

LOCAL EDITORIAL COMMENT

Talton Resignation Is County's Loss

The resignation of Harold Talton as a member and Chairman of the county Industrial Development Commission is a loss Franklin County can ill afford. The reasons behind his actions is a matter which should be of great concern to every citizen interested in the future of the community. The importance of this development and its serious implications cannot be minimized.

After five years of outstanding service as a member of the Commission, Mr. Talton announced his resignation last week saying he is "tired of being slapped in the face by the Board of County Commissioners."

The latest incident which Mr. Talton views as the final slap came about recently when the Commissioners allowed the terms of members of the Industrial Commission to expire. When the error was discovered, the Commissioners, instead of making three-year appointments as required by law, named Mr. Talton and Vice Chairman Frank Collins to one-year terms and failed to reappoint Lloyd West, Commission secretary, at all.

Mr. Talton's resignation took the Commissioners by surprise as they gathered for other purposes and none offered any explanation to him for their actions. Neither did any ask that Mr. Talton reconsider nor did any offer a note of appreciation for his services. After a closed discussion lasting for nearly two hours, the Board did order its attorney to contact Mr. Talton and ask him to return so that he might be given an explanation. Mr. Talton, however, did not return.

The Board explains that it acted, not as a slap at Mr. Talton, but in an effort to get Commission terms back on a staggered basis. It says it went back to the original law of March, 1961 and made appointments. The law required that initially three members be named for one-year terms, three for two-year terms and three for three-year terms. The law was later changed to allow a tenth member, which the Board overlooked in its recent appointments. The law also required that after the initial appointments, all should be for three-year terms.

Although the Board's explanation that it did not take the recent actions as a slap at Mr. Talton may be true, the record of the relationship between the Commissioners, Mr. Talton and the Industrial Commission seems to support much of Mr. Talton's contention as stated to the Board in his resignation comments.

"In view of a few instances in the past," he said, "Where I have personally felt like the County Board of Commissioners have more or less acted against the bank. . . I have felt it was a slap in the face to me. Two or three things have happened and I feel I ought to resign from the Industrial Commission."

The "instances" Mr. Talton referred to could include the following:

— On November 29, 1966, Mr. Talton, as Chairman of the Industrial Commission, announced the location here of Carolina Fine Woods, a division of Sylvania and the largest plant at the time, over to decide to locate here.

— Seventeen days later on December 15, 1966, the Commissioners without making any mention whatsoever in the minute book concerning their actions, agreed to withdraw \$287,227 of county funds from Mr. Talton's bank and place the money in another bank. It took until April, 1967 but the move was finally accomplished.

— On February 24, 1969, Mr. Talton announced the location of the J. K. Rishel Furniture Co. plant here.

— On March 25, he presided at groundbreaking ceremonies and later met with the County Commissioners to finalize a loan to the county for financing the water line to the plant site.

— One of Mr. Talton's bank officials was present at the meeting and offered his bank's full cooperation with the county in the loan. The Commissioners stalled the meeting, held private sessions outside the meeting room and finally decided to split

the loan between Mr. Talton's bank and another local bank that had not participated in the search for Rishel.

— Remarks at that meeting clearly indicated that the Commissioners plan to take one cent off the Industrial Development tax levy to help finance the new water line. This action, if taken, would close the door for any future budget increase for the Commission and would act to prevent any expansion of the Commission's work in the future, according to ID leaders.

These are instances when Mr. Talton might have "felt like" the Board was "against his bank" and "slapped" him in the face. The one-year appointment was another.

There are other indications that the Board has considered the Industrial Commission as a red-headed stepchild over the years. In November, 1964, before Mr. Talton was named Chairman, the two agencies entered into a controversial tangle when the Commission increased its full-time secretary's salary. The Commissioners overrode the Commission and ordered that in the future all salaries be approved by the Board although the law indicates this is the function of the Commission.

It has been known that for many years, Industrial Commission officials would not go before the Commissioners with any request without first alerting local leaders interested in industrial development to attend the meeting. Industry officials were hesitant to face the Board without citizen support. This situation has long been viewed as a "slap" at the Commission.

