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"Building Communicative Bridges  
In A Tri-racial Setting."

ROBESON COUNTY

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## A FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL SCHOOL MERGER POSSIBILITIES SOUNDS GOOD BUT... A Lot of People in Robeson County Have Short Memories

It sounds simple enough, and even plausible, to hear Eric Prevatte tell it. The court suit filed last week notes that inadequate funding is at the heart of the educational problem in Robeson County; and that we could do better if we had one school system.

Prevatte, seemingly the spokesman for the adherents of the court suit, has a way with words, no doubt about it. In one news conference he was quoted as saying, "we are the only county that has five school systems...Going from Lumberton High School to Magnolia (in the county system) is the equivalent of going from San Diego to Tijuana, Mexico. There's light years of difference."

The group Prevatte so eloquently speaks for is made up of 18 students representing all five school systems in the county. Their suit says, in essence, that five school systems are too unwieldy, and that a merged unitary system would eliminate duplication of services and disparities in all aspects of education. The suit also seeks to change the way the state department of education allocates monies to the 140 school systems in North Carolina. Prevatte was quoted as saying, "Basically, they give all systems the same amount of money per student." The funding mechanism does not take into account economic differences, for instance, in the five school systems in Robeson County, and would also be applicable elsewhere in the state.

In essence, the five school systems have copped out of their responsibilities and have said that they think the matter of merger should be left to the voters rather than the courts. Essentially, that stance is educational cowardice at its most dispicable,

as we see it. They, and the county commissioners, were elected to make decisions.

Does the suit have merit? You bet it does. The *Carolina Indian Voice* has called editorially for one school system for years. But we do have some legitimate questions. And we also believe that many people in Robeson County, including Eric Prevatte, have short memories.

For instance, Eric Prevatte, who lives in the Clybourne Pines area, has not always been so vocal for one system. For many years he upheld the unlawful stance of the Lumberton School System and was, in fact, part of the nefarious activity. We speak specifically about the illegal annexations undertaken by the Lumberton School System in the late 1960s. As a matter of fact, Prevatte was one of those who helped draw the lines that expanded Lumberton's educational and tax base. When threatened court action forced Lumberton to give back Clybourne Pines/ Country Club area to the county school system, Eric Prevatte had an educational conversion. He saw, in essence, that Clybourne Pines/ Country Club areas had been made sacrificial lambs, and fed to the voracious political animals always nipping at the heels of those attempting to do what is right and seemly. In essence, folks in Clybourne Pines/ Country Club areas became the 'New Croats' and were lopped of by the Lumberton School System in an attempt to keep Lakewood Estates, and other rich areas that were also being challenged as unlawfully annexed by Lumberton.

Eric Prevatte, and others in the area incorporated into the county school system, finally saw the light of day. They found out that mis-

treatment is not necessarily reserved for those with darkly-hued skins. They were victims of a great political power play. In a way, they were discriminated against.

Until then, Eric Prevatte was not in favor of one school system. I am glad to learn that he has had a change of heart. None of us are too old & set in our ways to not change if the political winds shift, and reality slaps us upside the noggin.

Dexter Brooks, one of the lawyers representing Eric Prevatte and his adherents, was once the school board attorney for the county schools, and was one of the chief architects of the successful effort to overturn the nefarious "double vote" political system. Brooks has to accept some of the blame (or credit) for the compromise that caused Prevatte's political conversion, and for the district scheme of electing school board members for the county school system. He was later summarily booted as school board attorney. In other words, he was fired.

And, lastly, let us say again that, ideally, total merger is the answer to the educational woes in Robeson County. No doubt about it. But here's the heart of the matter; when all is said and done: Who would run such a system? And could Indians, Blacks and whites be assured of equal representation? Would not county schools Superintendent Purnell Swett be the most obvious choice for superintendent of a county system? Or would he? Who would make those kind of hard decisions? Could our provincial and racial notions be set aside long enough to do what is right, or the children of the county? History shouts

