

THE PILOT

Southern Pines

North Carolina

"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. Wherever 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.

School Decisions Loom

Big things are going on in this nation today in the field of education. It is a matter of special pride to find North Carolina in the vanguard of the movement for better schools, following the trail blazed years ago by Aycock and Page and recently reopened by Dr. James Conant in his brilliant study of the high school situation.

Here in Moore County the Conant thesis is being followed in the plan to consolidate nine small high schools into three units. Advantages stressed are the economic angle and the greater opportunities to secure a high grade of teacher and more diversified curricula. The county plan became of special interest to this section when it was proposed that Southern Pines and Pinehurst, the two city units, consolidate with West End and Aberdeen in a school in this general vicinity.

It looks, now, as if the time had come when this important decision—to join or not to join—must be taken. The local school has made definite plans for expansion and the county's plans for the new consolidated school are firming up. There's little time to lose.

With the news that a large consolidated high school will be located in this vicinity and Aberdeen one of the schools included, speculation has arisen as to the role of the local school. Should it remain a city unit? Is it wise to keep a rapidly growing

school in the center of a residential district which holds no opportunity for further expansion, once the present plan is completed? Or should Southern Pines accept the county's invitation to join in forming the new school?

And what about consolidation? Though the Southern Pines Board of Education reports having made considerable study of the subject, little information to the people has been forthcoming as to their stand. The casual thinker must agree that "bigness" in itself holds no criterion of excellence, but then neither does "littleness" in itself. Both have their good and bad points. "Bigness" poses a possible threat to local control that may be unfortunate; "littleness," on the other hand, may foster a climate of snobbishness and indifference to the needs of the non-college group which forms, on an average, almost a third of each year's graduates.

At a Monday meeting of the Board of Education and the Citizens Committee on School Planning, the Board was requested to arrange for a survey of the local school, especially in the light of possible consolidation.

Southern Pines people care deeply about their schools. They want them to be as fine as they possibly can. The people should have access to all aspects of the question before irrevocable action is taken, either way. Certainly a survey by experts in the field must be the first step.

Poor Way To Conduct School Business

Since the foregoing editorial was written, there has been a development that must have been puzzling, alarming and confusing to hundreds of local parents.

Students in the East Southern Pines schools on Tuesday brought home a communication from the Board of Education, with verbal instructions that the two questions in the letter were to be answered and that the mimeographed sheet was to be returned to school the next morning, without fail.

Here is the text of that communication:

"A group of 18 interested citizens has requested an independent survey of our school district for the broad purpose of making recommendations in terms of general school planning.

"The School Board is willing to spend up to \$2,000 for the purpose of making this survey provided the majority of parents favor the survey by George Peabody College and the necessary expenditures to accomplish it.

"1. Would you favor this survey?—Yes—No—

"2. According to your present knowledge, do you favor doing away with the Southern Pines Administrative Unit as an independent unit and having it absorbed into the county school system?—Yes—No—

"Please return one form per family."

This letter was apparently the result of a Monday night gathering in which the recently formed Citizens Committee for Long-Range School Planning met amicably with the Board of Education, explained its concern about the future of East Southern Pines High School and asked that surveys be made to help chart the course of school operations here.

A basic flaw of the letter is that parents were asked to state opinions without being given the only information from which they could be expected to form opinions. It would be impossible to give a considered answer to question number two, for instance, unless information provided by a survey had not only been published but had been public knowledge long enough to permit the thought, discussion and debate that must precede intelligent decisions by parents and other taxpayers of the school district.

Of what worth are answers obtained overnight, in hectic haste, from puzzled parents who can hardly deduce what the letter is about and are misled and alarmed by the wording of the letter itself? Results of such a questionnaire would seem to us to be worthless, whatever they turn out to be.

We base our condemnation of this letter on these points, taking the letter, phrase by phrase, from the beginning:

1. "A group of 18 interested citizens . . ." This implies that no more than 18 are interested, whereas the committee has more than 250 signatures on petitions favoring a survey of the local schools by impartial experts—and committee members say they could have obtained many more names.

2. The "18 interested citizens" were apparently a head count of persons attending Monday night's meeting, most of whom were members of the Citizens Committee for Long-Range School Planning—yet nowhere in the letter is reference made to the Committee, a well organized

group whose activity, purpose and plans have been reported in recent Pilot news items.

3. What the Citizens Committee formally requested was much more than "an independent survey of our school district for the broad purpose of making recommendations in terms of general school planning." Purpose of the survey asked by the committee was definite and specific: "To determine whether East Southern Pines High School can best serve the community by remaining an independent school or by consolidating with other high schools in the area." Further, the Committee specified that any survey or consultation should include: "Recommendations which . . . would improve the educational opportunities of all the high school students of Southern Pines; a comparison of teacher assignments, curriculum, cost and any other data to substantiate the recommendation; (and) recommendations as to administrative control." If parents were to be asked if they favored a survey, shouldn't they have been told what the survey would cover and for what specific purposes it was proposed?

