

First vote Sept. 8

Factions clash as referendums on liquor-by-drink approach

By TONY MACE
Staff Writer

The prospect of mixed-drink sales by Christmas has wet and dry forces scrambling for support as seven North Carolina localities prepare for September referendums on liquor-by-the-drink.

Mecklenburg County voters go to the polls Sept. 8. Voters in Orange County, Southern Pines and Black Mountain will hold referendums four days later. The decision comes Sept. 20 in Sanford and Louisburg and Sept. 22 in Dare County. Other votes are expected next year.

The races seem to be shaping up as contests between anti-liquor church groups and pro-liquor business interests. Both sides have been pushing hard to register new voters, and both sides claim they can win if voters understand the facts of the issue.

"We feel there will be fewer intoxicated people in public places with mixed drinks—there would be better control of how much people are allowed to drink," said Jerry Williams, executive director of the North Carolina Restaurant Association.

"With liquor-by-the-drink, restaurants can limit price increases on food," Williams said. "This will save non-drinkers on their food dollar. And everybody will benefit from easing pressure on the county tax system."

Anti-liquor forces say alcohol consumption would increase if mixed-drink sales are permitted. They say pro-liquor forces support the issue because of imminent economic benefits.

"See who is putting up the money and active support of liquor-by-the-drink," said D.P. McFarland of the anti-liquor state Christian Action League. "It's the people who stand to profit. That's the pattern statewide."

Liquor supporters in Mecklenburg County have received \$1,000 contributions from North Carolina National Bank, The Charlotte Observer, and several large Charlotte hotels, McFarland said.

Charlotte liquor activists say the Mecklenburg vote is the key to the rest of the state.

"The dries see the Mecklenburg referendum as a kind of test case," said Bill Hensley, chairperson of the pro-liquor Mecklenburg Mixed-Drink Committee. "They (the dries) say if they win here they can win the other referendums across the state."

Voter polls indicate the wets are ahead in Mecklenburg, but Hensley said mixed-drink supporters are not letting up on their campaigning.

Almost 17,000 persons were added to the list of voters during an intensive registration drive in Mecklenburg County. Hensley said most of the new voters are in the 18-35 age group.

"Now we're trying to get out the vote," he said. Pro-liquor activists plan to spend \$35,000 in a publicity campaign canvassing Mecklenburg with bumper stickers, billboards and leaflets. "The dries will spend the same or more," Hensley said.

People Who Care, the anti-liquor group in Mecklenburg, has been conducting an extensive telephone campaign, according to supporters of the group.

"Our major tactic is to get the truth to the people so they will realize mixed-drink sales mean open bars and restaurants serving liquor on Sunday," said Henderson Belk of People Who Care.

"The wets say the bill will do away with brown-bagging," Belk said. "But as the bill is written, we would have liquor-by-the-drink in addition to brown bagging in social clubs."

The mixed-drink campaign has been quiet in Southern Pines, said pro-liquor leader George Little. "We plan to spend about \$3,000. Our campaign will emphasize the tax and economic benefits of liquor-by-the-drink. More and better conventions will mean a great deal for Southern Pines. If it passes, we will see a tremendous boost in tourism."

Southern Pines dries are facing an uphill fight, according to anti-liquor organizer Dewey Mims. "We're just barely getting organized. We just want to give people who haven't made up their minds a chance to understand the issue."

Liquor-by-the-drink passed by a 3-1 margin in Southern Pines in the statewide mixed-drink referendum in 1973.

Dare County dries are coordinating their efforts with the Christian Action League. "We've been working through individual churches, encouraging people to register," said the Rev. James H. Davenport, an anti-liquor activist.

