

Oct. 17th, 1905.

Special meeting of the North Side Board of Trade was held in the Metropolis Theatre Building, 142nd Street and Third Avenue, Tuesday evening, October 17th, 1905.

Subject:- "Bronx---A Separate County".

Meeting was called to order at 8:22 P.M.; Olin J. Stephens presiding.

There were (30) members present:-

O. J. Stephens, Pres.	W. J. Williamson
C. E. Reid, Sec'y.	R. Davis
J. H. Hildreth	J. A. Hawkins
G. E. Stonebridge	W. H. Trimmer
A. E. Davis	S. D. Close
M. Anderson	H. A. Knox
J. L. Wells	M. E. Oppenheimer
Judge Hall	G. Price
C. D. Steurer	R. Lawrence
A. B. Hall	J. C. Davies
N. Goodsell	H. E. McLaughlin
M. Saulspagh	W. S. Smith
L. O. Van Doren	G. W. Bird
J. McDowell	C. Kiesling
W. H. Harden	

The call for special meeting was read by the secretary, viz:-

"A special meeting of the Board will be held Tuesday, Oct. 17th at eight P.M. in the Board Rooms at the Metropolis Theatre Building. This meeting is called as provided in Article 12, Section 1 of the By-laws, for the purpose of considering and acting upon the proposal to erect a new county of the State of New York, within the boundaries of the Borough of the Bronx, so that said Borough shall have and enjoy a county government, the same as every other Borough within the corporate limits of the City of New York now possess and enjoy. And to that end that a committee of the Board may be appointed to co-operate with other local civic bodies in aid of the project. As this is a matter of very great importance, all the members are earnestly requested to attend."

President said: "I would like to suggest, in order that this important matter be considered in a proper way, and that affirmative i.e., all in favor of this call, speak first; and unless for some good reason it is sufficient, the time limit we desire to take is three quarters of an hour on each side.

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Mr. J. Clarence Davies said: "Mr. President, we have here a report from the Real Estate Committee which Mr. Anderson informs me is a matter which the Board has taken up. This does not seem to be any more than their opinion."

The Secretary ^{then} read letter dated February 24th, 1904.

Judge Hall said: "I understand that there was a previous action of the Board upon this matter".

President: "As I remember, there was."

Mr. Hall:- "Might I ask the date?"

President:- "I do not remember, Mr. Hall; I think the question came up two years ago."

Judge Hall said: "I simply ask the information for this reason, that the Board of Trade take action and pass on it. To pass a bill, then pass favorable resolutions, then call a special meeting to discuss the action again, seems to me petty and throwing away any interests this Board of Trade could possibly have."

This resolution was adopted after the closest and most careful notice had been paid to it by a committee, consequently it stands as the action of the Board to-day.

Mr. Hildreth:- "Is there any serious objection to having the paper read?"

President:- "None whatever".

Resolution read by Secretary. (Adopted Feb. 24th, 1903).

Mr. Davis said:- "At the time of the meeting at which the first resolution was adopted and brought before the Board, I remember very well indeed the subject was comparatively new. An amendment was made to that resolution and later revised. Mr. Friedmann, I think, made that resolution. The entire resolution was rescinded"

Mr. Hildreth: "Does Mr. Davis remember how many were present at the meeting?"

Mr. Davis: "I do not."

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Mr. Van Doren offered the following resolution: -

WHEREAS, the Borough of the Bronx is the only borough of the City of New York not possessing the benefits of county government, has no courts of record, no County Clerk's office, no Register's office or Surrogate's Court, or any of the other machinery for the administration of civil and criminal law and the transaction of public business within the boundaries of the Borough which county government affords; and

WHEREAS, the absence of such county government in this Borough causes its large and growing population now nearing four hundred thousand in number to be put to great inconvenience and loss, be it

RESOLVED, by the North Side Board of Trade representing the business and commercial interests of the Borough of the Bronx, that in the opinion of this Board, the Borough should also be made a county like the other boroughs are counties, and that county government should be without delay created within the Borough for the benefit of its inhabitants.

Judge Hall said: "I move that those of this Board who are in opposition to the bill for county government be heard from.

Resolutions which have never been received are reported to have been adopted." Motion carried.

President: "I believe that as this matter was taken up some time ago and has not been given proper attention, that it is only right this Board should take up the question again.

Mr. Wells said: "I would call to your attention the fact well known to the gentlemen who raises the question as to the order of the committee rediscussing the subject, that there are no constitutional laws or law against it.

President: "I desire to hold matters over to make decision."

Judge Hall: "I hope you will not take such a stand; that is all."

