

Legislative Summary

(By Institute of Government)

When the Senate and House adjourned on Friday the total number of bills introduced in this session had reached 1052, 754 of them in the House, 298 in the Senate. On the same legislative day in 1945 the total had reached 1237. Thus this session continues to lag behind its immediate predecessor so far as the bulk of legislation is concerned. Of the 1052 bills introduced this year, 534, or something more than 50 per cent of them have been local in nature. This situation will be up for study if the General Assembly passes HB 751 introduced on Friday calling for a commission whose business it would be to consider the whole problem of local legislation and to make recommendations as to the passage of general laws on subjects most often embraced in local bills.

The tenth legislative week was marked by the reappearance of the big "money" bills on the floor of the General Assembly. The Finance and Appropriations committees of both houses have reported out their recommendations on the Revenue, Appropriation, and Post War Reserve Fund bills. No sooner had the Revenue Bill been released for debate in the House than some members began to assault it with amendments: there were efforts to insure that Confederate widows and veterans get a 39-a-month pension raise, to restore theatre taxes to their 1939 schedule, and to restore the 25c reduction in the corporate franchise tax rate made by the original bill. All of them failed although the introduction of SB 275 on Thursday, to give totally blind and helpless Confederate widows a pension increase, indicates that the friends of Confederate widows are not yet ready to concede defeat. Representative Mull was more successful than his colleagues: by a close vote he succeeded in amending the Revenue Bill so as to prohibit the sale of wine and to closely regulate the sale of beer in his home county of Cleveland. The following day, stating that he had secured assurance from Finance

Committee leaders that they would give favorable ear to his local bill to the same effect, Mr. Mull withdrew his amendment leaving the committee's bill unscratched. And so it left the House to be considered in the Senate early next week.

The Appropriations Bill left Committee with a net increase in appropriations of \$8,013,794. Of this figure, \$6,155,000 is accounted for by the raise in teachers' salaries. The bulk of the remaining \$1,858,794 would go to the State Board of Health, the Department of Conservation and Development (this despite its loss of the Division of Game and Inland Fisheries), to the Board of Charities and Public Welfare for old age assistance and aid to dependent children, to the Retirement System to take care of contributions for State employees, to increase State aid to public libraries, to the Department of Agriculture and to the Cooperative Agricultural Extension division at State College. The Department of Labor, the Industrial Commission, and Commission for the Blind, four State-supported colleges, four State hospitals, two orphanages, and State vocational education work absorb most of the rest. The only new item added in committee is a \$48,000 appropriation for Pure Food Control work in the Department of Agriculture in the next two years. Appropriations for indigent care work of the Medical Care Commission and the veteran's records project of the Department of Archives and History were the only items in the original bill to suffer reduction (a total of \$389,740) at the hands of the committee. Both the House and Senate defeated efforts to amend the bill to increase the \$102,418,430 earmarked for instructional salaries despite strong efforts to convince the representatives and senators that this sum might "fall short" of the 30 per cent increase desired. Thus, amended only to delete a requirement allocating 50 per cent of the library aid appropriation on the basis of population, and to give low-bracket state employees preference

in the 20 per cent raise, the appropriations bill passed both houses. The bill bringing the post war reserve fund to an approximate \$80,000,000 by adding \$9,300,000 thereto passed both the senate and house without amendment. The permanent improvements appropriation bill remains in committee where the problems incident to the medical care program, especially the four-year medical school and teaching hospital at Chapel Hill, may bring on prolonged discussion. Indeed this bill offers the principal controversy remaining before the legislature.

Not all the week's interest has been confined to money legislation, but at least one bill effects an interesting tie-up between revenue matters and the health, school teacher and liquor problems. Representative Buie of Robeson introduced HB 640 with the encouraging title of "To provide additional funds for salaries of teachers and other state employees, for the Good Health Program, for mental institutions and for other general fund purposes." If passed, this bill would require every ABC store in the state to turn over its net profits to the state general fund.

HB 229 aimed at opening the shops has passed both houses without amendment despite vigorous efforts in the Senate to remove its prohibition of maintenance of membership contracts. The Senate committee has reported out its substitute of SB 118 setting minimum wages and maximum hours of a somewhat more elastic variety than those set by the original bill. Teachers and educational problems in general continue to hold the legislative spotlight. HB 621 would provide that beginning with next year no school should lose teachers for lack of average daily attendance when its average daily enrollment would justify keeping the allotment it already has. SB 219 and its companion HB 548 would submit the entire state educational system to close scrutiny by a commission required to investigate and make recommendations to the next General Assembly. These bills, having been approved by the respective committees on education, now rest in the appropriations committees for

consideration of the \$50,000 proposed to be appropriated for the commission's expenses.

SB 222 which has passed the senate without substantial amendment would give the State Aeronautics Commission power to regulate the installation, equipment and safety of airports. Counties and municipalities will have their tax ceilings raised if two recent bills continue the successful progress they have enjoyed thus far. SB 203, introduced by Senator McKinnon on Feb. 27, which would raise the municipal general purpose tax limit from \$1 to \$1.50 on the \$100 valuation has passed the Sen-

ate without amendment. And on Wednesday Senator Richardson introduced SB 254 which would submit to the people at the general election an amendment to the Constitution raising the county general fund tax limitation (less contingent levy of 5c by state) from 15c to 25c on the \$100 valuation. These two bills tie in with SB 198 introduced by Senator Richardson in February which would submit a constitutional amendment to the people to remove the limitation upon the public debt for necessary expenses.

