

EDITORIAL AND OPINION PAGE



We Cannot Know Where We Are Going If We Don't Know Where We've Been...

So fittingly we honor our Pioneer Fathers

AS I SEE IT



by
Bruce Barton

I STAND CORRECTED BY COMMISSIONER WYVIS OXENDINE

Pembroke-Maxton-Smiths Commissioner Wyvis Oxendine visited me this week and took umbrage with me concerning my column last week in which I blithely asserted that "county commissioners seem afraid of poor people."

Commissioner Oxendine reminded me that, contrary to what I said, he had questions at the meeting noted in last week's column, had questions before then, and still had questions.

Commissioner Oxendine also reminded me that I was not present for the meeting, and arrived after Commissioner Carl Britt had called the law, and that he personally had nothing to do with calling the law on anyone, especially poor people whom he represents and respects like all his constituents.

Commissioner Oxendine is right to correct me, and I appreciate him doing so. I admire him for his amiable approach, even when he feels he has been wronged. I like his ability to articulate his position with dignity, and his agreeable disagreeing. I stand corrected.

I should not try to recreate a meeting, unless I am there. I arrived late at the meeting, and the sight of the "law" angered me. It was wrong to call the law on the poor people, and I am still angry about it. But my anger should be directed toward those calling the "law" and not paint all parties the same color.

And I still believe Social Services head Russell Sessoms should resign for not processing the CIP funds, and other shortcomings.

AND I NOTE DISENCHANTMENT WITH MY COVERAGE OF ELECTIONS MEETING CONCERNING RE-UNITING OF SMITHS PRECINCT ETC.

Mrs. Shirley Moore, a former class mate of mine, also called last week, as did a number of callers from the Smiths (Prospect) Precinct, and disagreed with some of my assertions concerning my reportage of a meeting which was held recently at the Board of Elections concerning re-uniting Smiths Precinct.

I was reporting, second hand I must admit, a public hearing held recently in reference to the 2-1 vote to re-unite North and South Smiths into one precinct again.

I relied on local news reports and canvassing by phone to say, "Some 100 people attended the hearing, and the majority seemed to be in favor of a single precinct in the mostly Indian area, anchored by the Prospect Community."

Mrs. Moore, and the other caller disagreed with the assertion that most of the people present seemed to be

in favor of one precinct, and one caller said, "You should have been there and heard Mr. Johnny Bullard talk about the inconveniences of traveling to the central polling place before the precinct was split."

And, of course, I should have been there. I will be a little more diligent in the future although it is physically impossible to get to every meeting held in Ol' Robeson.

The vote to reunite the South and North Smiths Precincts into one precinct-Smiths-is subject to the blessings of the U.S. Justice Department since Robeson County is subject to the '65 Voting Rights Act and any change in the electoral process, including the changing of a precinct line, must be approved by the federal civil rights arm.

I learned early in my newspaper career that one should not be cute when the error of one's way is pointed out. I just say quickly, if I am wrong, or there is even a semblance of unfairness, that I am sorry and I will try to correct my discretion.

I say, again, if I have offended anyone by reporting an event incorrectly, I apologize profusely and ask you to forgive me. I honestly try to be fair in my reporting, but I do editorialize on the editorial page, and in my column which is located correctly enough on the editorial page. I hope everything I say in my column is fact, but it is first of all my opinion.

And anyone who disagrees with me has a right to respond in our letters to the editor. The only rule is that the letters be signed, and no cussing. And I brook no libelous comment, or character assassination.

I have always made it a rule of thumb to leave one's personal life alone. I only comment on those officials in their public capacities, like Russell Sessoms. He is held strictly accountable in his role as director of the Social Services Department. What he does after hours, in his capacity as a private citizen, is his business and his business only.

PAY RAISE CORRECTS AN INEQUITY TOWARD SOME COUNTY EMPLOYEES

The County Commissioners met Monday and corrected an inequity in pay raises given some county employees in the last budget enacted July 1.

The commissioners, with my buddy, Lumberton Commissioner H.T. Taylor, dissenting, agreed to spend an additional \$73,497 so that all employees will receive at least a 5% increase under the new budget. The pay hikes will be retroactive to July 1 when the county's \$27.2 million budget took effect.