4. Why did the Board of Education pick a figure of \$2,000 and why did it specify George Peabody College to make the survey? What parent knows how much a survey should cost, or whether \$2,000 is extravagant or stingy for the purpose?

5. The Citizens Committee's request to the Board of Education asked for surveys or consultations by the State Board of Education, the Department of Curriculum Study and Research and the State Department of Public Instruction, as well as by "an independent agency such as the Division of Field Service of George Peabody College, Nashville, Tenn." This agency had been suggested by a State-level educator to the Committee as competent for the purpose.

6. It seems pointless to ask parents to partially base their opinion on whether that particular college should conduct the survey, since that college, though ranking high in the field of professional education, is not widely known and might be viewed suspiciously by some persons not aware of its status or competence in this field. We have no objection to the choice of this agency, but we feel that reasons for the choice should have been given.

7. We have previously noted the pointlessness of question number two, modified though it is by the words, "according to your present knowledge." Nine out of 10 persons, asked this question, it has been our experience, say they would have to be told advantages and disadvantages and study this information, before they could answer. The whole point of the Citizens Committee is to collect and make public the information that will increase the "present knowledge" of persons in the school district. And the Committee had plans to do just this, before the Board of Education jumped the gun.

The Board of Education can't hope to serve the people of this school district well by sending around loaded questions on central policy matters for hasty overnight voting by school patrons who have not been granted an opportunity to become properly informed.

'Get Your Foot Out Of The Door! . . .'



TIME TO GIVE IS RUNNING OUT

Aged, Lonely, Helpless Need Cheer

Cold weather brings thoughts of the needy, of the poor and the forgotten as Christmas draws near. At the VFW post home, things are busy as more and more items of food, toys and warm clothing are brought in. But still there are baskets waiting to be filled.

The Christmas program, carried on by the John Boyd Post, under the leadership of Hubert Cameron, depends on community generosity and this is one time when that ominous phrase, "It is later than you think," is especially fitting. Only four shopping days left!

Again the request has gone out for donations of money instead of, or even accompanying, a gift. Because of the many duplications in food items and the corresponding lack of others, it is better to have the buying done by the committee. So far this has worked well, but there is still need and, as it takes time to do the buying, that need must be met soon, or Santa will be late, or even absent, in some homes.

And time flies. A check, made out to the VFW Christmas Cheer Fund and mailed to P. O. Box 226 or taken to the post home on N. W. Broad St. will be put to good use.

Here are a few of the families, all certified as needy by the County Welfare Department, who look to this VFW project for what little happiness Christmas may bring:

FATHER DISABLED

In a family of six, the father, 53, is disabled; the mother is mentally deficient. There are four little girls: the oldest in the fifth grade, then a third grader, the next in the second and a little tot not yet in school. They live a mile or more from a main road and they've been in a sad way for some time. Their first home was a shack built by the father using tin cans for the roof. Later he acquired a house, tore it down and rebuilt it on his own land. And then his health broke down. This is a pathetic little group, seemingly hopeless, yet perhaps hope will spring up if help in the form of Christmas cheer can be given. And, later, perhaps something more can be done for the children.

NO SUPPORT

Here's a mother with five little ones, with ages ranging from one to ten. The father deserted his family several months ago, leaving them with no means of support. Much is needed but even a small Christmas basket will help, especially with a word of good cheer.

NOT LIMITED

Between the laughing and the weeping philosopher there is no opposition; the same facts that make one laugh make one weep. No wholehearted man, no sane art, can be limited to either mood. —GEORGE SANTAYANA

cheer.

IN PRISON

Another mother is hoping for toys and clothes for her little child. The father is in prison: things look mighty bleak.

THEY'RE HOPEFUL

Two boys in a foster home, without relatives who can help, nevertheless look hopefully for the coming of Santa. Let's not let them be disappointed.

IN NURSING HOMES

Others on the Welfare lists are the inhabitants of the eight nursing homes in the county. Each one should be remembered, with those having no relatives to bring gifts receiving something special.

These old people are among the

loneliest and saddest, more often than not, whiling away their last days just marking time, with nothing to look forward to. Christmas time can be an especially sad time for them unless Santa is prodded to send his reindeer flying in their direction.

CHILDREN, TOO

This goes for the children in homes, too. Baskets are sent to the training schools, to Samaritans Manor, to the mental institutions. A bit of prettiness, a box of candy, something good to eat: life will look brighter.

And isn't that what happens to all of us at Christmas Time? Warmth steals in, the sun shines brighter because of kind thoughts and the Christmas cheer they bring.

