

Hopkins:

Hunt Should Change Mind on W-10

Mrs. Velma Hopkins, long-time civic leader, was the featured guest on WXII's "Report to the People" Saturday, Nov. 18. Interviewers were host Dave Plyler, WAA's Rudy Anderson and Chronicle EXECUTIVE EDITOR John W. Templeton. Mrs. Hopkins is president of Neighborhood Council, Inc., which runs the cafeteria at Reynolds Health Center,

Justice, Citizens Council East, Clothes Closet and the Foster Parents Association. Excerpts of her remarks follow:

Anderson: What political overtones do you think the governor's reaction to the Justice Department intervention will have?

Hopkins: Well, it can't have very good political overtones if he decides he's not going to abide by it because he is supposed to be a leader making laws and upholding the law. So I feel like that if he makes a decision I'm not going to abide by it and then somebody else comes up and he expects them to abide by it. I think that's not going to set a very pretty pattern for us in North Carolina. It's not going to leave us in a very good standard.

Anderson: We organized the Concerned Women for Justice about five years ago when Joan Little first became known. We visit the prisoners very often, but we do something outstanding on Christmas. Since you brought this up, it will give me an opportunity to say that we are going to the prison on Dec. 9 and we will be taking gifts.

There are 500 or more women there and we go down and hold a Christmas party, sing Christmas carols and it is very beautiful. You ought to go down and interview some of them. We take church choirs, ministers, laymen, and we go down and take gifts. We will be asking you and all the media to help us get donations for gifts. Anyone who wants to donate gifts, all they have to do is call me at 723-2736 or 725-1442 and I'll pick it up. It's all deductible from your taxes.

Templeton: You work in Reynolds Health Center, you know the people there. What do you think of the county's latest plan to re-organize health services?

Hopkins: I think that it was the right decision. I have been interested to get people to support a hospital. It didn't go out of business because of the blacks. It went out of business because they did not want a viable hospital.

What we need to do is to support the health center. Open it up at night. Ninety-five per cent of the people at Baptist and Forsyth Memorial are sitting up there with a finger hurting or an arm hurting and if a wreck comes in, the place is so crowded, you can't get service. What they need to do is to open that (Reynolds) up and come there first, not an emergency room.

Templeton: What has been the reaction of the staff over there to the plan?

Hopkins: I couldn't say what their attitudes are because as individuals at work, we only work because we have responsibility, we have to eat, sleep, pay our bills. They don't know which way to go. But most of them are glad about the decision. If the decision is carried through, with somebody from the government sitting on top of it and stop

all this bickering, then we can get about the business of helping.

Anderson: What do you feel are some of your most critical needs in that foster parents program?

Hopkins: Number one, we need foster homes. We need more foster homes. I realize they don't pay enough. A hundred and twenty-five dollars won't take care of a girl 16 years

old. We need to see if anyone is listening and wants to become a foster parent, if he has that kind of love and care for children from broken homes, or for some reason that isn't their responsibility, you should contact me or go and see the social services on Ridge Avenue, see Mrs. McBride or contact the Foster Parents Association. We meet the third Tuesday night in Reynolds Health Center every month.

There are other counties and cities that pay much more than we pay, but their homes aren't any better. We are going to meet with the Health Department board, I think they're meeting tonight, and I'm going up to talk to them.

Anderson: Do you think money is the underlying aim of people who are foster parents?

Hopkins: You have to have a little more than a home and a house. You have to have some love in your heart for children and for people who are having problems and you have to have the mind and the heart to say I am going to try to understand this problem.

You can't solve them all; you can't play God. But if you work hard enough, I've raised about 35 foster teenagers, and I haven't had any that was such a problem or I was such a problem with them that they don't come back and remember me on holidays or Christmas and they come by. It's a rewarding service and it's a trying service. Now, we do need insurance so that if a child breaks a door or something like that, we need something to take care of damage they do. I've got to pay for that; the state doesn't pay for that.