It is these things as much as anything else that has led to the loss of the county's most energetic industry hunter. Someone else may be named to the Commission, but it is highly doubtful anyone anytime soon, will adequately take his place.

Mr. Talton came to Louisburg in January, 1964. He was appointed to the Industrial Commission in March, 1964, and became Chairman in July, 1966. During these years industrial development of the county has grown considerably. Mr. Talton did not accomplish all these things alone nor did he single-handedly land the industries credited to the Commission since his tenure as a member. Many people have participated in these efforts and many included the County Commissioners have made important contributions to these ends. However, it has been under Mr. Talton's leadership that the county has enjoyed the greatest industrial expansion in its history.

During the years he has been a member and Chairman of the Industrial Development Commission,

the following plants have located here:

— Justice Manufacturing, April 1964; Gay Products, July, 1964; M. E. Joyner Manufacturing, April, 1965; Diazit, March, 1966; TreJay, May, 1966; Composite Structures, December, 1966; Dean Farms expansion, new plant, February, 1967; Carolina Fine Woods, November, 1967 (Later decided not to build here); Durham Hosiery, July, 1968, and Rishel, February, 1969. Brentwood Rest Home also located here this year.

Mr. Talton has served in other capacities over the years and many have been directly connected to industrial development.

— In March, 1964, he was Chairman of a Clean-Up Committee after an industrial development official from Raleigh suggested to a group of businessmen that such was needed to attract new industry.

— In March, 1964, he was named Chairman of a Steering Committee following a decision by local leaders to erect a shell building in hopes of attracting new industry.

— In July, 1964, he was named Chairman of the Finance Committee and led the drive to raise \$86,000 in local subscriptions to finance the Gay Products plant location.

— In January, 1966, he was named Chairman of the Airport Commission, another action designed to encourage new industry.

— He has served several terms as President of the Louisburg College 100 Club and is a Trustee of the College. The College is one of the county's leading industries.

— In December, 1964, he was chosen Man of the Year by the Louisburg Rotary Club for his work in industrial development.

In addition, Mr. Talton's association with First Citizens Bank and Trust Company as its local manager has, in great part, been responsible for the bank's participation in Franklin's industrial development. Some of the bank's involvement include:

— Paying for most of Mr. Talton's expenses in traveling around the country in search for new industry. The bank has also paid Mr. Talton's salary while he was away from his job in search for new plants.

— The bank helped in financing for Gay Products, TreJay and others and made the loan to Franklinton for the water line construction to Durham Hosiery.

— The bank committed \$4 million to Sylvania if Carolina Fine Woods would locate in Louisburg.

— The bank financed the new rest home, built at the urging of Mr. Talton to a personal friend in Kinston after the old boarding home was sold

in the Sylvania deal.

— The bank is currently involved in financing at least one expansion by a local plant after having participated in an earlier one by another.

This is just part of the record of service by Harold Talton and his bank. Again, one must realize that neither Mr. Talton nor his bank is solely responsible for the total industrial development of this county. However, the record cannot be ignored.

No plants located here between 1948 and 1962 when Sportswear came to Louisburg. Since Mr. Talton's entry into the county's development efforts, twelve plants have announced they would locate here and nine of these are now in operation. Under someone else's leadership, the same might have been accomplished, but we have grave doubts. The facts are simple. Franklin County has had a successful industrial development program and it should have been left alone to continue its efforts.

Mr. Talton has said he does not plan to reconsider his resignation. It had been hoped that some action by the Commissioners to assure there will be no further slaps at him, his bank or the Commission, might have caused him to change his mind. Assuming the Commissioners would have given such assurances, a number of people have urged Mr. Talton to reconsider. This column sincerely hopes that he will.

However, no man can be expected to give freely of his time and talents in the service of his community against what he considers to be overwhelming odds. Mr. Talton cannot perform his duties as Commission Chairman without the cooperation of the Board of County Commissioners. Practically every plant location requires this. Past performances by the Commissioners has given Mr. Talton the impression that the future holds nothing more than the same old things.