The inequitable pay scales resulted from the commissioners setting a \$650,000 ceiling for pay raises and a 4 cents hike in property taxes

instead of 10 cents.

Personnel Director T.Y. Hester acknowledged that after using up the \$650,000 limit all employees did not receive the full 5% raises that were recommended. Some 217, according to Hester, had not received the 5% before the action Monday night.

The commissioners should be commended for correcting an inequity, not all of their making.

Keeping employees happy is good politics, and it improves the quality of county government too.

I would rather see tax monies go to employees who earn their salaries than to grandiose schemes like the Carolina Civic Center (formerly the Carolina Theatre) that benefits an elitist few.

Triumphs Of Science

Scientists have long known about some of the problems that cause troublesome knocking in automobile engines. Only recently have they uncovered new causes and some cures for this "little" annoyance that could become big trouble.



Combustion chamber deposits have long been recognized as a cause for engine knocking. Recently, it was discovered that itake port deposits contributed their share to the problem. Now, researchers at Shell have found an answer. It's a patented new gasoline called SU 2000™. By reducing those critical deposits, it lowers engine octane requirements and helps engines run more efficiently while helping to eliminate knock. In new engines, it inhibits the build-up of intake port deposits.

Most new cars run on regular unleaded gasoline. After miles add up, about one third of these new cars find the need to switch to premium unleaded... because of knocking. Now, there's an alternative that's helping new engines and old engines and bodes well for the engines of tomorrow.

" 'Tis not a lip, or eye, we beauty call, but the joint force and full result of all." Alexander Pope

Letters

"Gratitude... Carl Britt Style..."

In my opinion, it is not by accident that Russell Sessoms is director of the Department of Social Services in Robeson County. It is not by accident that Bill Herndon is chairman of the Board of DSS. It is not by accident that Carl L. Britt is chairman of the Board of Robeson County Commissioners.

Russell Sessoms was appointed as director of DSS. In my opinion he could not handle this job from the beginning. Russell Sessoms destroyed his defense and offense with the statement that he could not interpret the guide lines as written pertaining to the dispensation of Crisis Intervention Program CIP funds. When will the taxpayer of Robeson County be relieved of this type and practice of incompetence?

Bill Herndon is an elected official of Robeson County (Commissioner). In my opinion this equalizes and synchronizes the actions and deeds of Bill Herndon and Russell Sessoms. By his own admission Bill Herndon stated that he was the only board director who knew of the CIP funds for Robeson County. Carl L. Britt is an elected official of Robeson County (Commissioner). In my opinion, Carl L. Britt has endorsed the incompetent practices of Bill Herndon and Russell

Sessoms. When Carl L. Britt last campaigned for office he would stick his hand out to a prospective voter and promise that if you (the voter) need me let me know. I am at your service. On July 16, 1984 some of the same people who voted for Carl L. Britt came seeking answers to questions pertaining to funds they were entitled to. They were rewarded with a call to the sheriff's department for the purpose of moving said people from the building. This is gratitude--Carl L. Britt style.

In my opinion the voters in Robeson County should let ALL of the Robeson County Commissioners know that they are being measured by the same yardstick that is being used for Carl L. Britt.

It could be that before too much longer there will be people in Robeson County that Sessoms, Herndon, Britt, and others who think they are so great, will be glad to talk to.

In my opinion, until the poor and needy of Robeson County are cared for correctly and consistently, we will be under threat of the Robeson County Mafia.

Let us try to turn all the two faced politicians away and look for better things.

John L. Godwin
Pembroke, N.C.

Foster Parents Needed

To The Editor:

Family Alternatives, Inc. is a nonprofit private agency licensed by the N.C. Dept. of Human Resources, Division of Social Services for the purpose of licensing foster homes for children with special needs. We serve a five county area consisting of Robeson, Bladen, Cumberland, Scotland, and Columbus counties.