COMMUNITY ATTITUDE IMPORTANT

Conant Study Points Out Importance of School Size

Much of the impetus for activity by the recently formed Citizens Committee to Study Long-range School Planning, in Southern Pines, has been provided by Dr. James B. Conant's famed nation-wide study, "The American High School Today," published in 1959. Following are some of the key thoughts from Dr. Conant's book, reprinted here to stimulate interest in the new committee's work.

I have already defined the comprehensive high school as a high school whose programs correspond to the educational needs of all the youth of the community . . . I early became convinced that a high school must have a graduating class of at least 100 to function adequately as a comprehensive school . . .

Can a school at one and the same time provide a good general education for ALL the pupils as future citizens of a democracy, provide elective programs for the majority to develop useful skills, and educate adequately those with a talent for handling advanced academic subjects—particularly foreign languages and advanced mathematics? The answer to this question would seem to be of considerable importance for the future of American education . . .

I am convinced small high schools can be satisfactory only at exorbitant expense . . . If a school has a twelfth grade of only forty, and if indeed only a quarter of the group can handle the advanced subjects effectively, instruction in mathematics, science and foreign languages would have to be provided for a maximum of ten students . . . Wide academic programs are not likely to be offered when the academically talented in a school are so few in number. The situation in regard to the non-academic elective programs in a small school is even worse. The capital outlay for equipment as well as salaries of the special vocational instructors adds up to such a large figure in terms of the few enrolled as to make vocational programs almost prohibitively expensive in schools with a graduating class of less than one hundred . . .

I should like to record at this point my conviction that in many states the number one problem is the elimination of the small high school by district reorganization . . . Citizens who wish to improve public education might well devote their energies to mobilizing opinion in behalf of district reorganization directed toward the reduction of the number of small high schools.

The academically talented student, as a rule, is not being sufficiently challenged, does not work hard enough, and his program of academic subjects is not of sufficient range . . . A correction of this situation in many instances will depend upon an altered attitude of the community quite as much as upon action by a school board or the school administration . . .

Grains of Sand

Gift Wrappings. . . grrrrr

What's happened to the stuff you need to wrap up your presents?

Gone is the fine glossy paper covered with green holly leaves and red berries, gone the rolls of floating angels or chimney-climbing Santas and galloping reindeer. Gone is the bright red paper with stars or snowflakes. Instead we are offered pink paper. PINK. Of all hateful colors for Christmas. Shrieking of beauty parlors, stuck-up little floozies, that awful jello, the color of a bad valentine.

There's that. . . . PINK and there's BLUE. Not nearly so bad yet, after all, totally inappropriate. Who wants blue at Christmas time? Blue is for little girls or good little ponies; or the late lamented Queen Mary's hats. Imagine Santa in a blue suit, for heaven's-sake!

And now the tags. They have suffered almost as severe a decline. Either there is no room to write what needs to be written or the string is so thread-like you can't see it—or ever find it again if it falls off—which it always does because it's that silvery stuff that won't hold a knot and flies into the air if you so much as take hold of it.

Some of the tags are meant to be stuck on. Well, you can do about four of those and then the stickum tastes so awful you have to stop. Quite often you don't stop in time and, in a dizzy fog, you stick them on the wrong presents.

Then you quit for the day. Grrrrrr.

For GRAINS'S feelings about cellophane and all other untearable, unopenable, ungettridable wrappings we refer you to the last 10 or 20 Christmas issues of this newspaper.

Why Not?

Industry Seekers Committee: couldn't you get busy on this? The current Christmas tree business is a pretty big thing: some 85 million is the present retail figure for the U. S. it is reported. Why buy trees from Canada and the Yankees when we can grow them here? Why not, also, horn in on some of those millions?

Said a Mouthful

Said Alexander Woolcott to Harpo Marx:

"You are a much wiser man than I am. I have nothing to say either, but you have sense enough to keep your mouth shut."

Chicken Fatigue

Writes the Southeastern Poultry Times: "Many consumers report that chicken, fried, baked, barbecued, or boiled, still tastes like chicken."

And why not? It IS chicken, isn't it? What's the matter with chicken?

Doesn't everybody like chicken? But we won't argue the point. It comes direct from the horse's mouth—in this case the chicken's beak—and a remarkable revelation it is, coming from such a source. The S. P. Times frankly states that people are tired of chicken and they are frantically urging everybody to think of ways to take the chicken taste out of chicken.

Nonsense! No soap, Poultry Times! We'll go right on eating chicken, thank you, and, for choice, broiled, all crispy at the edges, tender and juicy in the middle; throw in a few mushrooms if you want to dress it up, or a pile of rice with sour cream gravy; serve it with corn fritters: it's still the chicken that counts.

Tread Softly

"One of the most charming of the Mohammedan saints used always to walk barefoot out of respect for earth, the carpet of God."

Freya Stark

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