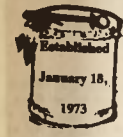




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REASON FOR RETAINING I.M. BIGGS AS SCHOOL BOARD ATTORNEY SEEMINGLY WITHOUT FOUNDATION

Serves at the Pleasure of Board, According to Official Minutes and Expired Contract

by Bruce Barton

... furor continues concerning the n of the Robeson County Board of zation at their last meeting when voted not to retain the law firm of lear & Brooks as school board neys.

... motion made by Harbert Moore seconded by Rev. Bob Mangum defeated by a 4-2 vote. Moore and gum voted to replace I. Murchison is as school board attorney with the n law firm of Locklear & Brooks.

... ing against the motion were Shirley (White), David Green (Black), my D. Swett (Indian) and Sim ndine (Indian).

... mon Poe Locklear and Lillian Faye lear (both Indians) although pre- at the meeting contend that they not vote.

WHAT DID THE VOTE MEAN?

... cording to those present at the ting I. Murchison Biggs "made it tal clear" that he wanted the matter led one way or the other and asked it least a year's contract contending "it would be unfair to any attorney to e as attorney without a time frame at least a year because of the plicated nature of legal aspects of ction.

... me principals in the matter infer the vote against Locklear & Brooks in essence a vote for I. Murchison gs.

... thers contend that the vote did not ment the board to a relationship with ggs and simply left the matter settled. Said an attorney contacted by s reporter, "the vote did not do thing except state that, at this time, board did not see fit to hire the law n of Locklear & Brooks. Nothing re. They can fire I. Murchison ggs at anytime because he serves at pleasure of the board."

... any of those who voted not to hire klear & Brooks contend that they did because I. Murchison Biggs has a tract with the board of education.

... earch by this reporter seems to icate that no contract exists. The last ten agreement between the board of cation and I. Murchison Biggs is ed October 10, 1974. In the eement the board agrees to employ Murchison Biggs as school board rney for "a period of twelve months n date upon an annual retainer of 200.00 payable in monthly install- ts of \$350.00 per month."

... cording to the contract secured from dministration of the Robeson unty School Unit, the agreement een the board and Biggs would e expired October 10, 1975.

... cording to Supt. Y.H. Allen, "there o other written agreement avail- e."

EXORBITANT FEES PART OF THE DISENCHANTMENT WITH I. MURCHISON BIGGS

... he disenchantment with I. Murchi- Biggs in part is because of, as many it, his exorbitant fees charged for al services considered beyond "nor- l duties." Biggs, according to the icial minutes of the board of cation, on April 15, 1976 charged board of education some \$1100.00 ply to submit the necessary forms to justice department in conjunction h the suit to break double voting. In ce, Biggs seems to have charged board \$1100.00 to submit pro forma necessary documents to the justice rtment when double voting was lared unconstitutional by the federal ts.

... obeson County is one of the 39 ties in North Carolina subject to the ng rights act. Any change in the ctoral process must, under the ndate of the federal act, be sub- ted to the justice department for roval.

... o, many Indian parents contend that ggs has been instrumental in ob- jecting the implementation of the egregation Plan of 1970. Said one wldgeable Indian educator, "Biggs lars 'Prospect suit' everytime HEW nds action on implementing their n to desegregate the county schools. o, according to official documents, Robeson County School Unit, has millions of federal dollars because

of their inability (or refusal) to implement the desegregation plan of 1970.

WHAT EXACTLY IS THE STATUS OF I. MURCHISON BIGGS AS SCHOOL BOARD ATTORNEY?

... According to this reporter's research, there is no contract between I. Murchison Biggs and the board of education. The last written agreement was dated October 10, 1974 and was for a period of twelve months.

