

Thru Capital Keyholes

By Bess Hinton Silver

PAY AND POLITICS—A prominent State school official makes the unqualified assertion that local politics is giving the State school system more trouble than the schedule of teachers' salaries. He gave an honest opinion that if teachers were allowed to vote on the proposition of a 20 per cent increase in pay or the abolition of petty politics from the schools that politics would be kicked out by a great majority. Teachers are dropped by local boards for all sorts of ridiculous reasons, ranging from not attending the right church to having "dates" with some young man whose father is in dutch with the politicians controlling the board.

"INTRUSTS" AND THE BUDGET—Astute Raleigh politicians are wondering what is going to happen if R. Grady Rankin, of Gastonia, continues on the Advisory Budget Commission. Mr. Rankin inherited his position on the budget body by reason of being chairman of the State Finance Committee last year. Since that time Mr. Rankin has given up his textile interests and accepted a high executive position with the Duke Power Company. At present he is sitting with the budget body drafting financial recommendations for the coming session of the General Assembly. It has occurred to some observers that recommendations presented by a body containing a member of the power family may not set well with the Legislators, especially from the eastern part of the State. Officials familiar with the splendid legislative and business record of Mr. Rankin do not doubt his ability to work a sound financial plan without favoritism. But many new members of the 1935 Legislature may think differently, or at least that is the fear of many of Senator Rankin's Raleigh friends.

INDUSTRIAL CHAIRMAN—Major Matt H. Allen, chairman of the State Industrial Commission is known to have considerable financial interests in real estate and beach developments at Morehead City and throughout that neck of the woods. The grapevine reports that this holds better prospects for the future than his present place on the State payroll and Raleigh would not be surprised if he stepped down as head man of the Industrial Commission any day. It has already gone far enough to stimulate campaigns in behalf of people who wouldn't mind succeeding him.

SHERIFFS AND ROADS—The high sheriffs of North Carolina do a lot of automobile traveling and they don't relish bumps and mudholes standing in the path of duty. They said as much in a resolution adopted at their annual convention held at Elizabeth City. These strong men of the law went on record as opposed to diversion of highway funds and gave as one of the reasons present conditions existing on secondary roads. The highway commission has the money but can't spend it on maintenance because of handcuffs locked by the last Legislature. A lot of farmers hauling their produce to market by truck will join with the sheriffs. At present the man living off the primary road system is paying a lot of gasoline tax that does him little good beyond the knowledge that the highway fund has a surplus. And that isn't much consolation when lizzie mires up or breaks a spring.

FAST ONE—Governor Ehringhaus stole the show from Commissioner of Agriculture William A. Graham during the tobacco crisis last year but the Commissioner came to bat and hit a home run on cotton last week. The Governor was on vacation when the U. S. Department of Agriculture reported prospects of the shortest cotton crop of the present century. Immediately Mr. Graham announced that he would petition Washington Authorities to allow Tar Heel farmers to sell cotton in excess of Bankhead Law allotments with the tax penalty. It's little strategical moves like that as well as careful campaigning that causes Raleigh to consider Commissioner Graham one of the most astute politicians in the State. Commissioner Graham is the man who threw the monkeywrench that stripped the gears of former Governor O. Max Gardner's short-ballot program in the 1931 Legislature. If you have a hankering to run for a state-wide public office don't make the mistake of failing to take the Commissioner of Agriculture into your accounts.

