

# Viewpoints

## Local systems need outside aid to refurbish schools

The report last week from state architects and engineers was both good and bad for the Hoke County school system.

The report was bad in that it pointed out that two schools should be phased out in the next five years and replaced by larger modern facilities. The new structures are expected to cost about \$10 million.

On a more positive side the report, which was an intensive survey of the structural condition of the schools, was not as bad as local officials had expected. No school in the county was recommended to be closed immediately, and most of the facilities in the system were considered to be in pretty good shape.

However the architects also pointed out that to replace the two facilities and to put the county's other schools in top condition, the price tag could run as high as \$20 million.

The architects' report will be one of many factors considered by a group of 20 county residents who are studying the physical condition of the schools. The committee is targeted to make a recommendation by May 1. It will be their task to figure out how the already overburdened Hoke County taxpayers can improve the quality and condition of the schools and meet the financial challenge needed to complete the work.

If this county had a lower tax rate, the task of meeting the physical needs of the educational system might be easily solved with a bond issue.

With our present per capita income and under our current tax structure, a bond issue, which would double the local burden, is not only unaffordable, but unrealistic to propose.

### Editorials

Committee members are therefore left to come up with alternative plans which will spread available monies as far as they will stretch and extend the burden over as long a period as possible. Whatever the recommendation, it will probably mean an increase in local support needed for the schools and an increase in property taxes.

If this county's campaign to increase the local tax base by attracting new industries here is successful, some of the costs of upgrading the schools will be defrayed, but it is unlikely that effort will bring help in time to ease the current problem.

Hoke County's situation is not unique. Many other North Carolina counties face the same problem of not having enough local dollars to restore and maintain the quality of the local school systems.

It is clear that Hoke County and others in North Carolina must turn to state government for assistance. New revenue sources must be tapped, and more of the burden of maintaining the schools must be shifted away from the local taxpayer.

This election year offers Hoke County's and other local officials an opportunity to put pressure on state and legislative candidates to get the issue of improving the condition of North Carolina's schools on the agenda for the next fiscal budget.

If the matter is not addressed soon, this state's

schools are destined to fall into mediocrity, because local taxpayers can no longer meet the needs.

## Tobacco tax for schools' funding

The handwriting is beginning to appear on the wall for the tobacco industry.

Major U.S. cities are passing tough smoking laws, some airlines are considering a ban on lighting up on flights, the American Cancer Society and Lung Association are cranking up heavy "quit smoking" national ad campaigns and Congressional committees are moving to eliminate or reduce federal subsidies paid to tobacco farmers.

Even some of this state's church organizations are expressing concern about the hazards of smoking.

The ad campaigns and the warnings from the American Medical Association are working. Fewer people are smoking and cigarette sales are dropping.

In some California cities, including San Francisco, new laws ban smoking in conference and meeting rooms, classrooms, auditoriums, restrooms, medical facilities, elevators and hallways. The law requires companies to establish "no smoking" work areas and makes employers liable for fines up to \$500 per day for any viola-

tions of an employee's right to work in a smoke-free environment.

Although there are differing opinions, researchers are finding more and more evidence that inhaling second-hand smoke is hazardous.

The courts and the medical community are supporting the views, and before long lighting up may become so legally difficult that many more will quit smoking.

All these factors do not paint a bright future for North Carolina's multi-million dollar tobacco business, or for this county's \$6 million flue-cured leaf crop.