... Seemingly, I. Murchison Biggs' services are available to the board of education based on a motion made in 1974 that reads:

October 10, 1974: "After coming out of executive session, on motion of (I.J.) Williams and seconded by (Steven) Stone, the board approved the employment of Mr. I.M. Biggs on a retainer basis with a fee of \$4,200.00 per year, payable \$350.00 per month as of July 1, 1974. This fee would cover all normal attorney expenses incurred by the board with the exception of court trials and other major litigation matters."

... According to an attorney approached about the matter, a retainer means simply that said attorney will "be on call" and not accept other cases that would conflict with the board of education.

WHAT WILL THE BOARD DO NOW?

Many dissidents do not expect the

matter to end with the vote taken at the last meeting of the board of education. Questions remain.

Will those board members who voted not to hire Locklear & Brooks on the mistaken assumption that Biggs had a contract now change their vote?

Will I. Murchison Biggs resign?

And, the biggest question of all remains, will the parents of students enrolled in the Robeson County School Unit, allow the matter to remain as is?

According to information received by this reporter, an ad hoc committee to secure legal representation by Indian attorneys has been formed. What action will they take?

For the moment, the questions remain unanswered. According to interviews with this newspaper's staff, David Green (Black), Sim Oxendine (Indian) and Tommy D. Swett (Indian) voted not to hire the Locklear & Brooks Law Firm because "Biggs has a contract." Will they change their vote now that it has been proven that Biggs does not have a contract? Will Laymon Poe Locklear and Lillian Faye Locklear now vote on the matter if it is brought before the board again?

It remains to be seen what will happen. But, as one Indian political wag put it, "Many of us are waiting to see what they will do."

The Lumbee River Electric Membership Corp. Board of Directors listened silently on the advise of their attorney, Tuesday afternoon to a litany of complaints articulated by Attorney Richmond Page.

Page listed 17 areas of concern to the consumer group he represents. They are:

1. Relief of immediate light bills by use of capital credit or other means.
2. Freeze on all plant expansion and construction until annual meeting of 1977.
3. A full scale investigation of Lumbee River EMC Management by Rural Electric Administration.
4. Salary and fringe benefits of management and personnel to be reconsidered for adjustments.
5. Director's expense to be dropped in favor of actual expenses incurred.
6. Training and development of directors and management to be curbed to include only necessities and direct benefits of Co-op.
7. Age discrimination of directors to be eliminated.
8. Elimination of Co-op cars.
9. Use of compensatory (time off) in exchange for overtime.

10. Manager of LREMC shall reside in an area served by Co-op.

11. No additional personnel hired until 1977 annual meeting.

12. Better and increased communication between Lumbee River Management and Lumbee River members.

13. Any expenditures over \$25,000.00 be given notice to Lumbee River members 30 days prior to approval by directors.

14. More consideration to be given to consumers with grievances.

15. Employ a mechanic.

16. Meter Readers

17. Special Meeting

Wednesday, at a late afternoon press conference, General Manager Derl Hinson, and attorney Britt Smith, presented the response to the board of directors to the complaints.

The following statement was released:

The Board of Directors of the Lumbee River Electric Membership Corporation has agreed to six of seventeen requests made by an irate consumer's committee and Manager, Derl Hinson, was instructed to further study five other requests.

The Red Springs-based rural electric cooperative has been under fire recently because of record high electric bills. Co-op officials say the high bills were due to extremely cold weather, a 73 per cent increase in the price they had to pay Carolina Power & Light Company for wholesale power purchased, and a change in their system of reading meters, which in some cases, meant that some consumers were billed for 45 days rather than the usual 30.

At a special meeting Tuesday afternoon, the consumer group presented the directors with 17 recommended changes in the operation of the EMC, 14 of which were on a written list. The policy-makers of the co-op were in special session for four-and-one-half hours to discuss the requests after meeting with the protest group.

Hinson announced today that directors fees and expenses have been reduced by 25 per cent, that construction of a district office building at Lake Rim has been postponed.

The manager said a wage and salary management study was being conducted by an expert from the national rural electric organization, and that efforts would be intensified to keep open channels with co-op member/consumers.