President: "Well, I have taken such a stand."

Mr. Davis said:- "I dislike very much to disagree with the ruling of the Board; but if you will pardon me, it is not at all in accordance with the law. Our By-laws imply that we shall

be governed by parliamentary laws. As long as that stands, no further action can be taken.

President: "I understand that, Mr. Davis, but I fear that this is an error".

Mr. Davis:—"We know that the meeting and the resolution has been adopted."

President:- "The gentlemen misunderstood my use of the word "reconsider". Here we seem to have passed upon the matter twice. Perhaps to-night, we can settle it finally.

Mr. Hall:—"The second action taken by the Board was not taken without any further action."

President:- "This is no time for trifling or free discussion. All we ask is that the Board be conducted in a proper manner."

Mr. Hall:—"If this Board cannot act decently in the matter, it is time for those who want to act decently to leave the room."

" (Judge Hall left the room.)

Mr. A. E. Davis:- "Mr. President, I am under the impression that at the former meeting, the question was considered, and it seems to me that if the secretary has not the minutes, we have no right to act until we have the minutes here."

Mr. Hildreth:- "Mr. Chairman, I would like to have the special record of the Board read."

Mr. Wells :) "I arise to the point of order".

President: "The previous point was not well taken. The only orderly method of presiding now is to come quickly to the purpose of this meeting.

Mr. Wells :-"I call for the reading of the final record. I think I have a right to do it.

Secretary went for minutes requested. (Recess).

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Meeting called to order.

Minutes of meeting of February 24th, 1905 read by secretary.

Mr. Wells: "I suggest, Mr. President, that the meeting is entirely different from what we suppose it would be."

Mr. Hildreth: "Will the secretary kindly read the minutes at which the action of the Board was passed on this question?"

Minutes of November 25th read by secretary.

Mr. Hildreth:—"Might I inquire if the secretary has a record as to how many were present at the meeting, the minutes of which were just read?"

Secretary:- "Twenty-seven".

President:- "This is a special meeting".

Mr. Wells :- "I ask for the reading of the resolution for this evening and second it.

Resolution read by secretary.

Mr. Wells:- "Mr. Chairman, I arise to a point of order."

President:- I will ^{let} the Board determine on this question."

Mr. Wells :- "Simply a matter of courtesy to the Board, I will not argue that decision. I feel, however, that yours is wrong and unjust."

President:- "Now begin. I will ask the members who were to have taken the affirmative, to speak."

Louis O. Van Doren:- "Mr. Chairman, I am possessed of no doubt whatever about the importance of this subject being again considered by this Board, and it can hardly be said, in view of the minutes which have been read here, of the different positions taken by this Board at different times upon this important subject, but that at this time, the Board should act finally, deliberately

and intelligently upon the subject. The friends of this measure have seen every public body in this borough, with which, however, we have here nothing to do. Act upon this measure and act in one way--in its favor. Every body of representative men in this borough, not in politics, that has considered as great a question as the correct one, has talked on the subject; and it will be strange indeed if this great representative body, composed of citizens who have a seat here, larger, perhaps, than that of any other borough; men of equal (if not superior) intelligence do not look at it in the same way. I think it right to take the matter here again for a full and free discussion, and I must confess on my part, and active curiosity to hear one solid, special and intelligent argument, composed of facts against giving to this great community the same governmental functions that every other community of the city now enjoys. I do not hesitate to state, Mr. President, that I did not approach the discussion of the subject as a man entirely free from prejudice. I had great doubt whether a county could be created, and whether the organization of of New York permitted of county government. The committee, of which I was a member, had not exhausted the subject before we were all convinced that there was no local objection to the creation of a county here. I would rather listen to arguments against this matter, but so far I have heard none. But there are some things that I may be entitled to say and have a right to say them, as I have made the subject a study and investigated it and argued it on many occasions. One of the arguments that was made against the creation in this Borough of a county government was that its supervision would be entirely separated from the city, if true, then Brooklyn is separate from the city; New York is separate

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from the city. Every borough in this city to-day except the Bronx has had county governemnt, and in the creation of Greater New York, careful provision was made for the maintenance of these county governments.. Let us remove from our minds at once the idea that the making of a county government in the Bronx means a separation. It no more means separation than would the election of an officer in this borough of the Bronx. It would not loosen a single stone in the fabric of Greater New York. When the city was consolidated and formed, it was intimated that county government should exist; it was provided that county government should exist side by side with city government, and that county government should not interfere with the general contraol of the city's powers. It was provided that thereafter the counties of the city should not incur any indebtedness. No county in the City of New York can incur a dollar's worth of indebtedness. Not one dollar's worth of its debt was paid out of the capital of King's County; their indebtedness was assumed by the city and the city passed over all public matters. As I heard a resolution read, it cited the cost to the Bronx of its public buildings. Not so, not one penny of the cost of its public buildings was debited to the Bronx. They would be paid for as bridges are; by the issue of city bonds. I do not believe, Mr. President, that this Borough would pay one penny more than is correct.

