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 INDEPENDENT IN POLITICS

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**Two Verdicts Have Been Rendered**

The so-called Lentz-Scott liquor trial is history—almost. And two verdicts have been rendered. One by the court, and one by the people. The court said: "Not guilty" as to Lentz and Scott. The people, apparently, are yet convinced that a quantity of Phil Yates' liquor was stolen by someone the night of the raid.

Judge R. Hunt Parker came to Wilkes, as instructed by Governor Broughton, and was on hand the opening day of court. Solicitor Hall was present to look after the interests of the great State of North Carolina. There were friends from Raleigh, and elsewhere, to "backstop" for Defendants Lentz and Scott. But as the trial got underway, it soon became evident that the case had already been "fixed" in accordance to reports current here several weeks before it was scheduled to begin. Only the formality of a trial was necessary and the result entered into the court record.

Far be it from us to criticize in any respect Judge Parker. It did not take us long to determine, for ourselves, that which we had heard about him. He was firm, fearless, and fair to all parties in his court. If it had been possible for the proper evidence to be brought before him, there is no doubt in our mind that he would have allowed the case to go to the jury, and meted out proper punishment against the guilty parties. Then, too, Solicitor Hall did his best with what he had as state's evidence. Phil Yates, one of the main state witnesses, had proved himself, for the time being at least, bigger than the courts. It was apparent, too, that something, or somebody, changed the state's evidence materially between the sitting of the grand jury at the August term of court and the special criminal term.

To any person, attending the trial with any regularity it became apparent that the trial soon developed into a steam-roller affair—with so many present from various state department in Raleigh—with the steam-roller coming to a climax with the expected directed verdict of acquittal. At times, it was impossible to tell whether some witnesses were for the state or defense.

Has it come a time in North Carolina that liquor, liquor interests, and liquor money, is more powerful than our courts? Has the judiciary of our state lost the substantial support of many good law-abiding men whom you seldom see in a courtroom anymore?

The vast majority of the people of Wilkes county, in our opinion, have a certain belief today that somebody stole a number of cases of the best liquor Yates had at his home on the night of June 1st, thereby defrauding the schools of the county of several thousands of dollars. This view of the whole episode places the entire state bureau of investigation under suspicion, and too, is a reflection against the entire state highway patrol operating in the western part of the state as directed from Raleigh.

It was highly significant that during the trial, orders from high officials in the state patrol were produced and entered into the record commanding every member of the patrol in the western district not to molest trucks hauling bonded, or red, liquor. Was this the beginning of wholesale rum-running through the dry counties we have heard so much about since 1939? Have members of the state highway patrol been receiving "protection money" from these alleged rum-runners? These are only a few of the many questions that might arise from a situation that has been prevalent in this part of North Carolina during the past several years. Then, too, the absence of Yates from the trial, rumored two

weeks before it was to begin, and which resulted in a fact, certainly has not tended to add credit to those involved directly, or indirectly, in the case.

There is yet much to be learned about the Yates liquor raid, no doubt. When, if ever, it comes to light, remains to be seen. So far, two verdicts have been rendered—one correctly by Judge Parker, the other by the people. And it seems to us that it is a situation yet unsolved that has landed on the doorstep of his Excellency, the Governor of North Carolina.

It is entirely up to him to determine whether or not the people shall have, in the future, proper respect for the two law enforcement agencies that have been involved in the Yates-Lentz-Scott drama that started in our county on the night of June first.

**No Evidence**

(Statesville Daily)

The sudden termination of the Wilkes whisky trial leaves too many questions unanswered. First and foremost among these questions of course is, what became of the 90 missing cases of high-priced whisky?

When raiding officers drove up to the warehouse of western North Carolina's leading wholesale bootlegger, Philip Yates, owner of the booze, was very cooperative. "You boys will need some trucks," he said, and forthwith furnished the rolling stock. Shortly after the liquor was checked in at the Wilkes court house, there were rumors in Wilkesboro that thirty cases of Scotch whisky seized from Yates had mysteriously disappeared. So persistent was the street talk that a re-check was made, showing 609 cases on hand. The Scotch was gone, and so were cases of other high-grade fire-water. Who got it? When was it taken? None of these questions were answered at the trial.

Why did Lt. W. B. Lentz issue an order to State Highway patrolmen not to bother whisky trucks? And if it was not the duty of the Highway Patrol to make liquor seizures, why the sudden change in policy? Yates had been one of the State's largest liquor wholesalers; and for years ran his business wide open. There seemed to be nothing furtive, secretive about his traffic. Everybody with eyes to see and ears to hear knew where his wholesale depot and retail outlets were located.

At the time of the seizure, Yates did not seem worried. He helped the officers load and check the stuff, furnished the trucks to haul it off. Then came the indictment of SBI and Highway Patrol officers and when the case comes to trial Yates fails to show up. Why?

The case against Scott and Lentz has been dismissed for lack of evidence. Yates is still under indictment. When and if his case comes to trial, we may get the answers to some of these questions. But we rather think he will plead guilty, say nothing, pay his fine—and that will be the end of the celebrated Wilkes liquor case.

**Flimsy Smoke Screen**

(News and Observer)

Proceedings so far in the strange liquor cases in Wilkes County Superior Court have served to tear away the flimsy smoke-screen behind which the real culprits sought to hide. Now that has been done, Judge R. Hunt Parker, who is presiding, can be depended upon to see to it that all the facts are developed and that those who are guilty are punished in accordance with their deserts.