"It appears that we've had a failure to communicate with our members," Hinson said, "And we're going to take whatever measures necessary to insure that grievances from members are heard."

"We're very sympathetic with those members on low or fixed incomes who have trouble paying their bills," he said. "And we can make some arrangements with any member who is having trouble, provided the member is making a sincere effort to pay."

"We cannot grant discounts, but we are going to see if there is some way that the state legislature can make some money available to help them," Hinson said. "We are also going to check with the N.C. Department of Social Services and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare for possible assistance."

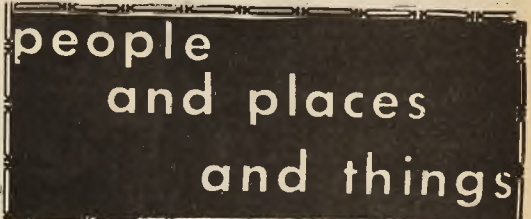
"It seems that some plan for 'Energy Stamps' could be developed similar to the food stamp program, and we're going to work toward accomplishing this."

"The recent high bills, in a few instances, were aggravated by some errors in billing," Hinson said. In those cases, he added, "we have made adjustments."

"We regret the inconvenience to those members," he said. "And we're doing all possible to insure that such errors in the future are at a minimum."

In a written statement, the director said a plan was being considered to regularly refund capital credit margins, but that it is "too soon to predict a final

L.R.E.M.C. Board Responds to Complaints



AREA C. B. CLUB OFFERS HELPING HAND

Once again the Area C. B. Club is on "the box" in an attempt to make life a little easier for others. They have contributed to the fund for Sheryl Davis (see related story on page 5). Gray Cloud, President of the C. B. Club, and the club members are soliciting help for Sheryl Davis to help with her medical expenses. According to a call on the land line, Sheryl's three sisters have also gone to Baltimore, Maryland to donate bone marrow for the transplant. If you are interested in contributing to this worthwhile cause, you may reach the Grey Cloud on the land line at 521-2136. You may also get him, or any member of the club, on the "box." He is monitoring channel 11. Just give him a shout, he'll make the trip back to you.

CAMELS NIP BRAVES IN OVERTIME

Campbell College, getting new life when Pembroke State failed to cash in at the free throw line, scored its 23rd consecutive homecourt win at Buies Creek Thursday night with a 78-73 overtime decision.

With only four seconds remaining in regulation time and the score knotted at 68, Tom Gardner had a chance to end the Camels' skein with a one-and-one situation at the foul line. He missed and Campbell's Don Whaley scored seven of his 17 points in the extra period to wrap up the decision.

The Braves, now 6-5, had trouble from the line all night, making seven of 18 attempts.

Sam Staggers led the Camels with 21 points before fouling out in overtime. Clay Alston had 20 for the winners. Lenwood Graham paced the Braves with 18, while Gardner and Jim Griffith each had 16.

The game was tied eight times in a rugged first half and the second period was one of ups and downs for Pembroke. The Braves fell behind by 10, then rallied on the shooting Kelvin Sampson to lead 68-64 with 1:08 left before going cold again.

In the women's game, Campbell carved out an 86-89 victory as Connie Hall led with 26 points. Wanda Watkins added 22 and Barbara Fox 18 as Campbell remained undefeated.

Kathy Little led Pembroke with 27.

EVANS FIREMEN HOST BANQUET

100 people attended the monthly meeting of the Robeson County Firemen's Association held Thursday night at the Evans Crossroads Volunteer Fire Department off U. S. 74 near here.

They were treated to chicken and barbeque prepared by some of the

decision."

The Board also said that some of the difficulty with the new meter reader system was that a small percentage of the members have been "cheating on their meter reading (and using) devices to steal current from your cooperative." In these few cases, when their meter was read by a cooperative meter reader, "we discovered that many meters had been under-estimated over a period of time."

