

## LOCAL EDITORIAL COMMENT

### County Employees Underpaid

The Franklin Grand Jury has raised an interesting point in its statement last week that in comparison to other surrounding counties, Franklin County employees are underpaid. This fact might have been reported by some past Grand Jury, although we missed it. It is nevertheless a fact which anyone can readily see, if he or she bothers to look.

Actually the discrimination—if one might use the word—goes further than meets the naked eye. All employees of the county are not necessarily underpaid. Many work for the county under policies and pay scales determined by the State or Federal government. These are paid salaries, which if not entirely satisfactory to them, are in reasonable comparison to those of other neighboring counties.

Some positions in the Welfare Department, Health Department, Education system, Agricultural agencies and others are paid on a scale set by other than local governmental agencies.

The county employees who suffer most are those whose salary is set by the Legislature and paid solely from county funds. Somewhere along the line, these positions were left not to the determination of State agencies in line with other comparable positions, but to the fate of local bill passage in the General Assembly.

This means that when and if such positions ever demand pay in accord with comparable positions elsewhere, a bill must be introduced for this county alone and it must meet the approval of the General Assembly. It must also meet the approval of the County Commissioners who must tax to raise the funds necessary to meet the payroll.

This arrangement brings forth the much larger question now confronting the General Assembly and county officials as well. That is, where to find

additional sources of revenue for local governments. Franklin officials reduced the valuation of property here some time ago and closed the door to the possibility of more ad valorem taxes. Many believe that property has already been taxed to the limit.

This problem, while great and as yet unresolved, does not ease the pain of those people dedicated to their jobs who are caught in the bind between inflation, rising costs and an almost hopeless situation where additional income is concerned.

Much is being said nowadays about increased teacher pay and indeed, teachers in this county need the increase as much as does anyone else. However, it is still somewhat disturbing that a teacher working five days a week with little responsibility after school closes is better paid than the Sheriff of the county who must, of necessity, be on 24-hour call throughout the year. The situation is even more acute with deputies and the same applies to other department heads and their assistants.

There might not be an easy answer to this problem of under payment to county employees, but right now is the time to launch an investigation into it. While the General Assembly is in session, the County Commissioners should name a committee to search out those underpaid and to make recommendations as to how their salaries might be brought more in line with comparable positions in neighboring counties.

Such an investigation should be made public and once the people see the facts, perhaps a way may be found to finance the increases. Little would be the harm in taking a look. We call on the County Board to make such an investigation. The Grand Jury report means very little unless it is followed by action.

## WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

### Et Tu, Brute

The Henderson Daily Dispatch

That may not be the exact Latin, but Caesar's final utterance of dismay when he was fatally stabbed by his friend Brutus, has its counterpart in the proposed imposition of an excise tax on one of North Carolina's chief agricultural cash crops and one of its principal industries. Proponents are not retarded by these considerations in their effort to impose a tax on tobacco products, especially cigarettes.

Perhaps people in the tobacco business in its many phases wonder why legislators are moving to strike at one of the principal sources of livelihood for producers and employes in manufacturing establishments.

The argument, of course, is that every other State is taxing cigarettes. But no other State has so much at stake in this field of activity as does North Carolina, and this ought to be recognized and respected.

It is difficult to comprehend why there is need for more money to the extent of turning to this vital means

of livelihood for so many people. It is claimed that the tax will not cripple tobacco, but it will if it encourages smokers to desist because of costs. Something of that character is evident in many of the States where taxes have been imposed which equal or approach the basic cost of the product.

Tobacco has enough troubles already without others being added. Revenue hunters are not likely to be discouraged by efforts to have Congress place further restraints on cigarette sales. Apparently they are not concerned about that. But impositions now in effect, together with those proposed, if enacted, may result in disappointment to legislators who think tobacco taxes will add so and so many millions to State income.

Essentially, this is another tax, of which there are already such heavy burdens as to make it difficult for many people to come up with the cash to meet requirements. What will be taxed next remains to be seen.

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## What Mr. Nixon Said

The News Reporter

The reversal of President Richard Milhous Nixon's philosophy on the freedom of choice plan for schools, as initiated by Secretary Robert H. Finch of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, has put U. S. Sen. Strom Thurmond on the hot seat and Mr. Thurmond has no way to turn except toward the President.

