

## The Carolina Review: Cigarette Tax

SAD DAY?...As might be expected, the cigarette tax hike was about the only topic of conversation in Raleigh last week. Virtually no one could find anything good to say about the 100 percent increase - from 8 cents to 16 cents per pack.

Gov. Hunt called it a "sad day for the tobacco farmers."

At the same time, very little was being said about other aspects of the \$100-billion federal revenue bill which included increases in the airfare tax and a tripling of telephone rate taxes.

Sens. Helms and East, as they promised, last week changed their original okay of the bill and voted against the increase. Both cited the still - present cigarette tax as the primary reason for voting against the bill.

Apparently, the two senators' negative votes came belatedly - since most observers feel the Senate tandem's original "yes" vote, on a bill including the cigarette tax, guaranteed the rate hike.

Obviously there is a lot of truth to that observation. The first vote was so close that "no" notes by Helms and East would have killed the bill in the Senate.

"They could have stopped it dead in its tracks," said one aid to the governor.

HOW BAD WILL IT HURT?...All that's left now is to figure just how badly North Carolina's tobacco economy will be hurt by the tax.

Hopefully, the answer is

not as bad as the doom-dayers say - tobacco farmers are a resilient lot. But if the "working" crowd in a Raleigh coffee shop is any indication, tobacco consumption will definitely drop.

"Hell, what choice have I got?" asked one exasperated smoker.

On the other end of the tobacco economy, no doubt tobacco companies will be trying to hold their costs down to absorb some of the tax increase. That doesn't mean they will cut their price tag, but will only try not to raise prices for awhile (that is, above the 8 cents tax).

The tobacco companies can hold their prices down, of course, by purchasing lower cost foreign tobacco - instead of North Carolina leaf.

"You can look for the tobacco companies to dispute this, but it'll happen," said one state economist.

A STATE TAX?... Potential revenues for the state budget may also have suffered a direct hit by the federal tax. For the past couple of years, there has been a growing sentiment in the N.C. General Assembly (and some say among the consumer) to raise the state cigarette tax, now at two cents per pack. By no means was the sentiment overwhelming, but an increase was a distinct possibility for the very near future.

While Gov. Jim Hunt has not supported a cigarette

tax increase, Hunt aide Brent Hackney agreed that source of revenue is lost for awhile.

"Even if you favored a couple of cents increase for the state cigarette tax," Hackney said, "you can forget it now - we've been pre-empted by the federal government."

### Mrs. Covington Is Leukemia Chairman

The Leukemia Society of America, N.C. Chapter, announced today that the 1982 Cycle for Life Chairman for Edenton will be Mrs. Grace Covington.

The Leukemia Society of America is dedicated towards the conquering of leukemia. Proceeds from the Bike-A-Thon will be used in research and patient-aid.

At the present time the Leukemia Society of America, North Carolina Chapter has \$459,935 in research projects granted in the state of North Carolina. These research projects are being conducted at Duke University and the

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## Eye Problems Are Not Restricted To Any One Age Group

For students of all ages, a return to the classroom means increased use of the eyes, making the medical eye exam a wise investment, says the N.C. Society of Ophthalmology.

Dr. Marshall S. Redding, president of the group of more than 250 medical doctors specializing in eye care, said, "Eye problems are not restricted to any one age group. However, it's particularly important that kindergartners and first graders have their eyes examined before the age of six."

The two major eye problems affecting young children are "strabismus" or crossed eyes, a condition in which the eyes turn in or out, and amblyopia, more commonly known as "lazy eye" when one eye is favored over the other.

A patch over the good eye is often the prescribed treatment for amblyopia, forcing use of the lazy eye, and the treatment is more effective when used at an early age.

"There is no age when some improvement can't

occur with this method," said Dr. Redding, "but the older the child, the less successful patching generally is."

Dr. Redding pointed out that many children are not aware that their seeing ability is less than perfect, either because certain conditions show no apparent symptoms or because the child has no reference point and doesn't realize his vision is impaired.

Many undetected eye problems show up when school begins, said Dr. Redding, because of new demands placed on the child and his eyes. Most of a pre-schooler's effort is with games, toys and books

within arm's length, requiring the child to concentrate on objects relatively close to the eye. In school, these youngsters must focus on audio-visual material and blackboards at greater distances and teachers spot problems.

Although nearsightedness may develop at any age, it is often discovered in children from third to sixth grades when glasses are needed to see the blackboard. Glasses rather than contact lenses are recommended for this age group, ophthalmologists say, because of the care contact lenses require.

"There is no scientific evidence," Dr. Redding said, "that reading in dim

light will harm a child's eyes anymore than there is proof that reading problems are due to poor eye coordination which can be helped by special exercises. The verdict is still out on lengthy sessions spent at computer terminals," he added, "but I anticipate no permanent damage from such activity."

"There are certain stages in a child's development -

pre-school, junior high and late teens when a medical eye examination is particularly important to check conditions which can lead to severe eye damage," concluded Dr. Redding. "A child's eyes should be checked at any age, however, when his appearance, complaints or behavior indicate there may be a problem."



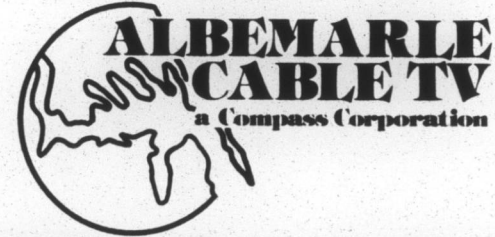
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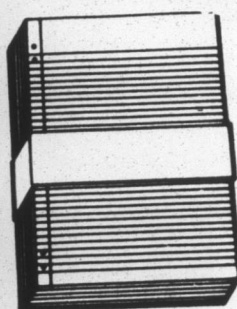
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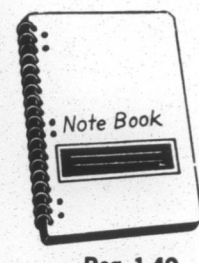
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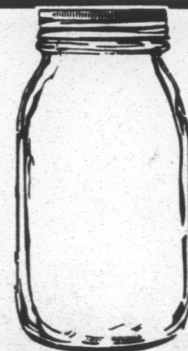
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