

THE NEWS RECORD

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF MADISON COUNTY

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Hunt: Staff Supported Larry Leake

Gov. James B. Hunt acknowledged Wednesday of last week that his Western North Carolina office had played a part in the controversial nomination of attorney Larry B. Leake of Asheville to fill the vacancy created by the death of state Sen. I.C. Crawford.

While denying that he took a personal hand in the nomination, Hunt said the staff of the western office and some of his friends in the mountains "did get involved in helping select the nominee because they had worked very closely with him in the party as he was state president of the Young

Democrats." Leake narrowly edged out former state Sen. Clyde M. Norton of Old Fort as the candidate to fill the created vacancy.

Hugh B. Stevens of

Asheville, manager of Hunt's western office, said that neither he nor his assistants worked for Leake's nomination.

"The only one I talked to was Gary Childers, and I state

emphatically that I never asked him which way he was going to vote," Stevens said.

The district is made up of Buncombe, McDowell, Madison and Yancey counties. The nominee was picked by an

eight-man committee — two members from each of the four counties.

When a speculative article Saturday morning disclosed that Leake would be the nominee, a small group went to work to try to swing the Senate seat to Norton who was squeezed out in the redistricting that put Buncombe in with McDowell

All of the votes of one member of the committee from Buncombe and the votes of the two members from McDowell could have put Norton in by one vote, and Norton supporters thought they could win when D.J.

"Jack" Woody of Candler said he would join them.

But three hours of negotiating by telephone with F.H. Hughes of Marion and Roy Burgin of Old Fort went down the drain after one of Hunt's lieutenants vetoed the plan, according to sources in Asheville. Hughes and Burgin declined to join Woody in voting for Norton.

Hunt said when his people from the mountains called in, they would generally talk to Joe Pell, his patronage chief, and that he never was directly involved in the campaign.

"I did not tell them who to get behind. They were involved locally in politics," Hunt said.

Hunt was told at his news conference Wednesday where the selection of Leake to succeed Crawford was discussed that Buncombe County Democratic Party Chairman Joseph C. Reynolds has called the nomination a "100 percent Jim Hunt and Zeno Ponder show." Ponder, Madison County political leader, has said that Leake was his candidate but denied that the governor was involved in the campaign.

But not only is Ponder a backer of Leake, who is a

native of Madison County and still serves as attorney for the county, he would not be happy to see Norton get the Senate seat.

Ponder had apparently won a Senate seat in a Democratic contest with Norton in 1964, but the State Board of Elections turned up widespread elections fraud in Madison County and awarded the nomination to the McDowell County candidate.

Hunt indicated again that he was "vaguely aware" of a scrape Leake has with the law in 1976 in which he was charged with making obscene telephone calls to a young girl, but said he was "under the impression that there really wasn't that much to it."

"We did caution them to be very careful — that this was a situation that would be a problem" Hunt said of his people who were working for Leake's nomination.

"And again, they were making the decision in terms of who they thought was best, and whether he would be an acceptable kind of person — whether they thought there would be an embarrassment to such an extent that it would harm his (Leake's) ability to serve," Hunt said.

Hunt said the selection of Leake was the committee's decision, and "it's not a matter of whether I'm satisfied with it. I think he has ability. I think he can do a good job," Hunt said.

Asked by a reporter if he knew two of the committeemen, Gary Childers and Robert L. "Bobby" Edwards, are state employees, Hunt said he did not. Childers is a Buncombe County District Court magistrate, and Edwards — who was chairman of the selection committee — is superintendent of Madison County schools.

Hunt said Childers works for the Judicial Department and Edwards for the Department of Public Instruction, and does not come directly under his command.

Hunt said there is no question in his mind about Leake's ability to perform the duties of a senator, but he did talk to him before the oath of office was administered "about the effect of the publicity on his effectiveness."

But as far as the actual appointment is concerned, Hunt said that after the eight member committee made the nomination he had no choice

Recreation Forum Set For Feb. 15

A public discussion of recreation possibilities for the French Broad River in Madison County will be held in Hot Springs at 7 p.m. Feb. 15, in the Hot Springs elementary school. Representatives from several local agencies will be present as well as officials from the recreation branch of the TVA.

The public is cordially invited.