More than any other man, Mr. Thurmond was instrumental in swinging the Southern vote to Mr. Nixon at the Miami Republican Convention and on the promise that, if he were elected, Mr. Nixon would relax regimenting tactics against the South on the integrating of schools.

The switch in policy has Republicans down South itching for the Thurmond scalp and Democrats are sitting back and waiting to take in the scalping. Mr. Thurmond is a former Democrat.

The Charleston, S. C. News and Courier puts the situation in the correct perspective as follows:

A statement of opposition to "freedom of choice" school plans issued by Robert H. Finch, secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, is a repudiation of the stand taken by Richard Nixon in his presidential campaign.

Mr. Finch, in a tribute to Ralph McGill, publisher of the Atlanta Constitution, said: "I consider it neither legally nor morally defensible to 'turn back the clock' and to accept as public policy so-called 'freedom of choice' plans which do not bring about effective school desegregation."

Mr. Nixon, in an interview last September on station WBTV in Charlotte, said he favored freedom of choice plans.

"I wouldn't want to see a federal agency punish a local community," he added.

In a television speech beamed at the Carolinas during the election campaign, Mr. Nixon said he believed the Supreme Court school decision was correct.

"But on the other hand," he added, "while that decision dealt with segregation and said we would not have segregation, when you go beyond that and say that it is the responsibility of the federal government and the federal courts to, in effect, act as local districts in determining how we can carry that out, and then to use the power of the federal treasury to withhold funds or give funds in order to carry it out, then I think we are going too far."

It is proper to remind Mr. Finch and the administration of Candidate Nixon's words last September. Mr. Nixon's commitment to freedom of choice school plans was one of the reasons why many Americans voted for him instead of Hubert Humphrey or George C. Wallace. He pledged, in effect, to relax the iron control that the Johnson administration exercised over local schools.

To fulfill his promise, President Nixon has an obligation to bring Mr. Finch into line with the stated Nixon philosophy on local schools.

## Legislative Report

By Rep. James D. Speed

Raleigh - I believe the significance of tobacco on the overall economy of North Carolina and the adverse effect of additional taxes on this commodity is dawning on more and more members of the General Assembly.

It has been and remains my conviction that the proposed state tax on tobacco would hurt not only the tobacco industry but also the economic well-being and livelihood of many, many thousands of our citizens. More than 40,000 wage earners in North Carolina work in tobacco manufacturing and processing plants and auction warehouses with a total payroll of \$177 million a year. Sales by our flue-cured and burley tobacco growers are more than \$431 million each year.

It is estimated that the value of the crop is \$535,253,000 annually and the value of the products from North Carolina tobacco exceeds \$4 billion a year. Already the tobacco industry pays more than \$31 million a year in taxes in North Carolina alone, not to mention heavy federal taxation and the taxes levied on tobacco products by other states.

For example, North Carolina tobacco manufacturers pay 12.2 million a year in state corporate income taxes, \$1.7 million in franchise taxes, and \$8.4 million in local property taxes. Cigarette smokers in North Carolina already pay \$5.4 million a year in sales taxes, and they are being asked to add 20 per cent, or five cents per pack, to the retail price they must pay. Tobacco plant workers pay more than \$3.2 million a year in income taxes to the state.

and efficiency and that the necessary revenue can be raised from alcoholic beverages, luxuries and bottled drinks.

In regard to additional gasoline taxes I believe that another one cent, if properly used, would be sufficient to take care of our needs. I also feel very strongly that anything done now to increase Highway Fund revenue must be strictly on a "pay as you go" basis to avoid further inflation of highway construction costs and further highway debt.

Many legislators feel as I do that any additional gasoline tax should be earmarked for distribution to guarantee each county a fair and proportionate part. I am in full agreement with proposals and legislation submitted by the Attorney General's office to strengthen law enforcement throughout the state, such as a Police Information Network, training programs and more personnel and facilities for the State Bureau of Investigation. I feel that these will be in the interest and protection of all law-abiding citizens in the state and I intend to support them.

I am not in agreement with the governor that so much as \$227.5 million in additional state revenue is necessary. Some additional taxes will be needed to carry out the new programs and improvements the state should have. But I think the tax proposals can be substantially reduced by putting more emphasis on economy

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## Living Costs

The Labor Department has announced that living costs rose 4.7 per cent in 1968 for the highest one-year jump in 17 years. The report stated that this increase virtually wiped out wage gains of 45 million rank-and-file workers.