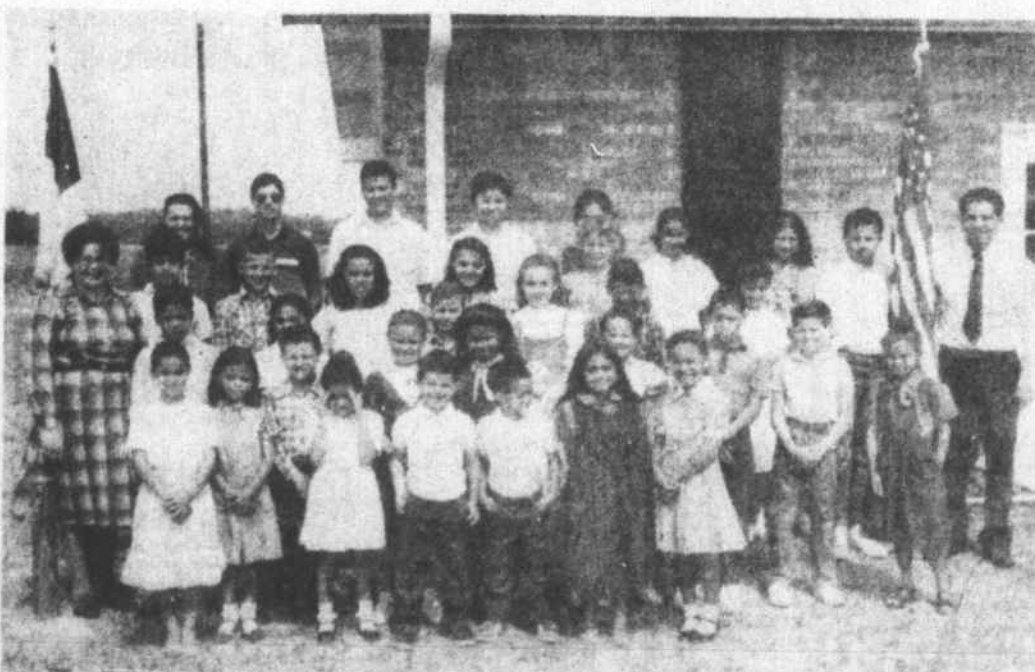
"No!" and "Be wary, Indians!"

And, as we see it, there is another answer to this problem. If the five city school systems (especially Lumberton) will return to their city boundaries they can keep their school systems... at least until they dry up and die a natural death.

And, as a final note, we are offended by Lumberton Schools Superintendent Carroll who had the gall to brag that half the Lumberton school system was non-white. We don't think Carroll has any bragging rights about this. That fact came about because the justice department closed school boundary lines in 1970, trapping the non-whites within. Until then, they were bussed out to either Indian schools or black schools elsewhere. As a matter of fact, West Lumberton Elementary School actually belongs to the county school system and used to be an Indian school within the county school system, although it is within the Lumberton city limits. Unless they have bought it since we last checked Lumberton pays rent to the county schools for the use of the facilities at West Lumberton. Unless they are the recipients of our usual magnanimous Indian selves and are using the school rent free. No matter, the school facilities belong to the county school system.

So, except for the pontifical nonsense and our concerns about who might run such a system, we are in agreement with Eric Prevatte, and those sharing his sentiments. And we say, anew, that school merger possibilities sounds good but...a lot of people in Robeson County have short memories. One cannot know where he is going if he does not know where he has been.

## Riverside Christian School Completes Successful Year



Shown are some of the students and staff of Riverside Christian School. Principal Leverne Locklear is shown far right. [Bruce Barton photo]

The Riverside Christian School, located 3 miles west of I-95 on Highway 74, has completed its first year of operation. Principal Leverne Locklear considers the year to have been a successful one, and is looking forward to the coming year. Locklear noted, "We operate on faith and hard work, and the combination has been the right one for us."

The Christian school is a mission of Riverside Independent Baptist Church, and the school is located in the facilities of the church. The school was organized in August 1985 and opened September 1985 with an enrollment of 35 students K-10. Said Locklear, "The concept (of the school) is over 300 years old, and the first schools were founded in

conjunction with a church." The founders of the Riverside Christian School realize the importance of education and religion in helping youth and their parents to deal with today's increasingly complex problems. Students enrolled are to maintain an average of 80 percent or above in the following: Math, English, spelling, writing, science, history and

elective. The goals of the school are a high standard of academics, morality, spiritual and athletic achievement. If you believe religious education will help in the training of your child call 521-4833 for more details.

The public is invited to the First Annual Awards Banquet on Friday, June 6 at 7:30 p.m. Riverside Baptist Church Sanctuary.

As noted elsewhere, Leverne Locklear is principal. The school has five teachers and Rev. Jerry McNeill, pastor of Riverside Independent Baptist Church, is the administrator. The school boards consists of Mr. James M. Cummings, Mr. R.L. Graham and Mr. Charles E. McNeill.

