

WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY

NOTE: This is the ninth of a series of weekly summaries prepared by the legislative staff of the Institute of Government on the work of the North Carolina General Assembly of 1953. It is confined to discussions of matters of general interest and major importance.

The 1953 General Assembly can take pride in its record for introducing and processing legislation promptly, but these efforts may be in vain if an early agreement cannot be reached on fiscal policy for the next biennium. Adjournment date seems no nearer and perhaps less certain than a week ago.

About 200 more bills have been introduced in the House than at this stage last session, and the Senate has kept up with its 1951 record. If the Senate's 1953 deadline on local legislation (March 10) holds firm, local legislation formerly introduced by senators in the waning weeks, conceivably either will not be introduced or will be thrown into the already burdened House (Note: the Senate suspended the rule to let in a local

measure on Friday). Major floor debates in both houses this week provide the clue to faster processing of local and non-controversial legislation thus far. It takes only 30 seconds to pass a bill without debate; a contested measure may take hours and clog up the calendars.

Even if the appropriations subcommittee, appointed this week to study and make recommendations on controversial budget items, speeds up approval of the budget bill, definite action on appropriations may be necessary before the finance committee can finish its work. As the legislators went home this week-end, those reluctant to approve further tax increases hopefully waited for final revenue estimates for the next two years as based on tax collections due March 15. If estimates are increased, appropriations increases may be possible without any tax adjustments. If they are not, legislators may receive solid recommendations from the frequent conferences on budget problems being held by Governor Umstead with his staff and legislative advisors, or they may decide to cut appropriations to fit the revenue structure rather than adjust the revenue structure to fit recommended appropriations.

Appropriations and Finance
While set up to receive the more controversial budget items for special study, the group of eight senators and 14 representatives named to the appropriations subcommittee on Wednesday may yet be as all-powerful an arbiter as its 1951 counterpart. Its role was left somewhat in doubt when the full committee refused on Tuesday to refer to the as then-unappointed subcommittee the request of the Hospitals Board of Control for an additional \$2 million above Advisory Budget. Commission recommendations. Wide divergence of opinion on the request developed immediately, and when a compromise was proposed on Wednesday suggesting that only \$1.5 million be appropriated, it was met by a counterproposal suggesting that the Board be permitted to carry over \$600,000 in unused funds. The joint committee then decided that perhaps this item should also be referred for further study. Immediate action by the subcommittee was stalled by the rain-drenched trip to Camp Lejeune on Thursday.

Proposals to revise the tax structure continue to reach the finance committees, but one suggest increases in revenues at a time when additional funds are being requested: SB 289 would permit a husband and wife living together but filing separate income tax returns to split exemptions for dependent children as they wish; HB 758 would remove all license taxes of merchandise vending machines except that of soft drink machines; and HB 776 would require motor vehicle wholesalers to pass on to retail dealers part of the gallon tax credit granted them as an evaporation allowance.

Courts
A controversy which has been developing over how best to provide more judges for our superior courts gave rise to the most spirited floor debate of the session. Those who view redistricting as the best solution tried to postpone House vote on HB 163 (which would add one judge each to 6 critical districts) in order that it might be considered simultaneously with their bill, which had been reported favorably in the Senate. The effort was unavailing, however, as was that of Wake County representatives seeking to include their district among those to receive an additional judge; HB 163 passed the House vir-

tually as introduced. Consideration of the Senate measure has been postponed until next week.

Motor Vehicles and Highway Safety

Even with Governor Umstead's stamp of approval, the 1953 version of a motor vehicle inspection program was quickly killed in the Senate on Friday, the first floor fatality of this General Assembly. After a brief debate between Sen. Bailey (supporting proposed annual inspections by private garages as a means of enforcing existing motor vehicle equipment laws) and Sen. Crew (calling such inspections worthless and calculated to enrich garage owners at motorists' expense), a substantial majority of the Senate in a chorus of "noes" voted down the bill. The House has passed HB 47, which would require that all new motor vehicles (next model or series) be equipped with electrical or mechanical directional turn signals before being registered in the state.

As in the 1951 General Assembly, a controversy over truck weight limits may be taking shape. HB 588 has been introduced to raise the weight limits on most trucks by almost one ton on each axle, while SB 311 would fix new and enforceable penalties for such trucks caught exceeding present axle weight limits, although a 5 per cent tolerance would be allowed. Both the proposed revision of the financial responsibility law (SB 105), designed to increase the number of insured motorists in N. C., and SB 266, envisioning a state-wide driver education program in the public schools, received favorable reports from Senate committees this week, but were re-referred to the appropriations committee for consideration of money problems involved.

Reorganization

Measures dealing with reorganization of state departments and agencies continue to come in, but action on them seems to have slowed considerably. The bill to transfer administration of the prison system from the Highway Commission to a new Department of Prisons promises to be the most controversial. Although introduced by the Governor's brother, Rep. Umstead, it is not an administration measure. Neither, according to one of its introducers, is HB 693, which would authorize the Governor to appoint new members of the State Board of Elections next May rather than in 1954 when present terms expire. The bill giving the Governor similar power over the State Personnel Council still has received no action by the original committee to which it was assigned in February Bills providing for reorganization of the State Ports Authority and for creation of a commission to study reorganization of State government have become law. In opposition to the plan

offered last week, SB 316 completely rewrites the law licensing nurses and nurse training schools in line with the recommendations of the Nurse Examining Board and Nurses Association.

Local Government

Three much-discussed home rule bills have been sifted by the House local government committee which unanimously approved a new version embodying the best features of each. County commissioners would be authorized to fix salaries and expense allowances (within budgeted appropriations) of all county officials but themselves, but no salary now set by legislative act could be lowered during the present office holder's term, nor could salaries be raised or lowered more than 20 per cent in any one year. While many legislators do not favor such a shift of power from Capitol to county, in final form the bill may apply to a substantial number of counties.

Agriculture

Proposals of major importance in agriculture would tighten controls on the sale and distribution of eggs, set up a new system for reporting harvesting information on certain crops, and regulate the sale and distribution of liquid fertilizer.

On March 10 Representative John F. White introduced HB 740, which authorizes Town Council to appoint two police officers to have authority to issue warrants returnable before justice of peace or mayor of Edenton but making it unlawful for either officer to serve any warrant issued by him.

The bill passed the House March 13.

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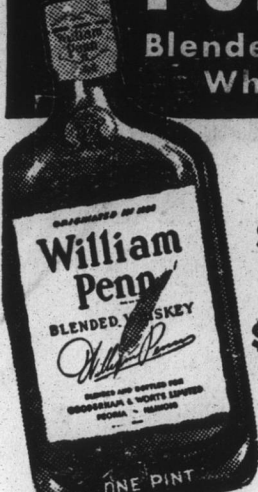
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EDENTON, N. C.

Announcement!

We are pleased to announce that Mr. E. P. Jones is now associated with the Chowan Farmers Exchange, Inc.

Mr. Jones Will Be in Charge of SALES AND SERVICES

Mr. John Parrish, formerly with Carolina Equipment Co., of Raleigh will be foreman of the shop.

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