



"In taking over The Pilot no changes are contemplated. We will try to keep this a good paper. We will try to make a little money for all concerned. Where there seems to be an occasion to use our influence for the public good we will try to do it. And we will treat everybody alike."—James Boyd, May 23, 1941.

Let The Door Stay Open Always

It is quite a joke on the newspapers of North Carolina that all the time they were campaigning for freedom of information in connection with legislative committee meetings during the 1953 General Assembly, there was a new law abridging freedom of information, unknown to most if not all of the editors, already nestling among the myriad proceedings of the 1951 Assembly.

This strange little red-haired stepchild of a law, which permits secret sessions of boards of county commissioners, now pops up grinning and thumbing its nose not only at the press but at the people of North Carolina. For freedom of information is the people's right. It is the press's right because it is the people's right, not vice versa.

The press believes in this right and works for it and against secrecy in elected public governing bodies at all levels not to satisfy the press's curiosity or vanity but because the overwhelming majority of editors and publishers in North Carolina and the nation believe that the Constitution's guarantee of press freedom and its logical extension—freedom of information—is a great trust and a challenge it would be treason to ignore.

What a sorry legislative piece of business we are presented with in this newly uncovered law! Of the two co-sponsors who pushed it through in the final confusion of an adjourning 1951 Assembly, one is dead and the other says, if you please, that he was unaware that it altered the previously existing legal requirement for open public sessions!

It is no credit to the state-wide Association of County Commissioners that the group is named by the co-sponsor as the agency requesting the bill. Like all attempts by those with power to limit essential freedoms, secrecy laws are fear-inspired. The pattern is the same everywhere and always: power begets fear and fear begets oppression. The pattern, with differences in degree and emphasis, is the same whether in a county courthouse or in the Kremlin at Moscow. And often the press and freedom of information are subjected to the first blow.

Paradoxically, the North Carolina press, generally speaking gives full-scale interpretation and news coverage, plus enthusiastic backing, to the great majority of legislative actions at both county and state levels. We don't believe there is a state in the Union where the press works more extensively and intensively shoulder to shoulder with local and state government.

Against this background, laws to limit freedom of information and fetter reporters and editors appear particularly shoddy.

Better Year Ahead?

A friend who used to write glowing letters about the glories of fast-paced big-city life—who worked hard all day and played hard all night, made five times as much money as we did and expressed bewilderment that we chose to reside in the remote wilds of North Carolina—sends a subdued Christmas note reporting that his ulcer, a product of 1953, is better.

"At any rate," he philosophizes hopefully, "I feel that 1954 is bound to be better than 1953." While he didn't assert that 1954 couldn't possibly be worse than 1953, we think he's got something there.

That might be a good watchword for us all: "1954 is bound to be better." Not automatically, of course, but it appears to us that opportunities will be emerging—clearer, less nebulous opportunities—to make 1954 better locally, nationally and internationally.

An astute national columnist recently became pardonably mystical along this line. He quoted

There is probably not a reporter or editor in the state who has not, at some time, been ejected from a session of an elected public legislative body. Although this is a professional insult comparable to telling a physician watching over a sick patient that he had better go home as he cannot be trusted to make the proper decisions at a critical, complicated stage of illness there is probably not a reporter or editor who would then refuse to report, explain and back the hilt important actions taken by that same legislative body, the same day, the next week or the next year.

The newly revealed secrecy law is unworthy of North Carolina—unworthy of its legislators at all levels, most of whom understand that they will be remembered (and re-elected) not for what they do behind closed doors and hide from the people, but what they do in the open with the people, through the press, fully informed so that they can understand, judge, accept or reject on merit alone.

After years of trying to compromise and cooperate with elected legislative bodies who go into secret sessions, we have come to the conclusion that there is no excuse for secrecy when the body is meeting at its stated public place and time to conduct public business. If such bodies want to get off somewhere and talk over "embarrassing" or "controversial" business, let them go—we don't expect to be invited. But when they are in public session, let the door stay open always.

Since the foregoing was prepared for publication, the co-sponsor of the 1951 bill has announced that he will favor putting the provision guaranteeing open meetings back in the law if he returns to the General Assembly in 1955.

Likewise, the executive secretary of the Association of County Commissioners has said that removal of the open meeting guarantee was not his intention when he asked for revision of the law in 1951 and that such revision was not advocated by the Association.

We are pleased that these opinions have been expressed and trust that the County Commissioners Association will push for restoration of the guarantee in 1955. The vast majority of county commissioners, we believe, are not afraid of open sessions.

It remains amazing and disturbing, however, that such confusion in regard to the 1951 action could have prevailed and the incident is a warning to the General Assembly of the dangers in hasty and undebated law-making.

Winston Churchill's assertion that, in the mid-thirties, Churchill felt war coming "in my bones" but that his bones do not convey that ominous message now.

Consulting the message that our own bones are broadcasting, if any, we do feel a New Year optimism.

Like the big-city resident noted above, many persons, it seems to us, are now becoming more subdued and thoughtful, more questioning as to the future, less wrapped up in the immediate concerns of the moment.

Could it be that this marks the closing of the "post-war" period during which many of us have rejected much serious thought of either an unpleasant past or an uncertain future?

If now we stop, take stock of things and plan more carefully, think more deeply and assume more responsibility, 1954 is "bound to be better."

Textbooks In Lawlessness

Petty thieves are exhibiting more and more finesse in their operations, Sheriff C. J. McDonald pointed out recently.