The public is invited to visit the school and find out more about the services they offer. Those desiring further information are encouraged to call 843-4887 or 521-4833.

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## PITCH FOR RAILROAD LINE SCORNE BY RESIDENTS IN AFFECTED AREA

By Bruce Barton

Pembroke-E.S. Wilkes, superintendent for Seaboard System Railroad, might have been the most unpopular fellow in Pembroke Monday night as residents in the affected area scorned his pitch for a railroad line that would knife through their properties if approved by Pembroke's planning board and, eventually, Pembroke's Town Council.

It was Wilkes' second appearance before Pembroke's planning board, chaired by Garth Locklear. If it were a ballgame, Wilkes and the railroad would have been shut out. He was not well received by the turnaway crowd that packed Pembroke's town hall.

The controversy swirls around the railroad's attempt to garner approval for plans to build a railroad line that would connect the east-west line traversing through Pembroke with its north-south line. As presently proposed, the line would run from the Lumber River trestle on the north-south line to the east-west line near Circle S. Stockyard (formerly Pates Stockyard) on Highway 711. The latest proposal from the railroad is the third modification of their original intent to build the line nearer Pembroke. The original line would actually have skirted Pine Street extension and would have come within four hundred feet of the junior high school. The most recent proposal would now be 1600 feet from the school, and would cut across River Road. Essentially, according to Wilkes, the latest proposed line would run along the line of the river before cutting across River Road and coming out near Pates.

But it was evident from

comments presented by residents in the affected area that they would not be pleased by any plans or modification or quarantees presented by the railroad.

Wilkes agreed to, among other things, not disturb any existing graveyards, divert any stream, nor restrict any water flow crossed by the railroad. But the restive crowd was not to be mollified not even with assurances of signal lights and bar crossings at places where the proposed lines would cross.

Wilkes also inferred that an industrial site was in the works, and that the railroad would pay county taxes. He also said, "I hope the town grows to such an extent that you would take us in and realize town taxes."

The proposed route actually would run from and to Florence and Charleston ports, and could mean an additional six trains a day, according to Wilkes. The line would also serve the Norfolk port, as well as all Florida and Georgia lines.

The audience's position was stated succinctly by Henry Chavis who said, "We don't want you." Chavis also chastised the railroad for not "having the decency to contact the property owners." Chavis said he better understood the meaning of the term "to be railroaded." He was warmly applauded.

Others speaking against the railroad's plans were: Rev. Mac Legerton, representing Robeson County Clergy and Laity Concerned; Jane Chavis; Ethel Locklear; Mary H. Locklear; Chester Revels; Gary Revels; Betty Campbell; Roscoe Locklear; N.H. White; Vanessa Hunt; Robert Earl Chavis and Diane Jacobs. Legerton asked

ed the planning board "not cut a deal with the railroad."

Also in the audience was Wyvis Oxendine, commissioner for the Maxton-Pembroke-Smiths area. Oxendine asked about economic development specifically. Wilkes mentioned Campbell Soup and noted that the railroad had maintained the line for a number of years before Campbell Soup came to the area. But commissioner Oxendine was not satisfied with the answers he received from Wilkes either and noted "I would be opposed to the addition of this line for safety's sake..."

In his remarks Legerton noted that the new spur would add further congestion, and that the area would have "very little to gain" from allowing the additional line.

The danger of hazardous waste was also aired, and questions were pointedly asked about GSX, one of the companies attempting to gain approval to establish a hazardous waste facility in the area. Wilkes pointedly denied any collusion with GSX, or any other company involved in hazardous waste materials.

Mrs. Mary H. Locklear again pointed out that a survey team from the railroad company had come on her property without permission, cutting a ditch bank and disturbing shrubbery and trees on her property. The incident occurred when the railroad was pursuing their first proposal to build the line nearer Pembroke. Wilkes again apologized to Mrs. Locklear and said, "I am sorry it happened... the survey team from Jacksonville embarrassed me and my company... and I want to make you happy." But Mrs.

Locklear was not appeased. She noted, "They (the railroad) put the cart before the horse and I was the cart. I was shown a great discourtesy...they should not have come on my property without permission."