This is most regrettable from the citizen's point of view. The one-year term which set off the bombshell might have been an honest oversight by most of the Board members. Maybe the short term for Mr. Talton and the Vice Chairman and the elimination of the Commission Secretary was not intentional. However, regardless of the motive or lack of one, the action was illegal and irresponsible.

In 1966, Mr. Talton ran unsuccessfully for the Board of Commissioners. He was a gracious loser. While many others would have quietly moved away from public service and nursed their wounds, he did not. To the contrary, he intensified his services to the county and thereby marked himself as a very big man.

The people have every right to expect members of the Board of County Commissioners—winners all—to be as gracious and to be as big. It is time the Commissioners be reminded that they represent not themselves, but the people of this county. They need to be reminded that they ran as individuals and the people expect them to act as individuals. Each member should stand for and vote his own convictions. These five men are the leaders of this county and it is time they acted the part. They should voice the feeling of the people and reflect the people's desire for a progressive county.

Had the recent actions not led to the apparent loss of one of the real forces behind the county's development, it might have passed unnoticed. But, as it is, it shines like a beacon and a warning to all who will see it. It is time the people demanded representation in keeping with their wishes. We cannot believe the people of this county want to repay such outstanding service as that rendered by Harold Talton in a manner such as is now apparent. Nor do we believe that the people of this county wish to be pictured as a community unfriendly to industrial development.

If, however, this impression has been relayed to Mr. Talton by actions of the County Commissioners, how can it escape future industrial prospects? If we think we have problems now, without effective industrial development, we haven't seen anything yet.



Well, the elections are over in these parts and nobody got real hurt. Some of the losers might think they did, but it won't take long for them to see that it is them that was the lucky ones.

I see where Louisburg is gonna do something about their voting books and that's good. Now if they'll just do something about reporting their returns so's everybody can go home and get some sleep things will get back to normal.

It's always been a curiosity to me how folks around here can find out who was elected Mayor of Podunk, Minnesota before they can find out who was elected to their own town council. Ain't electronics and local pollsters wonderful?

But it was a clean election. All the candidates wore clean shirts except the women. They wore clean dresses. Snake Endergrass, my old rumor buddy, said he seen the same fellow vote six times but I don't put no dependence in old Snake. He ain't seen a sober election day since Cal Coolidge shook him up many years ago. Snake don't like to lose and he gets no stalgic -- whatever that is -- every election day.

They did have a little mishandling of the ballots over in that fine old Southern conservative town of Chapel Hill last week, though. Old Snake would have had a tizzy if he'd been over there. They didn't miss a trick. Between them hippies and ultra-liberals and intellectuals and a few scattered sensible people, folks over there voted more'n once in more'n one place and some drove in from far places to cast their ballots. And they was democratic about it all. They done it in every single precinct. They didn't leave out a single one.

Of course they're saying this didn't have nothing to do with the outcome of the elections. If this was true, why'd they vote. Why didn't they just hire that smart fellow to decide who was gonna win and forget the whole thing? Look at all the money they could have saved. 'Course, in Chapel Hill, they might not have hired any poll holders. From the reports coming from over there now, they must not have.

But I'm for whatever turns them on over there in Chapel Hill just so long as they keep their thing there.

It was funny too, how many folks around here wrote in names. I could have understood it if they'd a signed their names. All them folks, we know can write, but we don't know who none of them are.

Wonder how many of them would have shouted murder if me or you would have told them they couldn't vote? I suspect about the same number as them that stayed home and didn't bother, don't you?

It always curious to me how many folks gripe about the way things are around here and then when they gets a chance to make their gripe count, they don't. They must been busy that day or something. Reckon they're gonna be busy the day they come tell 'em they ain't got no more votes coming, too.

It ain't no use saying they ain't gonna come. They come in a whole lot of places where folks said they wouldn't never.

But, we ain't go no gripes with the folks elected last week. They been doing good and I suspect they'll keep right on doing it. Now if we could just move some of them up to them higher offices in Washington, we might get this country straightened out. Ain't that a nice thought?

Elections . . . we like 'em and somehow we're sorry they're over. Ain't nobody been nice to us this whole week.