Moreover, there is no novelty about this affair; there is no risk involved; there is nothing at all new in it. Side by Side with the City governemnt, in the character issued by Donkin & co. has existed the county government of the county of New York. Queens County was created in 1683 and during these two hundred years county government and city governement have gone side by side and

hand in hand in the City of New York; and when the city threw out her arms and gathered within her fold, Richmond, Queens and Kings, these three rich counties, nothing in the way of a change of government was attempted, no new government was created, but the old order of things went on precisely as it did before. We ask that this borough shall have its own legal government. There is not an office wherein a man can register a chattel mortgage for Fifty Dollars. If he dies and leaves a will, it must be probated in another and distant county. If he has a petition suit, he must bring it into the county of New York. If he has land to sell, he must sell it in another and practically different community. They say that the Bronx is tied to Manhattan. They say that the business of the Bronx can be done as well in Manhattan as here. I ask, Mr. President, whether anyone who makes the assertion believes it? When you learn that the public business of Manhattan is so congested with its 2,000,000 population that it takes three years to reach a civil case, and that should any one of you merchants have a case of action, or one of you brokers a suit for commission, it would take you three years to try that case in the Borough of Manhattan, whereas, if we had a County Court in the Bronx Borough it would be different; When you are notified, Mr. President, that it takes three to five months to get back a deed from record, that there are not enough judges to be scraped and raked up from the whole city to relieve New York county, is it right, is it truthful to say that the public business of the Bronx can be carried on as well in Manhattan? I do not hesitate to say, Mr. President, that it would twice as convenient, twice as easy for the majority of the Borough of Queens to-day, if their business was in that Borough instead of in Manhattan. It will not

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be strange then, if the people of that county should say, "Well, suppose it is difficult to do business in Manhattan, we will transact it in the Bronx (since it has a separate county government) rather than go further. It cannot be done. We will have a deputy clerk, registrar and surrogate. I take it that the Borough of the Bronx can supply officers for these positions.

I say where there is a will there is a way. How foolish it is to tell green men who have nothing to do with the borrowing or lending of money, that county government in Manhattan does not affect its loans in any way. It adds nothing or takes nothing away from loans in Manhattan Island. But yet they say loans in the Bronx will be affected because there is a county government in the Bronx. Whoever heard of a loan desired in Brooklyn that was refused or rejected because Brooklyn had a county government? What effect upon this corner property would there be in the fact that there is a session in the county court house at 177th Street and Third Avenue? I ask where in the United States is capital affected by county government? In what respect would the fact that session of courts are held here affect the capital of the Borough?

Mr. President, I appeal to the common sense of the businessmen of this community. I ask them to consider that question on its merits. Would the fact that speedy justice and prompt administration (possible in this territory with the establishment of county government) lessen the value of this property? In the first place, Mr. President, there is nothing new in the condition of counties. Bear in mind that this great state has twenty counties, and that since 1683 these counties have been divided

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and subdivided until to-day there are 61 or 62. The last county to remain was Nassau. We finally come to look a moment at this territory of the Bronx which was not formerly a part of New York County. For only thirty years have we been bound to New York County. Since coming into New York County, nothing has happened to induce us to stay in New York County."

President:-"I just want to recall that you have taken half an hour."

Mr. Wells:- "I move, Mr. President, that the fullest period of time possible be given to the friends of this measure to discuss it. I have been accused here of trying to suppress the debate, and now I move that this be rescinded." Motion carried.

Mr. Van Doren:-"I have finished my remarks and doubtless there are others here who wish to say something."

Mr. Hottenroth:-" As one of the representatives appointed by Mr. R in favor of the profession, and one of the signers of the report adopted almost unanimously by this Board, at a meeting where the matters were carefully discussed, I want to say, that from all that has been said by your committee here, they seem to consider every business must be filed in the register of the county. It seems to me that the members' ideas are broad ones, so broad, in fact, that they should be received as an argument in favor of the bill, and have the consideration and the support of this Board; From the time of the Declaration of Independence, communities have been branching out to govern themselves, and I think the Board ought to be the last to stand in the way of the Borough of the Bronx doing likewise. We are living under an independent government; we have the means to rule ourselves; we can elect the men to fill