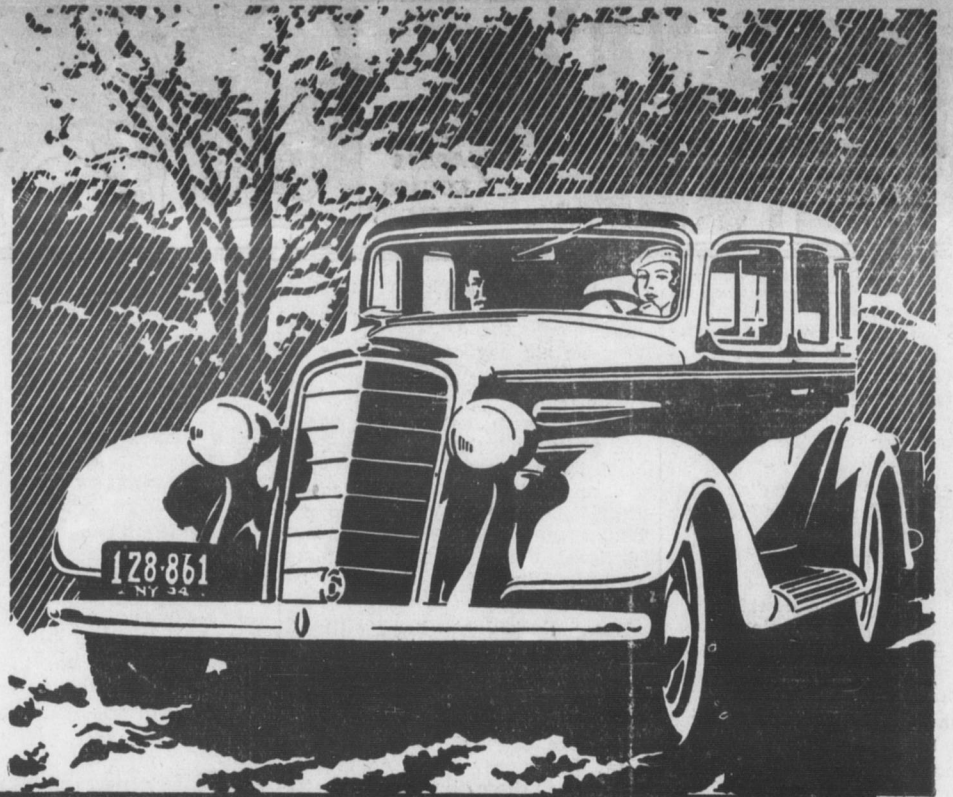
PSYCHOLOGY—One thing largely responsible for public prejudice of corporate interests is that the corporations neither know or care anything about mass opinion. Evidence of this sticks out like a sore thumb in the tobacco companies' refusal to sign the proposed agreement to pay parity prices for the 1934 crop. The companies said the agreement was unnecessary because tobacco was going to bring above parity anyhow. If that is true the companies and not the farmers knew it. The companies could have executed a master stroke by signing the agreement and claiming credit for the high prices now being paid. Their refusal makes the farmers sore and gives the Roosevelt administration full credit for the price boost. That wins votes for Roosevelt and creates public demand for government to take a greater hand in private business.

CAPITAL WAR—Attorney General Dennis G. Brummitt and State Auditor Baxter Durham have both been at war with the State administration for years. Auditor Durham doesn't exhibit his hostility as openly as the Attorney General but it is known in Raleigh that a State of armed truce always exists between the Governor's office and these constitutional offices. During the General Assembly Brummitt and Durham are usually found in the anti-administration camp. They have staged some lively legislative scraps but so far have gained little or no ground.

STARTED SOMETHING—When "Keyholes" revealed that some of Lieutenant Governor "Sandy" Graham's friends would like to see him oppose Attorney General Brummitt in the event Clyde Hoey, of Shelby, runs for Governor in 1936, it started tongues wagging. Capitol Hill agrees that eight years as Attorney General would be a great help to Mr. Graham's political strength. It also agrees that he would have a better chance defeating Mr. Brummitt than Mr. Hoey. One big state daily newspaper got all excited about the idea and devoted quite an editorial to it. But don't be misled. Mr. Graham hasn't abandoned the idea of seeking the gubernatorial nomination as yet.

GREAT DANGER—The only danger with the suggestion that the Ehringhaus administration sponsor resolutions in the early days of the coming Legislature to allocate the majority to the highway surplus to repairing secondary roads and increase teachers' salaries is that some bird might jump up with an amendment to the resolutions stating that he was in favor of better roads and higher salaries but that his vote on the resolution didn't commit him against highway fund diversion or in favor of the sales tax. In that event the amendment and the resolutions would get a lot of votes that wouldn't accomplish a great deal more than to tie the General Assembly in a knot.

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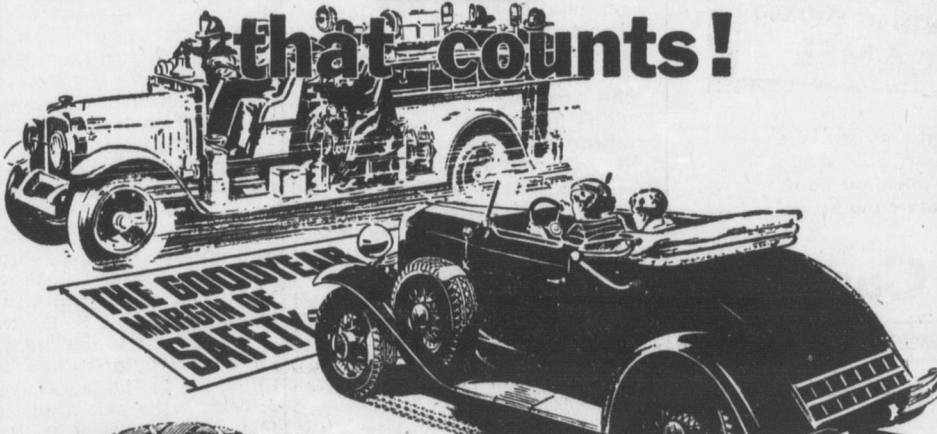
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