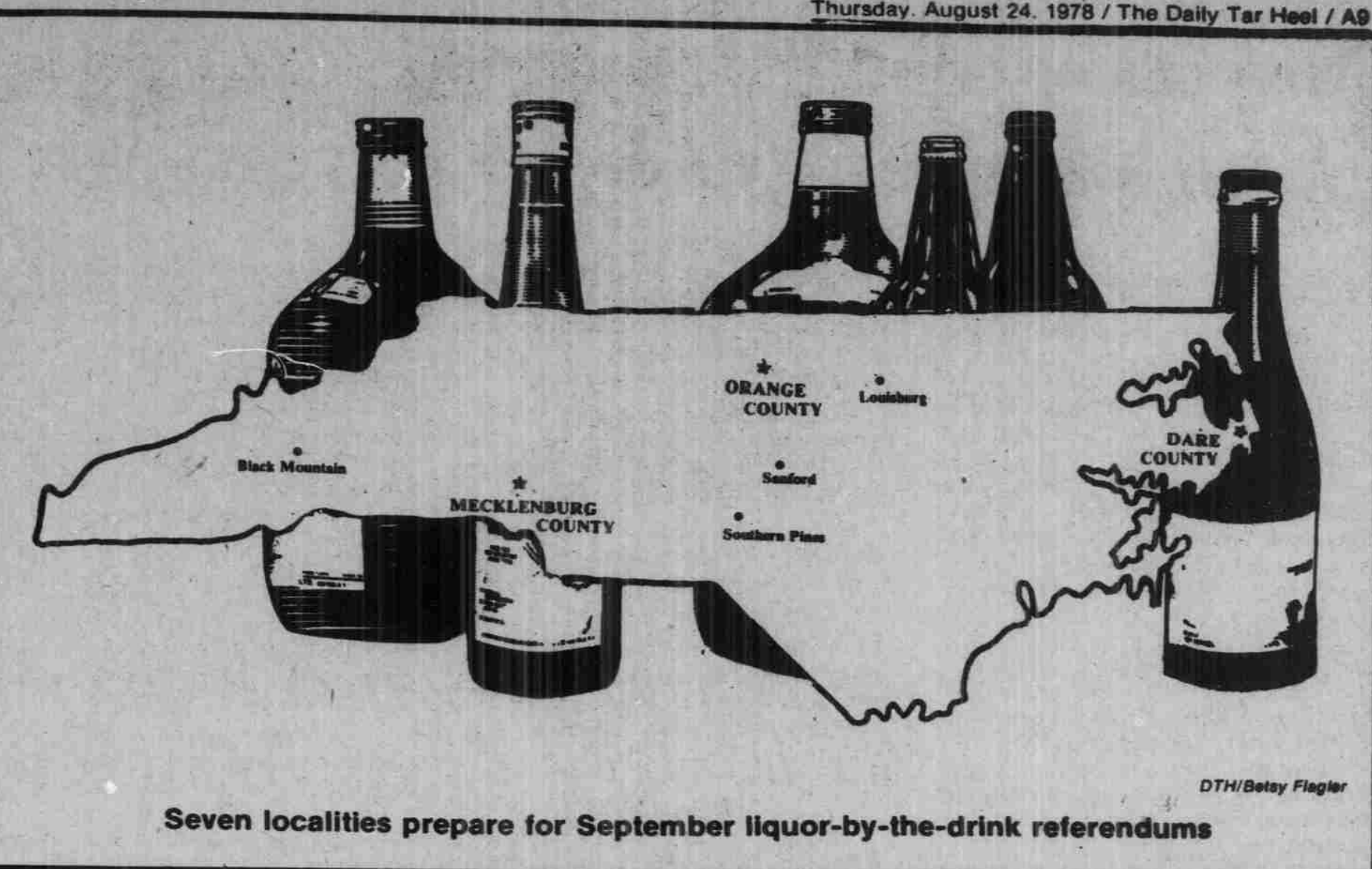
Dare County wets are working hard to register new voters. "We've spent about \$1,000 so far on brochures, a telephone campaign and research," said William Jones of the Dare County Commission for Liquor-by-the-Drink.

Black Mountain dries are circulating a petition asking the town council to call a second referendum to decide whether Black Mountain should have sales of any alcoholic beverages.

"If they get 15 percent of the voters to sign, and the state Board of Elections certifies it, then we'll have their referendum," said Black Mountain Mayor Tom Sobel. "But I think liquor-by-the-drink will pass in the first place, which suggests that their referendum would fail."

Sanford faces a close vote, according to Hal Siler of the Sanford Chamber of Commerce.

"There are no organized groups for or against liquor, and I doubt there will be any. At this point, it's anybody's ball game," Siler said.



Seven localities prepare for September liquor-by-the-drink referendums

Referendum campaigns step up

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Citizens for Local Option, said his group has received no money from the liquor industry.

"We plan to spend a couple of thousand dollars of our own money. So far, we've bought ads in the *Village Advocate*, the *Daily Tar Heel* and on WCHL encouraging people to register and vote," Ewell said.

"We just want to lay out the issue and let people decide," Ewell said.

Pro-liquor advocates point to the boom mixed-drink sales could be to the economy of Orange County.

"It would be like bringing a \$22 million industry into the county," said Joe Augustine, executive director of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce.

"The farmers and big landowners in the northern part of the county who are particularly concerned about rising property taxes ought to look at this liquor issue a different way," Ewell said. "The additional tax revenues would be a big help for Orange County."

Elections officials say the referendum has stirred interest among voters not usually concerned with the outcome of local elections. Sizeable numbers of new voters have swollen the registration

books.

"They (newly registered voters) seem to be people who have lived in the county but never bothered to vote before," said Joe Nassif, chairperson of the Orange County Board of Elections.

In the final days of the registration period earlier this month, the largest number of new voters came from precincts in northern Orange County, Nassif said.

"There will probably be more than a thousand people added to the rolls when they're all counted," said Gerry Cohen, voter registration chairperson for the Orange County Democratic Party.

"Registration has been heavy,

law

From page A-1

Charlotte attorney Hugh Beard, attorney for the two white plaintiffs, has asked U.S. Middle District Court Judge Eugene Gordon to order Bunting to submit more complete information.

Beard has asked for the names of students enrolled under the special admissions policies, but Bunting refused. She cited federal laws guaranteeing individuals' rights to privacy.

Soon after the suit was filed the

especially considering the students weren't in town during the registration period," Cohen said. "It's been much heavier than the registration for the primary this spring. It kind of shows you where people's interests lie."

Nassif discounted the possible absence of new student voters. "You have to remember the liquor referendum in 1973 passed 2-1 in Orange County, and the students didn't show up."

"So that takes care of the notion that it would take students to pass this thing," Nassif said.

State legislators approved a statewide liquor vote in 1973. It passed in only a handful of counties and towns, including Chapel Hill and Carrboro.

plaintiffs petitioned Gordon to order school officials to describe the school's admissions programs in detail to determine if there is a special admissions program that discriminates against white students.

Named as defendants in the suit are UNC President William C. Friday, law school Dean Robert G. Byrd and Chancellor N. Ferebee Taylor.

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