Anderson: How do you feel the city has spent the community development money?

Hopkins: No, we're not getting the attention in all communities. But maybe the pot isn't deep enough and doesn't have enough in it. There could be a better way of spending it. We need some housing. We have 1,946 units. We have blades of grass in East Winston and we need some housing. We need some low-income housing and I mean some housing that decent people want.

They say it would be segregated housing. No, it wouldn't. Unless you segregate, the codes and the building, people are not going to segregate a decent house.

Anderson: But judging from the various housing patterns, the only people who are in these houses are black?

Hopkins: Well, they are in them because senior citizens were raised in and built these communities and they are staying in them as long as they can find a house. We need some money to rehabilitate these houses. People own those houses some section 8 money.

I wish I had all day to talk to you reporters because you're up my line now. I hope at another time they would let us come out here



and talk about nothing but housing, and foster care, all these things are important not to blacks but to low income people.

Templeton: What are your recommendations for legislation that should come from the upcoming General Assembly in Raleigh?

Hopkins: Money should be made more readily available. The banks have segregated patterns too. They need to make loans to low-income people, senior citizens, grants.

Templeton: About 30 years ago, there was an attempt to organize a tobacco workers union here in Winston-Salem. You were active in that effort. What impact did it have?

Hopkins: That organiza-

tion. It makes you able to sit there today, because without that organization you wouldn't have been sitting there, baby.

Plyler: Would you like to see a union in the industry, now?

Hopkins: A union is always good business. You might not call it unions, but you have clubs that meet and talk about profits and what you're making, so why not do it for every body?

If they furnish gifts, we'll take them down. Now, our role in the prison system; when we first went down and toured the prison system, we found some deplorable conditions. Whether it was an oversight or an undersight, it was there. We were able to get quite a few things done and make it easier. We found women who had been there four, five, six years. No outside person had visited them, wrote to them or given them any spending money so that they could go to the canteen and buy something

like other women. Our position is that we try to say to them, if you're in Rome, you have to live like you're in Rome, but you can't break out, in order to make it easy for them we take them gifts, we take them money, we encourage them, we adopt dorms.

Each county, we have 15 counties in North Carolina where we have members, adopts a dorm. They write

dorm, they send them presents, they send them cigarettes, they send them money and whatever they can do to make life more doable for those who are in there.

I don't uphold crime, but I think whether they are in prison or out, they are human beings.

Anderson: Would you say prison conditions as far as women are concerned have been improved over what they were when you first started?

Hopkins: Yes, it has been drastically improved. You go to the men's prison.

Thanksgiving

By Naomi C. McLean
Business Writer



The feeling of thanksgiving and gratitude pervades our minds and hearts at this season of the year. We are more conscious than we ordinarily are of the gifts of life, and we graciously thank for our homes, our families, and our friends, as well as for the work we do day by day. The spirit of thanksgiving and gratitude is the sign of maturity. Little children take what they are given with little thought of the giver. "When I was a child," wrote St. Paul, "I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

It is right and proper that each November, we should put Thanksgiving in the spotlight. It is the time to give heart-felt thanks for "the blessings that we

share, for all the ways our needs are met."

Very soon the sounds of "Merry Christmas!" will be ringing throughout the world. The meanings of this joyous phrase are as varied as the persons who use it. For some, Christmas is a time of cheery fires and cozy family gatherings; for others, it is a time of travel and excitement; and still others are moved to gentle reverence and quiet contemplation.

Whatever you may be feeling at Christmastime, you can be certain that the phrase, "Merry Christmas!" will be directed to you time after happy time, through every medium of communication at man's disposal. Cards will begin to arrive, telephones will ring, arms will wave, music will fill the air, and thousands will await the arrival

of Christmas Day. Thanksgiving, we give thanks. Christmas season speaks with eloquence, transcending all the things of sight and sense.



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