Since your paper reaches many people and is influential in promoting public opinion and response, we want to use this means to make an appeal to citizens within your distribution area. Our Agency is greatly in need of foster homes and foster parents who have had experience or training in working with troubled

children or adolescents. Payment is quite sufficient and nontaxable, but much is expected from people who are willing to accept this challenging but rewarding task.

If you are a concerned, caring person who sincerely wants to be a positive force in a young person's life and are willing to open your home to him/her, we invite you to call (919) 738-1108 Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. or write Family Alternatives, Inc., P.O. Box 963, Lumberton, N.C. 28359.

Sincerely,
Milton Teague, Jr., Director
Family Alternatives, Inc.
P.O. Box 963
Lumberton, NC 28359



William Howard Taft is the only man ever to have been both Chief Justice and President of the U.S.



Men were making maps as long ago as 2300 B.C. One example remains with us... a small, clay tablet from Babylonia, said to be land in a mountain-lined valley.

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Shown (rear) left to right are Felecia Butler, Dorothy Pickett and Ann Tyler. In chair is Tina Locklear.



Remember folk: These views are mine. They are not necessarily anyone else's. Heck! They ain't even necessarily mine! Just my ratings and ratings, I guess!

RANTING & RAVING with Gary Barton

HEY, BOYS! PLEASE RESIGN!

As far as I'm concerned, Ms. Shirley Locklear, director of LRDA's Food Co-ops, is one of the best--or quite possibly the best--social worker we have. I really don't know a whole lot --and don't frankly care--about her educational credentials such as degrees and such other stuff folk seem to put a lot of stock in. But I do know she possesses two traits that I feel are essential in social work--she has compassion for poor folk, and she genuinely cares about poor people. As far as I'm concerned, there's just not enough compassion shown poor folk who are forced by circumstances beyond their control to go to the Department of Social Services for the help they are entitled to. Far too many folk at the Dept. of Social Services act as if every dollar they dish out is coming out of their pockets. Well, I am delighted to inform them that their salaries and the money they dish out comes from tax dollars. And as we all know, the poor man pays the largest percentage of taxes that keep this great country of ours going.

As you folk are no doubt aware of, a contingency of poor folk, spearheaded by a social agency known as the Robeson County Clergy and Laity Concerned, are calling for the resignation of Russell Sessoms who heads the Department of Social Services in Lumberton. These poor folk are upset--and rightfully so--because only 6% of the funds allocated to this area in the Crisis Heating Funds Program were spent when the state average was 80%. That's alarming to me. And grounds for resignation or suspension or prosecution.

I agree with these poor folk. Sessoms should resign. But, realistically speaking, he probably won't. And, as was made evident by the behavior of the Robeson County Board of Commissioners at a recent meeting where poor folk were supposed to have the opportunity to air their grievances and concerns, the Commissioners probably won't ask for his resignation.

The way it appears to me, just as grave an injustice was inflicted upon these poor people when Carl Britt, the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the law to make the poor people disperse when, evidently, he became tired of hearing things he no longer wanted to hear--namely the truth. I've always heard that the truth will set you free. Evidently this doesn't apply to the Robeson County Board of Commissioners. When confronted by the truth, the Commissioners called the law to lock up folk instead of setting them free.

Well, I wish to go a step further than calling for Sessoms's resignation. I call on Carl Britt, and every other commissioner who sat idly by and condoned his--to me--highly unprofessional conduct, to resign. I honestly wish someone had videotaped that meeting. Then, every time one of the present commissioners came up for re-election, the whole despicable scenario could be played back for the mostly poor electorate and let them see exactly what these so-said-to-be representatives think about poor people. To me, their recent actions suggest that they resent and hold in contempt the very folk they are charged to represent. It's truly sad. Heck! It's sickening!

I accompanied Shirley Locklear once on her travels out to the homes of some of her poor clients. I was working for Lumbee Regional Development Association at the time as public relations officer and was supposed to take some pictures of some worn-out wood-burning heaters in these homes. You see, LRDA, in conjunction with the N.C. Commission of Indian Affairs, gave brand new heaters to about a dozen of the poorest folk in this area, free of charge.