MARSHALL'S Main Street as it appeared last Saturday morning in front of the residence of Mrs. Carl Stuart. Snow was much

deeper in other parts of the county which forced postponement of schools. (Photo by Jim Story)

Morley Appointed Director

The Madison County Recreation Commission has announced the appointment of a new recreation director for the county. He is Kevin Morley, a resident of Hot Springs originally from Cape Cod, Mass.

Morley has been in the county for two and a half years having initially served as a volunteer worker at the Catholic Church in Hot Springs with duties including those of hostelkeeper at the hikers' hostel and librarian at the grammar school. A graduate of Brown University in Providence, R.I., Morley has had a lifelong interest in recreational activities and hopes to develop a year round recreation program for Madison County.

He has also participated in football and track and field on both the high school and college level and enjoys coaching.

Morley also stated that a major influence in his life was the 320-mile hike that he and his wife took on the Appalachian Trail in 1976. It was on that hike that they first came to Hot Springs and were offered the positions as volunteer workers.

He is also interested in drawing, music and poetry and sees these activities as valid recreational pursuits. Other jobs he has held include heavy construction work, airport employment, factory work, landscaping, farming and housepainting.

He and his wife, Laurie, hope to continue living in Hot Springs with their son, Nathaniel.

New Tags

Vehicle Registration Lags, Deadline Nears

In addition to being cold, February may also be a costly and worrisome month for many North Carolinians, according to the Division of Motor Vehicles of the state Department of Transportation.

Prospects of standing in long lines or receiving traffic citations for operating vehicles not properly registered may face some citizens, said Elbert L. Peters Jr., commission of Motor Vehicles.

"During the first two weeks of the registration renewal period this year, about 200,000 fewer license plates and stickers had been sold compared to 1978," Peters said, noting that "despite excellent coverage by the news media on the advantages of purchasing early, approximately 36 percent fewer tags and stickers have been sold this year in this initial 14-day period." Sales began Jan. 2.

"But there are indications that sales have picked up during the past two weeks,"

he said. "We encourage vehicle owners to purchase their tags or stickers now while the lines are usually short."

Peters said owners who have not received a 1979 renewal card should notify the motor vehicles division immediately by telephone at (919) 733-6505 between 8:30 a.m. and 10 p.m. Monday through Friday. A renewal card will be issued and mailed to the vehicle owner.

Stickers or tags may be purchased at branch offices or through the mail from the Division of Motor Vehicles, 1100 New Bern Ave., Raleigh 27697. Peters said the agency cannot guarantee delivery of tags or stickers ordered through the mail after Feb. 1.

"If owners receive their renewal card after Feb. 1, they should make their purchases at a nearby branch agency," said Peters, noting that there are more than 100 locations across the state.

Owners who have not received renewal cards also

may purchase 1979 tags or stickers with last year's card. To save time, Peters suggested owners should line through any incorrect information and print in corrected material prior to going to the branch agency.

Failure to display 1979 stickers or tags by midnight Feb. 15 is a misdemeanor.

Leake Named To Committees

Lt. Gov. Jimmy Green announced committee assignments Wednesday of last week for Sen. Larry B. Leake of Asheville, who replaced the late Sen. I.C. Crawford in the General Assembly from the 26th Senate District.

Leake will serve on the Criminal Justice Committee, Alcoholic Beverage Control, Judiciary III, Human Resources, Wildlife and Finance.

Sign-Up / Program To Assist Farmers With Problems

Do you have a pollution or water conservation problem on your farm? Have you considered the amount of soil loss from your farm each year?

An announcement by W.B. Zink, County Executive Director for the Madison County ASCS has been made for the 1979 Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP) sign-up to begin Feb. 12 and will continue through March 2. During that period the office will be close Feb. 19, in observance of a National

Holiday.

Zink stated that the 1979 ACP for Madison is aimed at solving High Priority problems as identified by the County ACP Development Group and is designed to help farmers reduce soil loss, conserve water, and solve other conservation and environmental problems.

He emphasized that practice which has been started prior to approval by the County Committee is not eligible for cost-share payment. "This is a change from prior years," said Mr. Zink.

Zink added that under the ACP program cost-sharing is designed to assist farmers in solving conservation problems by installing conservation practices that would not otherwise be carried out. A list of practices under the ACP is available at the county office.