Several new bills of general interest have been introduced this

week: SB 250 (HB 604) would establish a vocational training school for veterans at Camp Butler; HB 703 would establish a commission to investigate State-created examining boards with licensing power; HB 630 would authorize the establishment of a two-year medical school at the N. C. College at Durham for the training of Negroes; SB 265 (HB 726) would appropriate \$1,000,000 for improvements to North Carolina ports; SB 285 (HB 744) dealing with the licensing and regulation of hospitals and the general medical care program; and SB 286 (HB 748) regulating the sale of insecticides.

By affixing their signatures the presiding officers of the two houses turned 56 bills into laws this week. At least one bill of major interest was finally laid to rest: SB 200, the second Senate bill calling for a statewide liquor referendum, was reported unfavorably by the Senate finance committee. The House liquor referendum bill still rests in committee. Legislative leaders now speak with some confidence of adjournment on or before April 5. It may be done, but if so it will probably be because the presiding officers have more success with turning the clocks back than Canute had with the sea.

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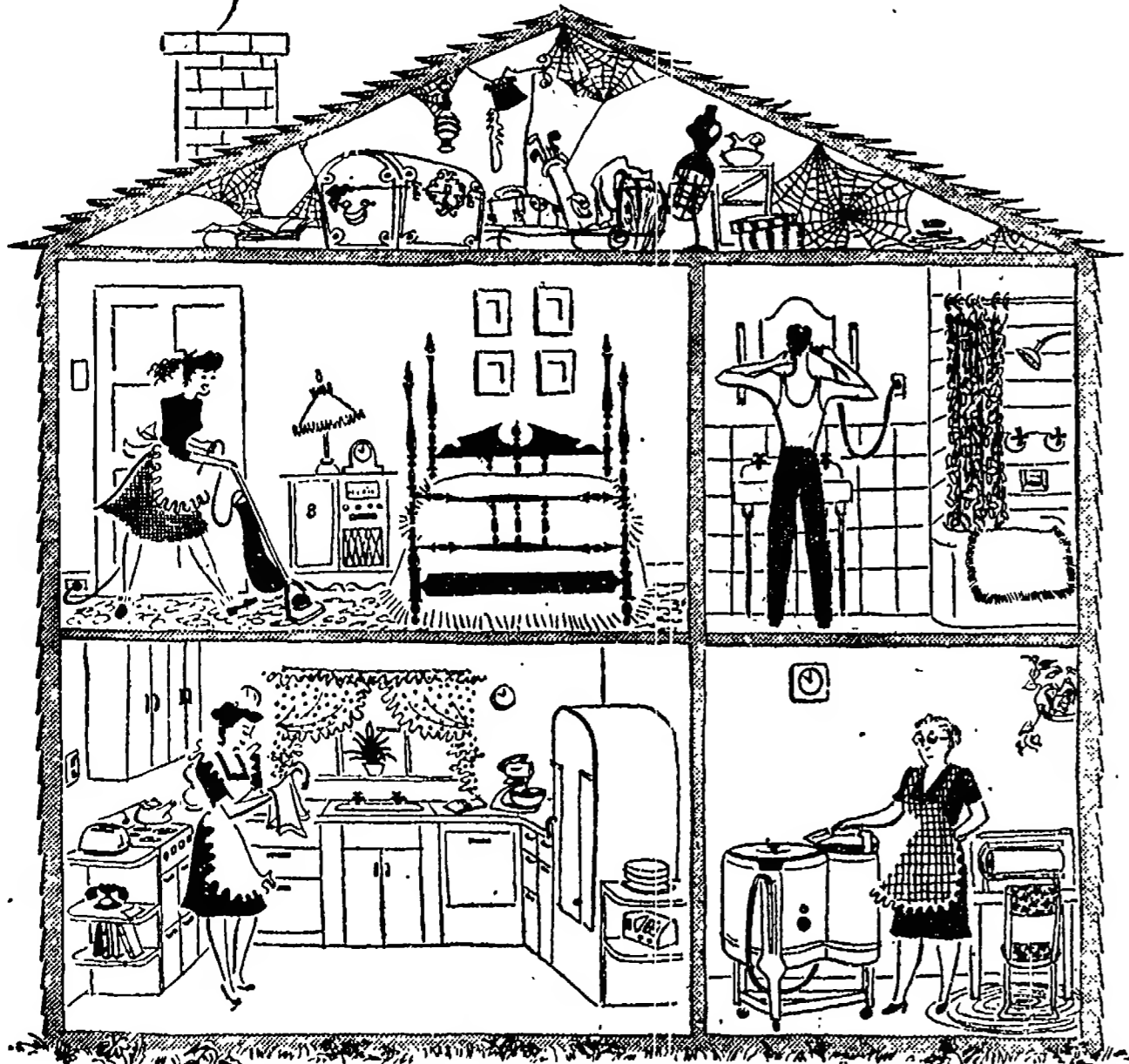
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