

Hospital Plans In Progress

Editorial Feature—Robert Kirkman

In light of the fact that a sizable number of Wesleyan students each year must use the local hospital facilities both the quality and quantity of these services are of concern not only to the residents of Edgecombe and Nash county but also to every member of the Wesleyan student body. Numerous complaints have been voiced on the college campus about both the lack of hospital space now available and about the lack of modern facilities in what space there is.

In order to investigate this matter the Decree contacted Dr. Kenneth D. Weeks, the college physician, and Kemp Battle, a prominent North Carolina attorney, both of whom are members of the Rocky Mount community and are well acquainted with the present problems.

Both Dr. Weeks and Mr. Battle made the statement that the hospital picture at the present time is not good. Dr. Weeks stated that the present facilities are inadequate in number. He added that he had no apologies for hospital care in Rocky Mount and that these facilities have served the community well. The problem lies in the fact that the growth of the community has outstepped growth in hospital care.

Park View and the Sanitarium were built in 1913 and 1917 and as such are showing their age.

From Mr. Battle we gained the following statistics as to the shortage of hospital beds. There are 115,000 people in Nash and Edgecombe counties. The U. S. Public Health Service in the past has recommended that 4 and 1/2 beds be available for every 1,000 people. There are 250 beds at present in Rocky Mount and 80 beds in Tarboro. If one takes out his pencil he will find that his total is 80 beds short of the recommended number. To make matters worse this recommendation is in the process of being lowered to 3 and 1/2 beds for 1,000 people which would make the shortage even worse. As an example of the problem there is only one hospital room in Rocky Mount with a private bath.

The problem unfortunately does not stop at this point. Bates Manufacturing Company will add approximately 2,000 people to the population here. Wesleyan is every year expanding. With the coming of Medicare, experts predict that the need for hospital facilities will be greatly increased.

But there is a solution to the present dilemma. A committee of five members appointed by the county commission has been studying the problem. Dr. Weeks, incidentally, is a member of the committee.



Left: The exterior of the Sanitarium presents an indication of what lies inside. (Photo by Boothe)



Right: The rerouting of U.S. 301 through Rocky Mount directly past Park View makes the hospital's location undesirable. (Photo by Boothe)



Left: Lack of recreational facilities at Park View make it necessary for children to amuse themselves in the halls. (Photo by Boothe)



Left: Need We Say Anything?

(Photo by Boothe)



Right: When a hospital has little more size than a nearby business, it surely cannot be considered adequate. (Photo by Boothe)

This group has come up with some concrete suggestions. First, Memorial and the Sanitarium are not going to enlarge. Their physical plant is not capable of such procedures. Park View may add a small number of beds. However, any enlargement of Park View must be considered as a stop-gap measure. The only real solution seems to lie in the construction of new facilities. Edgecombe county has recently approved a \$600,000 addition for the Tarboro facility. Now the hospital study commission has made the recommendation that a 350 bed hospital be built in Nash county in the close vicinity of Rocky Mount. Mr. Battle stated that with the construction of new facilities the need of the area would be satisfied for the next twenty years. In addition these new facilities would attract badly needed specialists not at present in the community. Furthermore, the one obstacle that has been in the way of the plan has been removed. It has been previously stated that the county would not build a hospital if it had to compete with Park View. Now an agreement has been reached whereby Park View will close with the opening of the proposed building. In addition the Duke Foundation will give \$115,000 to the county to pay the debt on Park View and the property will be turned over to the county.

There is one final block against the proposal. A 5 and 1/2 million dollar bond issue must be approved by the citizens of the area in order to supply funds. It is expected that this proposal will be voted on sometime in the spring. Nash county has an extremely low bonded debt of \$40,000 at the present time. When this issue comes before the voters it can only be hoped that the public will approve the program. It is so obvious that a tremendous need exists that it would be hoped that the voters cast their ballots wisely.