

Opinions

COW BOY



Federal bills clogged Legislature

RALEIGH -- The next time you vote for a U.S. congressman, you might want to find out how he stands on matters that are pending in the North Carolina General Assembly. That's because many of the most important bills that came before the 1985 legislative session were there because of federal mandates.

At least a half dozen major proposals in 1985 came with a federal carrot and stick. The feds said pass this law and North Carolina will get federal funding. Fail to pass the law, and the federal government will cut off funds for highways, child abuse programs or environmental programs.

The state drinking age for beer and wine was raised to 21 under a threatened cut-off of federal highway money. The seat belt law was passed under a federal threat to require air bags that still might drastically increase the price of a car. Federal proposals for changes in North Carolina state laws regarding child support enforcement, salary garnishment for child support, leaking underground storage

tanks and Baby Doe regulations came with other funding threats.

When supporters of a 30-day automatic license revocation for a drunk driving arrest made their case, they cited another potential federal funds cut-off.

"This has been legislation by intimidation," said Sen. Charles Hipps, D-Haywood. Hipps said it was "ironic" that many of these mandates were coming out of President Reagan's administration. He's "doing his best to dismantle the federal government yet he's shifting the burden onto state government."

Hipps is a regular critic of Reagan. But Rep. Trip Sizemore, R-Guilford, is one of his biggest fans. Still, on these questions, Sizemore also criticizes the Reagan administration -- as well as the Congress. "It's not good federalism policy to bludgeon the state legislatures into certain policies that may or may not be suited to the climate of the people of a particular region."

Sizemore sponsored several of the mandated bills. He and



Watching
By Paul T. O'Connor

legislators like Reps. Harry Payne, D-New Hanover, and Charles Evans, D-Dare, said they don't necessarily disagree with the idea behind the bills. They just don't like the way the North Carolina General Assembly was pushed around and they don't think it's a wise method for deciding public policy.

"I don't like the Congress giving us homogenized national anything," Payne said. "You can't homogenize laws for all of us. Iowa and North Carolina are different."

The feds don't work with the states before making these demands, Evans said. "I don't think any of us like being dictated to by the federal government

although in many situations it looks like we dictate to local governments. But it seems to me that we have closer working relationships with local governments than the federal government has with us."

That lack of coordination, Evans said, can mean that the feds are demanding that North Carolina act in a way contrary to the wishes of the people of the state.

But while there's no shortage of legislators who'll complain about violations of states' rights, Payne and Evans are quick to note that some legislators like to hide behind the feds.

In environmental policy, the legislature has tied itself to the feds saying no state regulation can be tougher than a federal regulation. Despite repeated attempts to get that law repealed, it remains on the books. Also, it's obvious that some legislators will cite the federal coercion as a positive force when it serves their purposes.

Highway department seeks revenge on summer traveler

Seeking revenge is one of the greatest weaknesses of the human race. I know of no group who does it better than the men and women of the highway maintenance department.

For all the complaints they receive they reserve the summer months to get their full satisfaction from an unsuspecting public.

Paving roads during rush hours and at quitting time is standard procedure for them. Their method for revenge is ingenious.

For instance, the head knocker will place a member of either sex on an alert position to spot all cars

which have been recently washed. They will then send the cars where the tar and rocks have the most exposure. If the car is not totally covered with tar specks when the motorist reaches safety, the person on alert has not done the job.

Holding the stop sign is delegated to the most nonchalant, even tempered individual on the payroll. A Cheshire cat smile is essential. As one approaches the stop sign this individual gives the traveler instructions with the enthusiasm of a prisoner going to the gas chamber. With the fake forever smile he says: "Drive



Looking On
Raz Autry

carefully please, observe all traffic rules and have a great day."

He is really saying: "I hope your car gets covered in tar and you slide in the ditch."

Recently coming from from a trip to Morehead City, I encountered the maintenance department in all its glory. They made a

pleasant three hour trip into six hours. If making it into one void of any kindness toward one's fellowman was their goal, they were successful.

As I entered the city limits of Kinston they were out in full force. It was 102° and traffic was backed up for five miles in all directions.

One lane is always closed with a lighted arrow denoting the closing. The arrow was hidden behind a maintenance truck just to confuse the motorists. Eager beavers sped by with the swiftness of a hare, always in the closed lane. Driving 90 miles per hour, they come to a screeching halt at the arrow. Their innocent look will fool some self righteous, do-gooder, halo carry-

ing, pretentious, good Samaritan. Invariably, he will let the closed lane cars cut in front of his car. Instead of letting the rule breaker suffer, he enjoys letting those rule followers cuss. When the last car has turned in the lane in front of the tormentor, and you are prepared to move, the do-gooder car won't start.

The ever present stop sign carrier with the Cheshire cat smile steps forward to make bad matters worse. He is going to direct traffic. The traffic he directs are the nuts to your left, who once again have filled up the closed lane.

Just as you start to move forward, the glad hander appears on the scene, known as the pilot car. Knowing there are those who

have waited until the flip of the calendar to signify the start of a new day, only entices the driver of the pilot car to place a sign on the back which states follow me. This is placed on the back of the car for those who can't read. Now he starts to play Richard Petty, gunning the engine and asphyxiating those behind. He dashes forward throwing rocks and smashing windows for miles around.

Finally, escaping the circus and zoo-like atmosphere, the weary traveler moves on. He is safe until the 5 o'clock work force starts home. The maintenance crew has taken a break from 2-5 p.m. After all, it wouldn't be any fun with so little traffic on the road.

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