

# Opinions

## Solons prepare for '86 session



**Watching**  
By Paul T.  
O'Connor

study general areas of legislation like mental health or property taxes.

Sen. Lura Tally, D-Cumberland, headed just such a general area committee. "We wouldn't have gotten any of the day care through without the study committee," she said of the legislature's major day care changes this year.

A study committee gives the legislature and its staff time to really get into an issue. Witnesses are called and they're given enough time to make detailed presentations. Staff researchers have the time to see what other states are doing, to find data on what is real-

ly happening in North Carolina and to read on the subjects. During a six-month session in which a standing committee might only meet for one-hour a week, detailed study is not possible, a number of legislators said.

Rep. Anne Barnes, D-Orange, noted that public input is also greater on study committees. Not all the members are legislators.

Although there are good ideas behind many of these study committees, the usefulness of the committees might be subject to challenge. As Rep. Dave Diamont, D-Surry, noted, many of the committees come up with grand proposals and then lack for someone to push them through the assembly. The sponsors may not get reelected or they may find something more pressing.

Regardless of their worth, the study committee deliberations begin in a few weeks.

## New Coke out taste old restored flavor



**Cliff  
Blue**

### People and Issues

The magazine "Consumer Reports" — a non-profit publication which tests products — recently tested the new Coke against the old, and against Pepsi, with 95 tasters. It also analyzed contents.

Despite the amount of protest registered in the media about the new product of number-one, both the Coke and Pepsi were preferred to the old Coke.

As for analysis, all three contained about the same amount of sugar. There was a difference in taste — and thus flavoring is what the current ruckus is about. (All three are about 99% carbonated water and sugar.)

As for the public's final verdict on taste; the magazine says only time will tell.

**MORE CONGRESSMEN?** ... We read that some political analysts are proposing that membership in the U.S. House be increased from 435 to an undetermined new number — to decrease the number of constituents for each member.

The 435 was established in 1911, the last time membership was increased. At that time, the increase was from 386-435.

The idea behind increases in membership (the first apportion-

ment in 1790 provided for 105 members) is that members give better service when they have fewer constituents to serve.

The trouble many have with present-day suggestions for another 20th century increase is that the House is already unwieldy, with 435 members. Some think it better to provide this number of members with additional deputies or more district offices than to enlarge the House further.

The debate is sure to continue in future years. Today each House member represents almost 550,000 constituents. By 1990, it's estimated each member will represent 575,000. But, then, senators would only represent millions.

The Senate with 100 members, operates more efficiently than the House; Senators enjoy greater freedom of speech and debate.

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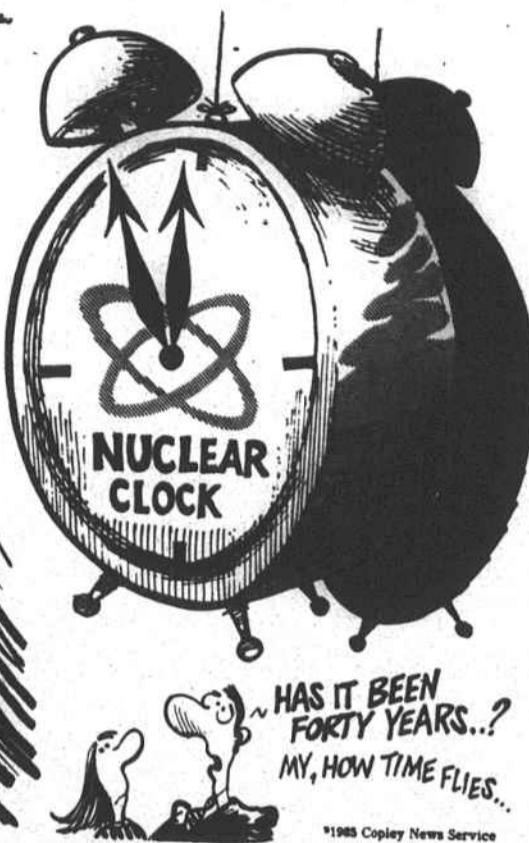
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RALEIGH -- After 24 weeks in Raleigh, legislators no doubt are looking forward to some time at home, at the beach or anywhere else. For many of them, however, there'll be plenty of trips back to the capital before the June, 1986, short session opens.

In a couple of weeks, the legislature's "second season" will open as the dozens of study committees established by the assembly begin work. No less than 60 committees will spend all or part of the next 18 months preparing legislation for introduction to the 1987 General Assembly.

The growing use of study commissions has sparked a number of controversies. Rep. Martin Lancaster, D-Wayne, for example, said the time demanded by study commissions was instrumental in his surprise announcement not to seek reelection in 1986. Lancaster said the study panels were turning the legislature into a full-time body which working people just could not afford to serve in.

Another controversy concerns the money required to run the committees. There will be 17 independent study commissions, and they're slated to cost nearly

\$400,000. The 44 studies planned under the Legislative Research Commission are budgeted at \$150,000.

Given the expenditure of that kind of money, the value of the study commissions has to be appraised. Lancaster, in his statement, noted that their work must often be repeated by standing committees of the legislature once a session begins.

Several other legislators interviewed noted that study commissions are often formed simply as a consolation prize for a legislator who can't get his or her bill through. "They're for bills they don't want to kill, so they send them to a study commission," said Rep. Betsy Cochran, R-Davie. Sen. Marshall Rauch, D-Gaston, said, "Sometimes we do too much. A legislator sees that a bill is going to be defeated and rather than accept that defeat, he gets it made into a study committee and that is absurd."

But the number of study commissions has grown over the years because they do serve a very useful purpose, legislators say. Cochran and Rauch, for example, said that the committees are the best way to

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