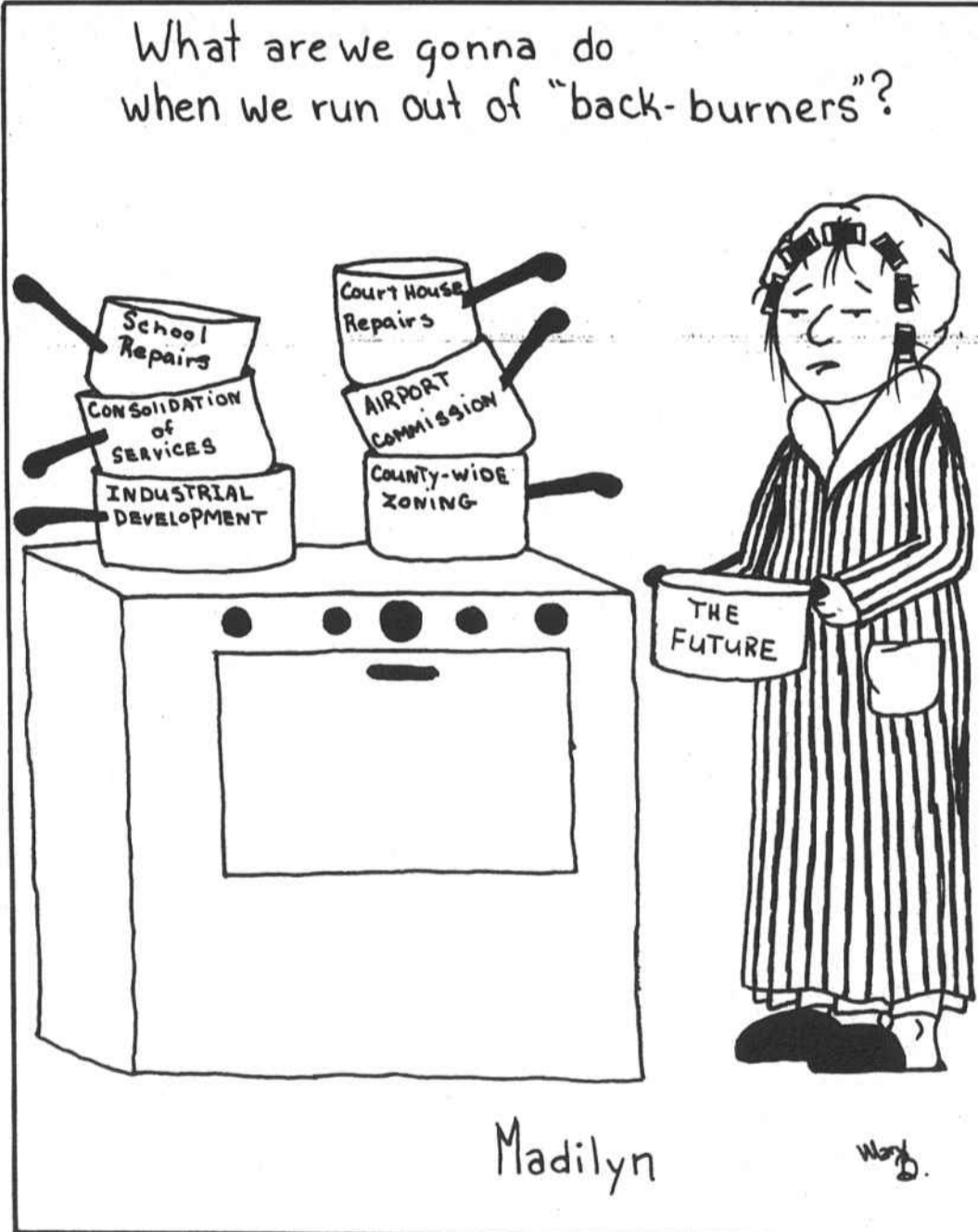
Senators Helms and East, along with other members of the state's Congressional delegation, think that ending the 16-cents federal tax on cigarettes will correct the problems for the tobacco industry.

We disagree. The lifting of the tax may slow the decline, and might temporarily pick up sales, but the move will not heal the tobacco industry's ills.

Perhaps a smart move on the part of the North Carolina delegation would be lobbying for an increase in the tax and to have the funds earmarked for the nation's schools.

Those tax revenues could go a long way towards correcting physical deficiencies in the schools and would ease the local tax burden on all property owners, including tobacco farmers and cigarette producers.

The tobacco industry may be nearing its eventual demise, but with the time it has left, tax revenue from cigarette sales could still breathe life in the nation's school systems.



## Who's minding Hoke's past?

By Kay Thomas

Who fought in the skirmish at McPhaul's Mill?

Did Sherman really camp at Bethel Church?

Was there a trolley track up Magnolia Street?

Did Gen. George Patton buy steaks in Home Food?

Are the answers to these questions recorded in any one place in Hoke County?

Recently *The News-Journal* has been attempting to collect old issues for micro-filming. This process would insure that old copies are preserved. There has been an appeal: "Lend us your old papers, we'll carefully copy and return them."

This effort makes one wonder what Hoke County has in written form about its history. And, if it is written, where is it?

During the Bicentennial Celebration oral history was collected. Hoke citizens who

### Looking On

remembered the early days of Raeford — the Raeford Institute and the Medical College — recorded their knowledge.

The history of Raeford and Hoke County is only of about eighty years. The collection of facts and materials should not be too difficult.

In the nineteen-forties, Raeford was full of soldiers and their families. There was a U.S.O. — was it in the depot? There was rationing, knitting for servicemen, special garden projects. Hoke County National Guardsmen went to war. Where is this recorded as our history?