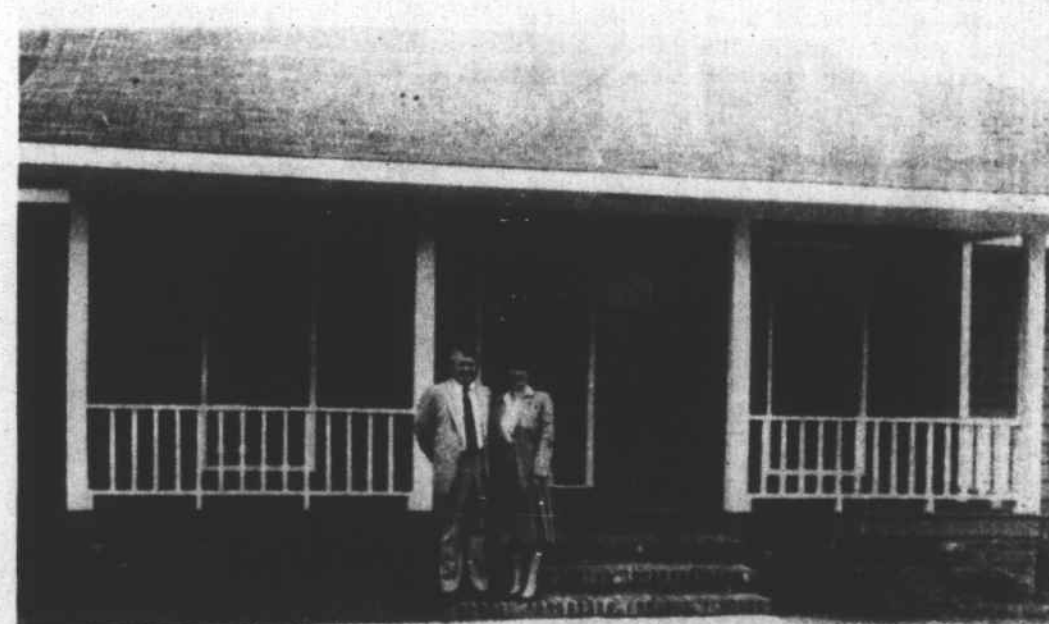
The planning board, chaired by Garth Locklear, and consisting of members Hardy Bell, Monroe Lowry, Mrs. Furman Brewer, Mrs. Rose Marie Lowry and Mrs. Ruth Tidwell listened patiently to the concerned citizenry and did not indicate how they might vote on the matter.

After the lengthy hearing, Locklear promised that the planning board would "make a recommendation to the Pembroke Town Council at its June 3 meeting." The planning board recommends and action is not official until acted upon by the Pembroke Town Council.

Although not indicating how they might vote, Locklear injected at one point in the hearing that the planning board was a good and positive instrument. He said "if Pembroke did not have a planning board the railroad could do whatever they wish. It is a good thing that Pembroke had the foresight to develop a planning board to regulate those developing within our one mile jurisdiction."

More than 700 names were presented via petition against the railroad line proposal and Henry Chavis, speaking in behalf of the dissidents, promised that "we are not going to stand for it." Chavis summed up the feeling of those in attendance by saying, at one point, "We don't want the railroad, and we don't want you (Wilkes) with your attitude..."

## Ed And Barbara Melvin Take A Crack At Building Homes



Ed and Barbara Melvin are now in the home construction business. They are shown in front of the first home built by M & M Construction Company. The modern and spacious home is located on Wakulla Road in the Prospect community.

Prospect-Ed and Barbara Melvin care about people. And they have decided to take their considerable talents into the home building industry. Barbara, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert L. Moore of the Prospect community, said, in a recent interview, that the idea took root while she was working for the Robeson County Church and Community Center. One of her duties was in the area of rehabilitation on homes. She learned a lot about the home construction business in the process.

One of the things she found out was that financing is one of the most inhibiting factors in building a home.

And she found out that the most successful builder is the one who is most able to get along with people. She has honed her skills at getting along with people all her life, and feels that her parents taught her to care about others and to share whatever talents God allows one to possess. She decided, while at the church and community center, that the construction industry was an area that she would like to try one day.

Now a successful home-maker, and the wife of Ed Melvin, she feels that the time has come to give feet to her dream. With the help of her husband, Ed, who is the driving force behind the

success of Ed's Tire, she has built her first home. The home is now on the market, and she hopes they will be able to help someone secure the title to their own home. She feels that she and her husband can offer assistance to those buying their own home by sharing what they have learned about how to finance a home, and tips learned in the market place and at the church and community center. Barbara says, "There are positive ways to approach buying a home. Knowing how to go about it is an important ingredient in buying a home."

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