

Dialogue For Aging Senior Power Through The Ballot Box

By Ernest Messer

A united and well organized older population can be a powerful political force. Candidates pay close attention to large groups of voters. Therefore, it is extremely important that older citizens not only register and vote, but become knowledgeable about the issues.

The majority of benefits and services available to the elderly today were won through legislation on both the national and state level. Some of these hard earned elderly programs are now threatened.

The older generation is the fastest growing segment of the population in North Carolina. Yet, many elderly citizens vote either inconsistently or not at all.

In North Carolina, if a registered voter does not vote in one of two successive presidential elections or any election held in between that time, he is eliminated from the voting list. Many older people do not meet these requirements. Only one other age group, 18-25, vote as inconsistently as the elderly.

What do the elderly have to lose? Major social advancements are at stake, such as Social Security, Medicare, Supplement Security Income and the appropriations for the Older Americans Act.

The elderly should protect what they have and seek new and expanded benefits. They should work to

"Swim At Your Own Risk" Ends June 1

North Carolina's 40 state parks and recreation areas will open their swimming facilities and refreshment stands for the summer season June 1. The free ferry at Hammocks Beach will also begin operations that day. All state parks are open from 8 a. m. to 9 p. m., and lifeguards are on duty from 10 a. m. to 6 p. m. For more information, contact Kirk Fuller, State Parks and Recreation, (919) 733-4181.

expand the Homestead Act to cover condominiums, strengthen the Domiciliary Bill of Rights, and seek to make school buses available to older people. In-home services and adult day care should be broadened to keep the elderly at home rather than at institutions.

Equality for the older woman is of particular importance. By the year 2000, there will be 150 elderly women to every 100 elderly men. In light of this, the White House Conference on Aging recommended passage of Equal Rights Amendments to guarantee the rights of older women.

Women do not share equally in social security and pension benefits or in the right to work. Women also face discrimination in pay and job security.

The plight of older women is one of particular injustice. Sixty percent of elderly women receive only about one-half the income of elderly men. They have no retraining rights, no employment rights, and no equal pay rights. Widowed housewives have inadequate retirement income. Many of these older women are among the poorest of the poor.

Senior citizens should exercise their voting rights. Their mature judgement is desired and respected.

The philosopher Plato said, "the penalty for wise men who refuse to take part in the affairs of their government is to live under the government of unwise men."

FAMILY INCOME

In July of 1981, the U. S. poverty threshold for a non-farm family of four was \$8,450. In North Carolina, 17.5 percent of households were below that level.

According to extension family resource management specialists at North Carolina State University, that figure is up from 14.7 percent in

1975.

Per capita income in the state in 1979 was estimated to range from \$4,086 in Avery County to \$8,499 in Mecklenburg, for an average of \$7,382. Per capita income rose in 1980 to \$7,819, but the state had dropped from 39th to 41st in national income ranking status.

New Bridge Tender House Open on Atlantic Beach/Morehead Bridge

RALEIGH-A new North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) bridge tender house on the Atlantic Beach-Morehead bridge was officially occupied on Feb. 23, 1982. The new house replaces the now obsolete one that was built with the bridge in 1952.

NCDOT Secretary W. R. "Bill" Roberson, Jr., said, "The new bridge house, complete with modern equipment and controls, improves DOT's abilities to oversee land traffic and sea traffic. The importance of the bridge to North Carolina's inland waterway system can best be noted in a few statistics. In 1981 the drawbridge opened 5,405 times and allowed 9,592 sea vessels to pass through. During the month of April 1982 alone some 800 sea vessels had already passed through."

The earlier house consisted of two separate structures, a concrete house and a control house. The concrete house was used by the bridge operator when he was not opening or closing the bridge. The control house was located in the center of the swing span, the part of the bridge that opened and closed to allow for the passage of sea vessels.

The current all-in-one structure consists of a new 16 x 20 foot two-story bridge operator's house, a platform and a parking deck. The total cost of the facility is \$314,500. The electrical equipment is located in the bottom story of the house and the control center is located on the top story of the house.

Try a few drops of lemon on the top of liver slices before frying or broiling, to change the flavor.

Raw chicken will keep, properly frozen, for a year.

When preparing salads, tear the greens instead of cutting, to avoid wilting and discoloration.

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