

LOCAL GROUP HEARD

Public Hearing Held On Bill Creating Certifying Board For Psychologists

Professional psychologists, a psychiatrist and a large delegation from Southern Pines told the Joint House and Senate Health Committee, meeting in Raleigh Friday, that creation of a certifying board for psychologists in this state is needed.

A bill to create such a board was introduced earlier this month by Rep. H. Clifton Blue of Aberdeen and has received the support of the State Hospitals Board of Control and several other agencies.

Blue introduced to the committee a number of people from here, including John Ruggles, a member of the State Hospitals Board of Control, W. Lamont Brown, county solicitor, and Mrs. Valerie Nicholson. It was Mrs. Nicholson who, about a year ago, was the state's principal witness in a case tried in Moore Recorder's Court in which a man who lived here and billed himself as a psychologist was convicted on charges of criminal libel.

At the meeting Friday Dr. Lloyd Borstelman of Duke University said legislation to create a certifying board was necessary because the State at present has no regulations, the absence of which "invites charlatans to establish here because they can't go to neighboring states, "which do."

He said the proposed legislation would not interfere with the practice of approximately 120 members of the North Carolina Psychology Association.

Opposition to the bill has developed, it has been reliably reported, primarily from the State Medical Society.

But Rep. John Umstead of Orange, head of the Hospitals Board of Control, and Dr. J. W. Murdock, medical director of the Board, both spoke in favor

of the bill. Umstead said that the "psychologist" from Southern Pines had sent "at least four" people for treatment at State mental institutions who did not require treatment.

Dr. Borstelman explained to the joint committee that there is presently no law in the state to prevent anyone, regardless of qualifications, from setting up a psychology practice. Psychiatrists who hold medical degrees are in a different position, he pointed out, since they are regulated under the state medical laws.

He went on: "Anyone in this state can call himself a psychologist and have no trouble getting clients without interference from the law."

Many other states have psychologist certification boards, he said, including Virginia, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Maryland. As the unqualified practitioners are driven out of those states, he added, North Carolina is their logical prey.

Mr. Ruggles, who is in the real estate and insurance business here and longtime member of the Hospitals Control Board, told the committee that he had been "taken in" by the man (whom he did not identify by name) but that he later discovered the truth.

"But I didn't feel so bad," he added. "All the doctors in town were taken in, too."

Brown said that Southern Pines had seen the problem of unqualified people practicing as psychologists "come home to us, in several very tragic ways."

He described as "nightmarish" the effect of treatments upon a young boy by a man who called himself a psychologist in Southern Pines. He told also of an incident of two young girls who

were almost made the victims of a "conspiracy" to send them to Samarand, a school for delinquent girls, when treatment by the so-called psychologist failed to bring about the desired results.

Brown said the man had left the community only as a result of being indicted for criminal libel because he wrote letters to four newspapers, (including The Pilot), libeling Mrs. Nicholson. He said that such "charlatans" can have an "insidious and damaging effect on a community before it realizes what is happening."

The committee also heard from Mrs. Nicholson. She related many of the events that led to the eventual trial in which the man was convicted of criminal libel, and fined.

She described the results of the so-called psychologist's practice as a "terrible thing to happen to a community." She added that she had had the psychologist investigated and discovered that he

Two Seniors Are Merit Certificate Winners For 1957

Thomas P. Vann and John F. Chappell, seniors at Southern Pines High School, have been awarded certificates of merit from the National Merit Scholarship Corporation, school officials were notified this week.

The certificates are awarded to finalists in the merit program who had achieved a high score on a scholarship qualifying test, but who did not win a scholarship. According to officials of the scholarship corporation, about one-half of the top one per cent of high school seniors throughout the country were awarded the certificates.

Vann is the son of Mrs. Thomas Vann of 455 S. Ashe St., and Chappell is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Chappell of 240 North Ridge St.

was a "complete fraud." But, she added, "We have just passed him on to others. Because of the operation of the libel laws, he can call himself a doctor and practice on innocent victims anywhere he wants."

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