In conclusion he stated that immediately after the sign-up period ends, all requests for cost-sharing will be reviewed

by the county committee for eligibility and notification will be mailed to each eligible farmer. The County Committee and Zink would like to encourage anyone who has a high priority problem which needs solving to reduce

pollution and conserve soil and water to visit the ASCS Office during the sign-up from Feb. 12 thru March 2.

ASCS Office hours are Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. except national holidays.

Madison Girls Make Little Mac Tourney

The Madison High School girls' basketball team will participate in the Little Mac conference tournament which starts next Monday night in the Madison gymnasium. The opponents for the opening round are not yet known but will be paired following games this Friday night. The Madison girls, under the direction of Ricky McDevitt, coach, are now in second place

in the standings with 8 victories and only four losses. North Buncombe girls are on top of standings with a 12-0 record.

The top three teams, at present North Buncombe, Madison, and Hendersonville, gain automatic state playoff berths.

The admission to the tournament is \$1.50 per person.

Leake Controversy-- A Two-Sided Coin

By JIM STORY

There are two sides to a coin.

For that reason this week's column will deal with the recent widely publicized appointment of Larry Leake as state senator from the 26th District.

Many persons have voiced their opinions that Larry, a native of Madison County, should not have been chosen to succeed the late I.C. Crawford. Some contend that the other candidates for the post were more qualified and had more experience in government for this important post. Some stated that Larry was too young. The main objections to his appointment were based on the uncovering of charges against the Asheville attorney concerning an objectionable phone call to a young girl in 1976. This charge, in addition to citations of highway driving violations, have resulted in widespread publicity concerning his appointment.

Larry admits he acted stupidly and stated, "I don't think people are so cruel that they will typecast me for an act of stupidity. I don't think that reflects as much on my morals as it does on my intelligence."

This writer does not condone the admitted "mistakes" of Larry, but who is it who has not made mistakes?

I wonder how many members of the legislature have never been given a speeding citation or some sort of citation for "misbehavior"?

As to those who objected to his appointment due to lack of experience I would ask how can a person gain experience if he does not have the opportunity to serve?

I'm certain that Larry realizes his mistakes and from past experiences will not again be involved in such "stupid" actions as "objectionable" phone calls. As to his driving habits, I feel that Larry will be more careful on the accelerator. However, I'm

sure he will exceed the 55 mph at times like all of us do.

Most of the criticism, however, has been about the system or method used in allowing an eight-member 26th District senatorial executive committee to name Leake to the state Senate.

Others have voiced strong objections in that they (the public) were not allowed to voice their choices before the committee made its decision. Still others placed the blame on Gov. Hunt, Zeno Ponder and other Democratic leaders and politicians.

Perhaps the Legislature will look into the situation and come up with a more popular and satisfactory procedure in selecting successors in the future.

Now that Larry has been confirmed as state senator, let's give him a chance to serve. If he does a good job, fine. If he fails, voters will have an election in the future to express their feelings.

Laurel Center Fund Drive Is Organized

A committee has been formed to organize and conduct a fund drive in the Laurel areas to raise the necessary matching funds for a new Laurel Medical Center.

This committee has met several times organizing the drive, now scheduled for early March.

According to Dennis Tweed, chairman of the Fund Drive Committee, a goal of \$10,000 has been set. This amount is necessary to match a \$120,000 Appalachian Regional Commission Grant, pending successful application.

Another meeting has been set for Feb. 12, at 7 p.m. at Laurel School to discuss the drive with community volunteers who will be needed to carry out the project.

Tweed stressed that it was important for everyone who is interested in helping the community get this much needed facility to attend the meeting Monday evening.

Other members of the committee are: Mrs. Oleta Shelton, Mrs. Tootsie Gunter, Mrs. Ada Jean Shelton, Mrs. Beula Adams, Raymond Cantrell, L.A. Zimmerman, Mrs. Carol Gunter, Mrs. Helen Shelton, and Mrs. Jessie Franklin.

THE REV. KENNETH LYNCH, pastor of the Fairview Baptist Church, Lenoir, S.C., has accepted the pastorate of the Marshall Baptist Church. He filled the pulpit here last Sunday and will preach his first sermon as pastor on March 4.