Judge Parker has properly directed a verdict of not guilty against Guy L. Scott, agent of the State Bureau of Investigation, and Lt. W. B. Lentz of the State Highway Patrol, who were charged with the larceny of 90 of the 697 cases of whiskey seized by State officers at the home of Phillip Yates.

The important work of the court remains to be done. The evidence adduced against the officers was amazing and showed clearly that their real crime in the eyes of those responsible for their prosecution was not the frivolous charge against them but was in daring to arrest Yates and seize the enormous amount of whisky found at his home. Much of the evidence concerned a ridiculous effort to show that highway patrolmen acted beyond the scope of their authority in participating in the raid. It is most significant that the principal witnesses against the two acquitted officers were other officers who had signally failed to perform their own duties in connection with Yates.

Yates, who fled from Judge Parker, is still at large. He must be punished. It is even more imperative that the court ascertain who was responsible for Yates' assurance of immunity, an assurance which apparently extended to a feeling that the machinery of the law itself could be used to punish officers whose crime consisted in having dared to enforce the law against him.

**ABNORMAL ABSURDITIES**

By  
**DWIGHT NICHOLS**  
 et al

**CONSERVE JUICE**

The Duke Power company is cooperating with the War Production Board in an appeal to conserve electricity.

And this reminds us that there are many ways customers can help the company to conserve manpower, tires, gasoline and other scarce articles.

It used to be that we could call the company on the slightest pretext. It was easier to go to the telephone when the lights went off and call the company than it was to try to find the trouble.

Often a fuse is blown. It is easy for any person with a sprinkle of common sense to replace a fuse plug, and some should be kept on hand for just such emergencies. It takes too much time of employes, too much wear of tires and too much gasoline for a company employe to drive out

**VINDICATED**  
 (Winston-Salem Journal)

Law-abiding citizens throughout the State will find occasion for relief and reassurance in the directed acquittal of Guy L. Scott, agent of the State Bureau of Investigation, and Lt. W. B. Lentz, of the State Highway Patrol, on charges connected with the purported disappearance of 90 cases of liquor seized in a Wilkes highway raid.

The integrity of the state branch of the law enforcement system was challenged in the indictment against these two veteran officers. But when the case came to trial the prosecution failed to present any convincing evidence tending to show irregularity or wrongdoing on the part of the two officers. Had it succeeded in doing so, Judge R. Hunt Parker, one of the most fearless and independent jurists on the bench of the Superior Court in North Carolina today, would have seen to it that the case reached the jury.

The vindication of Messrs. Scott and Lentz, we assume, means that the State will continue to benefit by the services of these widely experienced and highly capable officers. Few men engaged in law enforcement activities have established a better record as a detective and man hunter than Guy L. Scott, whose skill in running down suspects is almost uncanny. Lieutenant Lentz has also made quite a name for himself as a highway law enforcement officer and his services have constituted an invaluable asset to the Commonwealth.

**SIZABLE VOID**  
 (Greensboro Daily News)

The Daily News is in complete accord with Judge R. Hunt Parker's ordering of a not guilty verdict against Guy L. Scott, SBI agent, and Lt. W. B. Lentz of the state highway patrol after their trial in a special term of Wilkes county Superior court on charges of larceny of 90 cases of whisky seized in a raid in which they participated. The state patently failed to make out a case against the two officers.

But this turn of events, although accepted on its face value, does not mean that everything is sweetness and light in Wilkes environs!

There remains what we take from this distance to be a sizable void in both the court record and public interest and responsibility. Phillip Yates, at whose home the seizure was made, is still missing. Yates, a defendant himself and previously termed one of the principal witnesses against the two accused officers, had been placed under \$500 bond but disappeared into thin air. Meanwhile the court had denied a motion of counsel to continue his case until the December term of Wilkes court, ruled that this case and the charges against the SBI and patrol members were related and ordered officers to find the missing witness-defendant when he failed to answer when called. But Yates whereabouts remains a mystery, in so far as the public knows, and the course of justice has been obscured, deterred or altered accordingly.

Apparently there are situations and conditions in the state of Wilkes which have not yet been brought into the open and judicial accountability, and the urge therefore remains for proper authority to keep digging away until more of the elements of screwiness have been removed and the full course of justice run. There is no getting away from the fact that Judge Parker himself held that the two cases, one now cleared by direct verdict, and the other held up by flight of a key figure, were related. It is dissolution of this relationship and whatever ramifications it has that the public still awaits.

ten miles and screw a five-cent fuse plug into a socket.

On one occasion we heard of a customer who had the company men go out several miles to see what was wrong with the lights and after they arrived they found that the switch had been pulled. The man of the house then remembered he pulled the switch and forgot to put it back again.

In that case the workmen made the trip, used their time, the truck, tires and gasoline to flip a switch. First, try to discover the trouble. If you can't, then call

But don't take crazy chances. This is the easiest way to get along.

On one occasion in a neighborhood a man with a radio and who did not have his house wired decided to try a plan to get electricity to his radio.

He climbed a pole and tried to tie a wire to the high voltage line. He'll never get it again.

**SAME STATION—**  
 Speaking of radio remains as of the story of the farmer who purchased a radio and had it installed.

His three-year-old daughter sat by the radio all day, listening to every word, even the station announcements.

Last night she leapt to say her prayers and when she had finished she said: "Listen to tomorrow night at this same time. There will be another prayer."

**ANOTHER PRAYER—**  
 And of course you've heard of the selfish prayer of the hypocrite who asked: "Bless John and his wife, me and my wife, as four and no more. Amen."

—V—  
 Moscow will grow more cotton.

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