A visit to one of these old, weather-worn, delapidated houses stands out in vivid and stark detail in my mind, almost as if it happened yesterday instead of over a year ago. The family of five lived in a two-room shack with the only evidence of running water being the rain that ran down through holes in the ceiling, splashing into a number of much-worn pots and pans and a foot tub placed strategically to catch the downfall. The family heated and cooked on an old, 3-legged heater that was propped precariously on an old coffee can. The heater was so old and much-used that a hole was actually evident in its side. One could actually see the burning logs crackling and sizzling inside, trying unsuccessfully to ward off the cold which was pretty intense since this visit occurred during one of the coldest snaps in this area's history.

What broke my heart, though, was a 3-month-old baby girl wrapped in swaddling and propped at the end of the couch in as close a proximity to the old worn-out heater as possible. The infant looked like a beautiful baby doll, until one took a closer look and saw her persistent running nose. And she was sniffling and crying, producing one of the most pitiful, heart-wrenching sounds imaginable. The mother, standing in her torn and tattered dress beside Ms. Locklear, said the baby had a cold that she couldn't seem to shake off. And the mother couldn't afford to take the baby to the doctor. And, even if she could, she didn't have no way to travel.

I remember distinctly standing among those worn-out-pots and pans and the solitary foot tub, a big, husky hulk of a man, feeling thankful for the rain that occasionally cascaded down from the ceiling, splattering on my eye glasses and cheek. Yea! I was thankful because the rain camouflaged the tears that flowed so freely from my imperfect eyes.


It is my personal opinion that it would behoove a lot of these snobby-acting, arrogant, big-headed social services folk if it was mandatory that they visit these poor folk in their poor homes. Perhaps if Sessoms could have seen that beautiful, sniffling 3-month-old baby girl struggling so mightily to shrug off that persistent cold that binded her, he wouldn't have been so hasty in his callous, cold-hearted and indifferent conduct concerning the crisis heating fund program.

Yet, I dare say there are some folk who have become so callous and cold-hearted and conditioned that it seems virtually nothing could affect them. Some of our so-said-to-be representatives actually act as if nothing could move them except an overdose of Ex-lax. I honestly can't say for sure whether Sessoms, Herndon, Britt, or the commissioners who condoned Britt calling the law, fit into this category although their recent behavior suggests that they do, as far as I'm concerned.

Yes, I don't know whether that beautiful little girl ever did succeed in fighting off that ugly cold. But I do know that I am still haunted by the heart-wrenching sight; I just can't seem to dislodge the memory of the sight of her from the dark recesses of my poor, finite mind.

Oh, yes! In my mind's eye, I see that pretty little thing now. And, carried away by the memory of the heart-wrenching sight, I imagine I can actually hear her pleading pitifully between sobs and sniffings. I honestly imagine I can hear her pleas now. I am struggling mightily to make out what she is saying. As the image of the little infant I have conjured up becomes clearer and clearer in my mind, I am able to figure out what the beautiful child is saying in between sobs. She is pleading over and over again: "Russell Sessoms, Herndon, Carl Britt, and all the other commissioners who condoned Britt's behavior. For God's--and poor folks' everywhere--sake! PLEASE RESIGN!" And I can't help but mimic her pleas. **Boys! PLEASE! PLEASE! RESIGN!!!**

I'll talk at ya some more next week folk. Meanwhile, keep this little thought in mind: The world is far too color-conscious. If we're not preoccupied by worrying about the color of folk's skin, then we're blinded by the color green--the color of the Almighty Dollar.

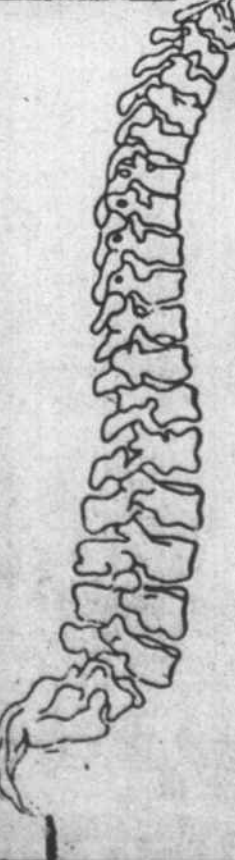


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