The manager was instructed by the Board to "tighten the belt" and to "exercise every measure of fiscal responsibility consistent with sound business and good service" and to "review the 1977 Work Plan and Budget in detail for possible deletions or postponements."

Co-op officials and the consumer's committee are scheduled to meet at the Red Springs office Thursday evening at 7:30 to discuss the grievances and actions taken by the Board of Directors.

Hubert Prevatte is president of LREMC's board of directors. Rev. Elias Rogers is vice-president. Other members are J.W. Hunt, Frank Jacobs, James H. Hammonds, Harold Deas Brewer, Ward Clark, Alton V. Dudley, John Paul Jones, Bradford W. Oxendine, Davis K. Parker and Fred T. Warren.

Evans firemen (with a helping hand from their wives). The group was entertained by the D & L Gospel Singers.

Program for the meeting was the showing of a film by Danny Hickman, director of communications for the City of Lumberton. Hickman showed a film related to emergency communications dispatchers which pointed up the routine and often fast-paced activities of a radio dispatcher.

Chartered in 1974, the Evans department now has 26 active members and a modern fire station.

A two-bay garage area houses a 1974, 700 gallon Bean pumper truck and allows space to park an additional fire fighting vehicle.

Firemen now have under construction a 1,000 gallon water tank that will be fitted out with a reel-mounted hose line.

The rear section of the fire station includes a kitchen, large meeting room, business office and bath facilities. Robert Locklear is chief at the Evans Crossroads Fire Department.

MOTORISTS URGED TO PURCHASE RENEWAL LICENSE PLATES EARLY

Raleigh-J. M. "Bill" Penny, Acting Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, today urged Tarheel motorists to purchase their 1977 renewal license plate stickers of license plates as early as possible to avoid the last minute rush.

The renewal period ends by law February 15, at midnight. If everyone will come in early, long lines can be eliminated and the crowded conditions of past years can be avoided. Penny also reminds motorists that there are 102 branch offices across North Carolina in which license plates and stickers may be obtained or in Raleigh at two locations, the Motor Vehicles Building on New Bern Avenue or the lower level of the North Hills Mall.

Motor Vehicle owners who have not received their license plate renewal application cards should notify the Division of Motor Vehicles in Raleigh immediately.

PARENT TEACHERS CONFERENCE PLANNED AT SOUTHSIDE

The Southside faculty will be available for Parent-Teacher conferences on Tuesday, Jan. 25, 1977 from 12:00 noon until 6:30 p.m. All parents are urged to come out and discuss their children's progress.

Additional information and confirmation of appointments may be obtained from teachers or principal.

Indictment Issued in Pembroke's 'Missing Funds' Case

Former Pembroke Town Clerk, Mrs. Maybelle Elk, has been indicted on eight counts of embezzlement reportedly totaling some \$9,000.00. Mrs. Elk served as Town Clerk for eight years and resigned recently. She had recently been employed by the Housing Authority and Redevelopment Commission of Pembroke. According to the Executive Director, Clifton L. Thomas, Mrs. Elk has submitted a letter of resignation.

Mayor Reggie Strickland had no comment on the matter and promised a statement at a later time. He indicated that the town council is expected to call a special meeting in regards to the matter.

Mrs. Elk was placed under \$2,000 bond in the complaint signed by William L. Creel, Jr., a State Bureau of Investigation agent. The SBI has been probing the matter for a number of weeks. The "missing funds" were uncovered in an audit conducted by S. Preston Douglas Associates, an accounting firm quartered in Lumberton.

Governor's Inaugural Parade Scenes



Local beauty queens joined in the celebration of the Governor's inaugural parade in Raleigh on Jan. 8. Shown left

to right are: Miss Lumbee, Linda Gail Locklear; Miss Pembroke State University, Susan Bullard; Miss Fairmont,

Sarah Floyd; and Miss Black Robeson County, Sharon McLaurin.



"Strike at the Wind," Robeson County's outdoor drama, sponsored a float in the Governor's Inaugural parade in Raleigh on Jan. 8th.