

Wets Win Assembly Fight; Major Legislation Is Getting Attention

(Editor's Note: This is the ninth of a series of weekly summaries of the work of the 1949 session of the General Assembly of North Carolina. These summaries are not intended as a report on all legislation, but are confined to discussions of matters of general interest or of major importance.)

The General Assembly paused on Monday and Tuesday to mourn the death of Senator J. Melville Broughton and then returned to the problem of making up its mind on 1949 legislation.

Liquor
Last week HB 270, the liquor referendum bill initially given the best chance of success, was reported unfavorably by a vote of 26 to 4 in the House Propositions and Grievances Committee. Unable to muster one-fourth of the committee membership needed to bring out a minority report, Representative L. A. Martin, introducer of the bill, moved on Thursday of this week to have his bill taken from the unfavorable calendar and presented to the House on its merits. Answering the first roll-call on a liquor bill in several sessions, 54 members voted to revive the bill and 51 voted against removing it from the unfavorable calendar. The motion failed for lack of the two-third vote needed under House rules. No effort has been made to resurrect the Senate referendum bill. It is safe to predict that there will be no state-wide liquor referendum in North Carolina in the next two years.

Just before this action on Thursday, a bill was introduced to permit any incorporated town to vote on the establishment or closing of ABE stores upon the petition of 15 percent of the registered voters. Heretofore the only municipal liquor elections permitted have come as the result of special legislation for particular cities and towns. This

breaking of the county-option pattern is cushioned by the bill's provision that 85 percent of the State taxes collected from stores established under this plan are to be spent for school buildings and 15 percent for Aid to Dependent Children and Old Age Assistance.

Licensing Boards
The licensing of members of various trades and professions has come, in recent years, to be a fruitful source of legislation and a frequent subject of litigation in this state. Most of the furore in legislative hall and court chamber has involved the propriety and legal status of the licensing boards which control entrance into many trades and professions. Just last week the "Governor's bill" to put a public member on each of these bodies met its probable demise in the Senate by the inglorious device of being tabled. Four bills introduced this week indicate the conflicting interests at work in this field. HB 661 would usher into the growing group of vocations with state licensing boards the funeral directors, while HB 713, on the other hand, would see out the plumbing and heating contractors. SB 236 would tighten the licensing, or "registration," requirements of the engineers and land surveyors with the stated purpose of raising their standards sufficiently to insure reciprocal licensing by other states, while HB 684, in the other direction, provides for the licensing without examination of pharmacists licensed by other states who have worked under N. C. pharmacists for periods of 25 years.

Schools
Raleigh this week was immersed in a welter of figures and arguments over the proposed "Foundation Plan" for North Carolina public schools. The Plan was discussed at a public hearing held by the Joint Appropriations and Education Committees on Wednesday, and the net result seemed to be that everyone favored the Plan, but few could agree where the money was coming from. None of the sets of figures passed around among legislators and educators seemed to jibe, the difference being that they approach from different angles the problem of how much money the counties would have to raise under the Plan. One set was based on the assumption that no county would support anything more than the minimum program, and under those figures only 8 counties would have to raise more than \$50,000 more than they raise now, and of these 8 only Gaston and Cabarrus would have to raise over \$200,000 more. Another set of figures was based on the assumption that the counties would continue to supplement the minimum state-supported program in the same ratio that they are now supporting the present program, and under these figures 19 counties would have to raise over \$50,000 more and 7 would have to raise over \$200,000 more. Actually the first set of figures represented the minimum that the individual counties would have to raise, and whatever else were raised would depend on the decision in each county as to how much local supplementation might be desirable.

Whether or not the "Foundation Plan" is enacted, there is indication that other aid to schools will be forthcoming. SB 203, which originally called for the raising of \$50 million from several sources for school plant construction, was rewritten in committee to eliminate all sources but a \$50 million bond issue which would be subject to a vote of the people. Indications are that this bill as amended will become law; if so, each county could receive a maximum of \$500,000 for school buildings under its provisions. If it passes, it would replace both HB 627, which calls for the submission of a similar bond issue, and the Committee Substitute for House bills 3, 4 and 221, which authorizes the appropriation of \$50 million for the same purpose.

Roads and Motor Vehicles
The question of issuance of \$200 million of secondary road bonds moved another step toward a vote of the people on Friday when HB 89, which had been reported favorably by House Finance Committee on Thursday, passed its second reading by a vote of 101 to 2. As reported

out the bill now designates the portion of bond money to be spent in each county based on factors of area, population and mileage and permits the Highway Commission to retain up to 10 percent of the proceeds as an equalization fund for secondary road purposes. Efforts in committee to tie the 1c gas tax increase provided in HB 181 to the bond issue failed, and this bill also passed second reading on Friday. Meanwhile the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee announced that his committee would postpone action on SB 52 linking the bonds and tax increase until the House measures arrived in the Senate. Which version eventually reaches the people depends on the relative strength of the opposing factions—those who think combination is a shotgun marriage and those who view it as placing the tax increase proposal in its proper light.

The introduction on Tuesday of HR 693, authorizing the Governor to appoint a commission to study the sharing of State highway revenues with municipalities, seemed to anticipate the rebuff given the cities on Thursday when the House Finance Committee reported unfavorably HB 54, giving the municipalities 1c of the present 6c gas tax. A few hours later the Appropriations Committee attempted to soothe ruffled feelings by increasing the \$2 million recommended for division to the cities in the next biennium to \$5 million. Another solution embodied in SB 274 would do away with the problem from the municipalities point of view by having the State take over for maintenance all city streets which form a part of the State highway system.

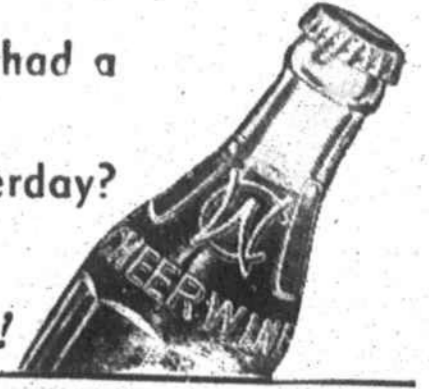
County and Municipality Property Taxes
Two years ago, in answer to pleas from tax supervisors, the General Assembly passed a bill which required businesses engaged in selling merchandise in more than one county (largely chain stores) to file with the tax listing authorities in every county in which they operate a list of all the counties in which they operate, a statement of the value of their tangible personal property in each county, plus a statement of the total value of their goods and merchandise in the whole state. On Wednesday HB 718 was introduced to repeal the 1947 act. SB 239 is equally interesting. This bill, introduced Tuesday night, sets up a new method for assessing the

property of franchise motor carriers. While counties would still take their land and building listings, the carriers would be required to file an annual report with the State Board of Assessment under which that agency would allocate to the counties, townships and municipalities in and through which the particular carrier operates their shares of its property value. This would, in effect place franchise motor carriers in a position similar to that presently occupied by railroads and other utilities with respect to local property taxation.

Young chickens top the list of foods expected to be plentiful throughout North Carolina during March.

Chemical treatment of peanut seed saved Tar Heel farmers nearly two million dollars in 1947, says Howard R. Garriss, plant pathologist at State College.

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