Long before the days of Raeford or Hoke County, the land was here and people lived around our "pine barrens." Antioch, McCain, Longstreet, Rockfish — all have their loving historians who could share what they know.

There are citizens who now honor Revolutionary and Confederate ancestors. They must have geneologies and compiled materials that would be of interest to the general public.

Families have old deeds, letters, photograph albums, treasured copies of *Lumber River Scots*. There should be some way of sharing that could insure the safety of prized items and yet enable others to learn from them.

Maybe a "Sharing Day" could be arranged. Perhaps there is an organization, agency, or business that could sponsor one grand gathering where folks could come and show things they have saved.

A home file could record more about old Raeford homes. Where is it written that Mrs. Williford (who gave part of his name to Raeford) lived in one house on Main Street while he built another?

Whatever the plan, Hoke County needs to get to work now on its history.

## Letters To The Editor

### Absenteeism article needed compassion

To the Editor:

I was shocked when I read Sherry Matthews' article regarding Mina Townsend's absenteeism from a number of meetings of the Board of Education. I thought of the old saying, "circumstances alter cases."

Surely Sherry did not know of the deep sorrow that Mina endured during the past year. Instead of the article implying lack of interest on Mina's part, compassion would have caused the writer to mention her reason for being absent.

Then, I thought maybe we are

all too prone to criticize others without knowing the circumstances involving them. Maybe, if we knew, we would be less critical and more forgiving.

Irene D. Thrower

### Animals are suffering while officials dawdle

To the Editor:

This is to inform the residents of this area that apparently our County Commissioners have absolutely no sympathy at all for the cruel treatment that some of the

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## Keeping politics in yard and candidates home is a dilemma

By Warren Johnston

I sat out in the yard last week. There was one of those brief winter spells of bright weather. The yard seemed like a good place to sit and think about politics.

The practice is not unknown, and I knew there had been plenty of historical precedent, in case someone asked me what I was doing.

Even my grandmother used to push it. She was a member of one of those strong national movements which advocated leaving political thinking out in the yard, along with whiskey drinking and cigar smoking.

"If you're going to talk about politics, you can just go on out in the yard. There's no need to have

that sort of thing in the house," my grandmother used to say.

Throughout history, there have been differing opinions on the best yard posture to assume when indulged in political thought.

One strong national group supports fence sitting as the best way to achieve the highest level of thinking, while others lean towards standing firm.

I prefer to sit in a chair. It's a good deal more comfortable.

Last week, I had been in the yard about 30 minutes when my dog Calhoun wandered up.

"What are you doing, thinking about politics again?" Calhoun asked, hunkering down beside my chair.

"Don't you think somebody

### The Puppy Papers

might think that you are strange, sitting out here in the middle of winter?"

I had not thought about politics since last fall, but now that the campaigns were heating up for the spring primaries, it was becoming difficult to keep a clear mind.

"It's gotten worse this year. They're spending more and saying less. That's why I had to come out to the yard early," I said.

"Oh, what are you so worried about? You know they have to keep up with their opposition. If one spends, the rest of them got to spend," he growled, beginning to

gnaw impatiently on the leg of the chair.

"But, they're really going nuts this year. Look at the candidates for governor, and what about Helms and Hunt?" I asked rhetorically, noting that it will cost the winner of the governor's race \$1 million to get elected.

Early estimates also show that Gov. Jim Hunt and Sen. Jesse Helms will probably spend about \$20 million trying to garner the North Carolina Senate seat which is up for grabs.

"I have a hard time understanding why they want to spend so

much money to get a job that pays less than \$100,000 a year.

"Nobody's ever been able to give me a straight answer on that," I said.

"It's the trips they get to take," Calhoun yawned.

During 1983 members of Congress had a great time in Paris at the taxpayers' expense. They took their families, rented limousines for all their kids, stayed in fancy hotels and jumped on the beds.

Once that trip was over, they popped off to the islands for another junket.

"They had to work on their tans for the upcoming campaign," Calhoun said.

"It's a pretty sweet deal serving the public these days," he added.

"That's what worries me, and it seems all one has to do to get the job is spend a lot of money on television ads which blast opponents with unanswerable charges," I told Calhoun.

"If you want to change things, then maybe you should ban political ads. Then they would have to make speeches and run on their records like they used to," he said, wandering off to look for a misplaced bone.

What a silly idea, I thought. Just the kind of thing you would expect from a dog.

As I sat in my chair and watched the sun go down, I wondered who I might get to back me in a bid for Congress. After all, I have always wanted to see Kuala Lumpur.

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