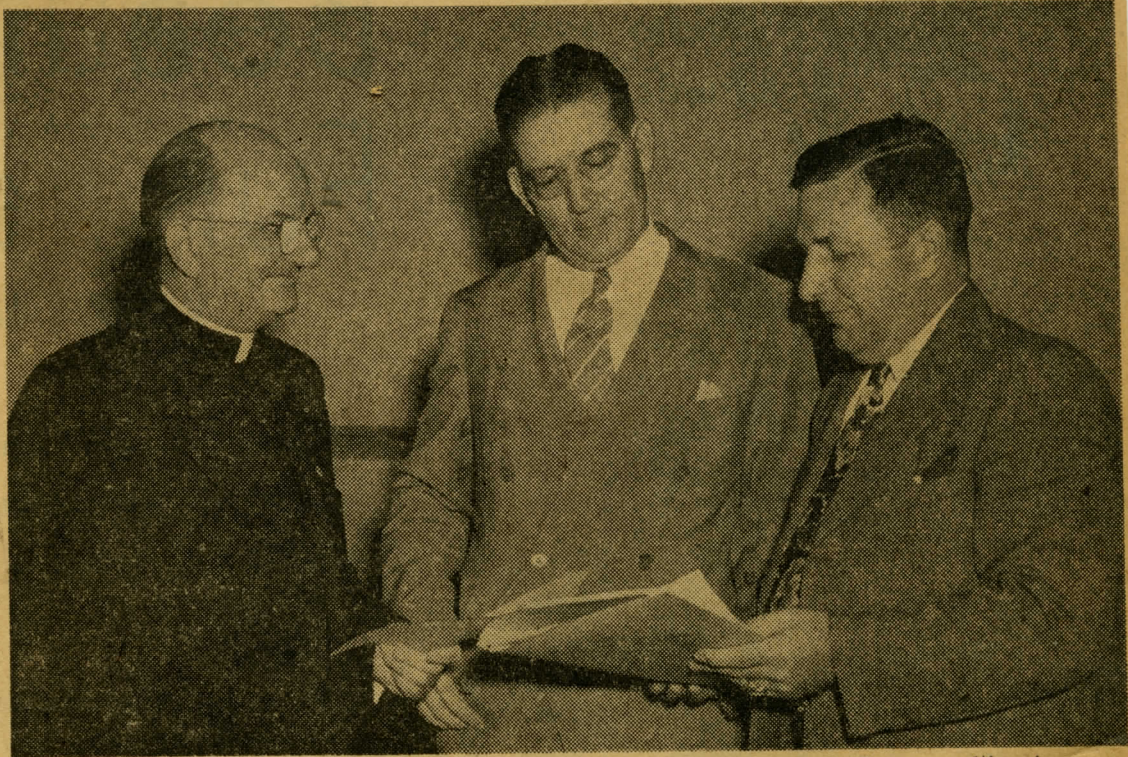
The county auditor cited financial advantages amounting to "between \$250,000 and \$317,000" as a merit of a commission.

A major portion of this savings, he declared, would accrue from a consolidation of the 17 township road systems now operating in the county.

Father Goyke, in his defense of the township plan, termed Mr. Wheeler's proposition "castles in the air."

"They are alright," he said, "but you can't move into them. They won't hold you."

HE DECLARED the township



Discussing the county's top issue—a proposed commission rule—before last night's pro-and-con forum in the Salvation Army hall are, left to right, Rev. Fr. Victor C. Goyke of

Macon, opponent of a county commission; Attorney Thomas H. Armstrong, who outlined the existing township plan, and County Auditor Ellis B. Wheeler, proponent of a commission

form. The proposition is on a special Nov. 2 ballot that asks a vote for or against continuance of township organization.

(Herald and Review Photo)

with a three-man commission, it was noted that most of the local board members were part of the interested audience.

The county auditor cited financial advantages amounting to "between \$250,000 and \$317,000" as a merit of a commission.

A major portion of this savings, he declared, would accrue from a consolidation of the 17 township road systems now operating in the county.

Father Goyke, in his defense of the township plan, termed Mr. Wheeler's proposition "castles in the air."

"They are alright," he said, "but you can't move into them. They won't hold you."

HE DECLARED the township government, which includes an annual town meeting each April 1 the "purest form of democracy."

"It is found tested and true," he declared.

In a plea for retention of the existing board of supervisors, which represents the 17 townships in the county, Father Goyke asserted "there has never been a serious complaint lodged against the board of supervisors."

He dismissed a charge in a Herald and Review editorial—that three members of a board committee were paid \$18 in per diem fees to okay a \$36 bill—as a "childish outburst of an over-enthusiastic proponent of the commission form."

Father Goyke termed that particular committee action an "isolated case."

DECLARING that the demand for a county commission "does not come from the general public," the priest said the proposal is "asking you to give up your local representative who knows your needs best."

While 17 counties in Illinois are operating under a commission form, Father Goyke pointed out that their populations average 18,000. Most of the 17 are in Southern Illinois.

Father Goyke said he doubted whether a county commission would be effective in a "county as heavily-populated as Macon."

"Centralization of power in a few public officials is a most dangerous policy."

Regarding township road operations, Mr. Wheeler said they could be left as 17 road districts, or could be consolidated into one or more units under a commission form.

"A LOGICAL solution," Mr. Wheeler said, "would be a road district for the city of Decatur and one for the remainder of the county."

In a question and answer period following the principal addresses, Attorney Armstrong, who was billed as an "impartial" speaker, to outline township functions, became a prosecuting attorney as he assailed Mr. Wheeler's statistics regarding the commission proposal.

Armed with reports from the 17 township road commissioners, Mr. Armstrong undertook to explain comparative costs of road work under town and county administrations. In doing so, he identified himself as an attorney for the road commissioners.

Last night's open forum was sponsored jointly by the Macon County League of Women Voters and the Community Forum. General Cox of the Community Forum presided.