When a country-store burglar goes to work these days he very likely will be wearing gloves to eliminate fingerprints. At one store, not long ago, glass in a door was taped with adhesive so that it would not shatter noisily when broken—a neat trick that may have been responsible for the success of the operation.

Question: Do you think, sheriff, that the detailed instructions in criminal procedure appearing in many so-called comic books, given there as "educational" material or "exposes" of crim-

inal methods, have anything to do with this situation?

Answer: Yes, I do.
Question: Do you know, sheriff, that in these comic books youngsters and adults with the brains of youngsters, some of said brains no doubt hovering on the verge of criminality, are provided with graphic diagrams and instructions on how to accomplish many acts of violence or lawlessness, ranging from how to pick a lock to how to kill a person quietly?

Answer: So I've heard. I'm worried about it. I don't like it one bit. It isn't right.
The prosecution rests.

What Will Prevent Such Tragedies?

For the second time within recent months, a murderous automobile accident involving teenagers has brought a particularly heart-rending tragedy to families in an adjoining county.

When, some weeks ago, brothers in two families were killed in a Hoke County accident, the whole state was shocked and it seemed that such an occurrence could scarcely happen again for years to come.

Then, a recent night, came an accident at Ellerbe in which five boys, including two sets of brothers, were killed.

Speeding and reckless driving, arising not from drunkenness, stupidity or criminal intent

but simply from the exuberance of youth, appear to have been factors in both these terrible accidents.

No one but young people themselves can prevent such tragedies. They must be introduced to the automobile with all the life-or-death seriousness with which boys are taught the use of firearms. Their consciences must be led to react to speeding and reckless driving in the same manner as conscience reacts to pointing a loaded weapon at another human being—it just isn't done and that's all there is to it.

Driver training courses in the public schools would, we believe, be the most effective step that could be taken toward establishing a rigid driver's conscience in youth.

Last Half Century Only a Prelude

State On Threshold Of Greatest Era

By BEN E. DOUGLAS
Director, N. C. Department of Conservation and Development

The foundation for industrial leadership was well laid in North Carolina in the first half of this century. In that time, we achieved national supremacy in three major industries—all stemming from our basic agricultural economy. These are the manufacturing of textiles, tobacco and wooden furniture. The mid-century found us a State with its economy diversified between agriculture and industry, but it also found us leading in industries, and in crops, that yielded relatively low per capita return.

The new half-century has already been marked by progress in developing new and diversified industry, and introducing new agricultural practices that offer at the same time the opportunity and the challenge to increase substantially the wealth and well-being of our people and our State.

The introduction of these new industries—notably electronics, chemicals and specialties requiring skilled labor and highly trained executives—and the expansion of our agriculture with greater emphasis upon production of live-stock and use of advanced methods to bring higher cash returns from other crops, was not accomplished cheaply and not without far-sighted planning.

The public schools, the technical training centers, the roads and

electrical systems, the hospitals and other public institutions that were developed at such heavy expense, and which by their nature were investments, both public and private, for the future more than the present, are now paying dividends in the development of our new economy.

They have already enabled us to stabilize our State taxes, while other states not so far advanced in their essential services are having to levy new taxes and increase old ones.

Our dividends from these investments in the future will continue to increase, in the form of greater advantages and lower taxes for public services, if we make the most of the opportunity these basic improvements open to us, and as we bring in new industries and new people to help us convert our natural resources and attractions for living, working and playing into ever-increasing prosperity.

In attaining its present industrial leadership in the South, North Carolina preserved its basic agricultural economy. That makes for an uncrowded state—a state of small towns and many small farms. We have no large cities. We are isolated from congested populations with their disadvantages both from the standpoint of industrial development and security, but our geographic location gives us easy accessibility to the world's greatest markets and we serve

them by every form of transportation—rail, highway, water and air.

As we capitalize upon the opportunities presented to us, we may look back upon the great advances of the last half century as only a prelude. The foundation is firmly laid. North Carolina is on the threshold of its greatest era, and to its achievement the facilities of the Department of Conservation and Development are dedicated.

The 1953 production of hay in North Carolina is estimated at 1,145,000 tons from 1,164,000 acres harvested. This is the smallest harvested acreage since 1942 and the smallest output of hay since 1941. Production in 1953 was 11 percent below 1952, and 11 percent below the 10-year (1942-51) average production of 1,282,000 tons.

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The North Carolina cotton crop for 1953 is now estimated at 45,000 bales (500 lbs. gross weight)—20 percent below the 569,000 bales produced in 1952 and 13 percent below the 10-year (1942-51) average production of 522,000 bales. The 1953 cotton crop off to a favorable start. Although some replanting was necessary, most growers were able to attain above normal stands of cotton.

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Notice Of Town Garbage Can Requirements

In order to comply with the new Town Sanitary Ordinance which was designed to make Southern Pines a cleaner, healthier and more beautiful community, the following garbage can requirements must be complied with before February 1, 1954:

1. Garbage cans must be metal and must be water-tight.
2. Garbage cans must have handles.
3. No can may exceed 30 gallons liquid capacity and no can may weigh more than 20 pounds empty.
4. All cans must have a tight-fitting cover.
5. Sunken patented cans properly installed, flush with the ground, are encouraged.

Failure to comply with this ordinance may result in a fine of not less than \$5.00 nor more than \$50.00. Each day's violation is a separate offense.

TOWN OF SOUTHERN PINES
SANITARY DEPARTMENT