Names New Dormitory

On Friday, May 9, the Louisburg College Board of Trustees officially named the new residence for women for the late Sarah Graham Kenan. E. Hoover Taft, Jr., of Greenville, N. C., president of the Board, presided at the ceremonies. Frank H. Kenan, of Durham, president of the Sarah Graham Kenan Foundation, delivered the words of appreciation for the Foundation.

The building was officially accepted in behalf of the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church by Residing Bishop William R. Cannon, of Raleigh.

Mr. Kenan stated the Foundation's gratitude for the excellent use the college has made of the \$240,000 grant from the Sarah Graham Kenan Foundation. Louisburg College President C. W. Robbins, pointing out the financial crisis facing private colleges today, thanked the foundation officials for their wisdom in helping the small college to remain in the forefront of junior college education. Mr. Kenan was joined at the ceremony by his wife and other foundation officials and their wives.

The new Sarah Graham Kenan Hall, which was constructed at a cost of \$560,000 is the latest addition to the Louisburg campus. It houses 104 women and contains a 24-bed infirmary with adequate facilities to serve the student body.

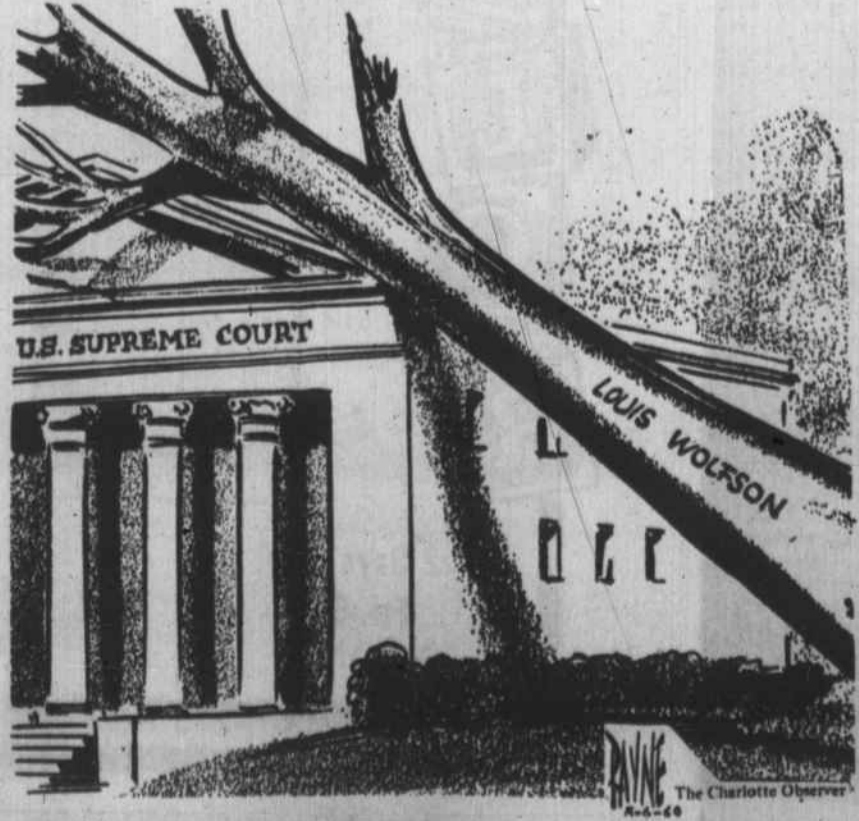
Preceding the naming ceremony the Board of Trustees adopted the 1969-70 college budget of \$1,535,000, a record for the 182-year-old institution. The board also nominated the following persons to serve as trustees, subject to election by the Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church: Miss Lucy Perry Burt, of Louisburg, to replace Superior Court Judge Hamilton H. Hobgood who is rotating off the Board after 17 years service; Judge Henry A. McKinnon, of Lumberton; Mrs. Walter R. Davis, of Elizabeth City and Midland, Texas; The Reverend Mr. Kermit Wheeler of Laurinburg; and Dr. James H. Semans of Durham.

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