You'll never guess who I bumped into the other day. It was old Melvin Smudgen. You remember him. I told you about old "Cussit" (that's what we called him in school) back last summer. He was running for Congress when I seen him last.

Like I told you then when I seen him standing on the corner picking his teeth and campaigning, I'm mighty proud of Melvin. We went to school together.

Well, the other day there I was in a hurry and not looking and bang... right into old "Cussit" I bumped. I'd ah known him anywhere. He hadn't changed one lick since last summer. 'Cept, of course, he won't wearing new overalls. Oh, he was dressed all right, he just won't dressed up.

He won't wearing no shoes this time and I asked him about that. "Cussit", I said, "Why ain't you wearing no shoes?" He looked down at this blue toes... standing naked before the whole world... and said, "Frank," (he always called me Frank. I always called him Cussit since we went to school together). "Frank," he said with a mistful look in his brown eye, "I ain't running for nothing no more and I don't see no reason for me to keep being uncomfortable."

I kinda felt sorry for him. There was a tear coming from his blue eye. "Cussit", I said, "It can't be all that bad. Somebody's got to always lose in elections. Maybe you didn't do it right."

Well sir, it almost tore me up what he said next. I remembered the time he got caught smoking and he looked exactly like that then. Smoking won't so bad... but I had to admit the teacher was right. Cussit didn't have no business at his age smoking a cat's tail... specially with it still hung on to the cat.

"Frank," he said, "I tried. I wore them new overalls the whole summer. I didn't even take 'em off to sleep. And them shoes liked to give me blisters... 'cept I didn't wash my feet for four months... they would have. I told everybody I was agin taxes and how I was for law and order. I even kissed three babies. You ever kiss a baby with a cold, Frank?"

"Well, Cussit", I said, "You can't take all that to heart. No I ain't never kissed no babies under 16. It ain't your fault you was before yore time. You didn't promise enough. You got to promise more and I got faith in you Cussit. You're what this country needs. A shoeless, tooth-picking common man."

Well that's when Cussit went into what he used to call his meditating trance. His eyeballs fell back to his ear lobes and his hair stood straight up... all three pieces of it... and his big toe wrapped around his little toe (and that ain't easy. You just ought to try it one time). I knowed good and well I'd be there for a spell.

It was nigh on to nightfall when Cussit jerked. I knowed he was coming too and I could hardly wait for his re-relations.

"Frank," he said, straightening his gallowes, "You're right. I will run again. I'll promise them I won't tax no tobacco and I'll dress up in a hundred dollar suit and go on television. I know two birds that promised that and got elected. Yep, Frank, I'll do it."

"Now Cussit, you're talking my language. Tell 'em you won't and then after you're elected don't pay no attention to what you promised. That way you can keep getting elected. Now put your toes back in place and start growing some sideburns."

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Explains Text Book Issuance

To The Editor:

It is with interest and a desire to offer an explanation that I respond to Mrs. H. E. Cassell's letter which appeared in your column on February 18, 1969.

Mrs. Cassell's statement that "there are 17 basic reading books which must be shared by 30 students" is correct but somewhat misleading. There are 10 reading titles in the first grade, or two sets with five books in each comprising three pre-primers, one primer and one first reading book. This will provide for small reading groups and while one group is using set one, the second group should be using set two. This should be reversed at the completion of the series and should provide a book per pupil at all times.

Regulations of the State Board of Education state: "Basic reading should always be taught in small groups and there is no need to have more books than there are pupils in the largest reading group. Books are to be distributed on the basis of 60% of the membership if the school has more than 20 pupils in the grade."

These regulations apply not only to Gold Sand Elementary School, or to Franklin County, but to all of North Carolina. These distribution regulations are not-

ing new for I have been connected with the issuing of textbooks in Franklin County for the past 12 years and they have been in existence for at least that long.

I can understand Mrs. Cassell's concern and hope that this will explain to her and other parents as well why there is not a book per pupil in each reading title in our lower grades at the same time.

Yours truly,  
Allen W. Shearin  
P. O. Box 449  
Louisburg, N. C.

### Aid For Biafra

Senator Edward M. Kennedy, (D-Mass) has urged President Nixon to give immediate attention to the strife and starvation in Biafra. The Senator said that the nation's posture toward the breakaway county results from a "bankruptcy of American foreign policy."

### Department Chief Named

President Nixon has nominated Gerard Smith to be director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. The President said his task was among the most important of the administration and promised him ready access to the White House.