

Editorials & Comments

The Tax Revaluation

What is revaluation and how will it affect my pocketbook?

These are two questions that Charlotte-Mecklenburg property owners are asking this month, as tax revaluation notices go in the mail.

The first question can be answered quickly. The second question can be answered this summer.

Revaluation, or reappraisal, is the equalization of all real property values. North Carolina State law requires that all counties revalue real property on a periodic basis. The purpose of revaluation is to equalize the tax burden, based on current property values.

In Mecklenburg County, property values are changing rapidly and revaluation is needed more often than it is in counties where population and property values are more static. The last countywide revaluation was in 1971, and since that time many property values have changed drastically.

For this reason the Board of County Commissioners voted to revalue all Mecklenburg property this year. The Tax Supervisor's staff has been working for some 18 months on revaluation. The revaluation notices are now being prepared and mailed.

If you own property in Mecklenburg, you should receive a notice before April 30 telling you the assessed value of your property.

The amount you pay will depend on the tax rate, which will be set in June, when both the City and the County adopt annual budgets.

Tax Supervisor Robert P. Alexander, in an effort to help you understand revaluation, uses the example of a home located within the City Limits of Charlotte and appraised at \$20,000 by the Tax Supervisor's

Office in 1971.

Under State law, this home was assessed at 60 percent of its appraised or market value in 1971; so the assessed value was \$12,000 and you paid property taxes on this amount. The City County tax rate in 1971 was \$3.25 (\$1.56 County and \$1.69 City). The tax bill was \$390.

The State law changed in 1974, requiring the County to assess real property at 100 percent of its market value. So, the same \$20,000 home was assessed at \$20,000, and you paid property taxes on this amount. The City County tax rate in 1974 was \$1.96 (\$1.02 County and \$.94 City), so the tax bill was \$392.

Assuming that this same house is revalued in 1975 at \$30,000, your tax bill will be computed on this amount, after the tax rate is set.

If you believe the new assessment on your property does not properly reflect its market value, you should come to the Tax Supervisor's Office in the County Office Building, 720 East Fourth Street, and review your assessment record with an appraiser. Any errors found in the assessment will be corrected.

If you still believe the value of your property is less than that determined by the property appraiser, you may appeal your value to the Board of Equalization and Review. The deadline for appealing to the Board is June 30, 1975. This Board has the authority to make adjustments in assessments. Additional appeals may be made to the North Carolina Property Tax Commission, then through the courts. Neither the City Council members nor the County Commissioners have the authority to make adjustments in property assessments.

The Black Male Professionals

Recent records show that the proportion of black men employed in professional, technical and managerial positions almost doubled in the 1970's, from seven percent of all employed Negro men in 1959 to 13 percent in 1974.

The figure is even more significant when one considers that the proportion of black men employed in top level positions since the 60's have grown at an even greater rate.

According to statistics from the United States Department of Commerce, the proportion of black men in top level positions in the private sector has increased from 10 percent in 1960 to 13 percent in 1974.

same kind of job he would have been given if white?

A wide range of industries was represented in the survey, and a broad range of business activities. But the largest group, close to 40 percent, was engaged in services at the corporate level, such as personnel, industrial relations, supervisory or managerial positions. Relatively few, however, were in the manufacturing or service industries.

The survey also found that the median income of black male professionals in 1974 was \$12,000, compared with \$10,000 in 1960.



We Must Help Each Other Now More Than Ever Before

REPORT FROM Washington

Welfare Reform-Questions

By Congressman Jim Martin
9th District, North Carolina

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Following is a transcript of Congressman Martin's weekly radio program.)

Q: Congressman Martin, recently you and other members of Congress introduced a bill to reform the welfare system in the country. Specifically, the legislation is directed at the AFDC program, or Aid to Families with Dependent Children. How much do you expect to save if the program is enacted by Congress?

MARTIN: Almost \$2 billion. About one-half of that represents state and county money; the other half, federal.

Q: Where do you expect to save?

MARTIN: Well, from a whole host of areas where resources are presently being misused—some the result of fraud and other illegal activity, but most the result of legal loopholes that permit persons to become eligible when they shouldn't be eligible.

Specifically, the bill would curb the practice of persons with high incomes receiving welfare. It would eliminate a number of improper beneficiaries of public assistance, including strikes, illegal aliens, and persons who defraud the system. In addition, the bill would require recipients to make better use of any

gal loophole.

Q: Hasn't this been tried before?

MARTIN: California was one of the first states to implement welfare reform. Roughly one-third of the recipients either were made ineligible or had their payments reduced. There are 360,000 fewer people eligible for AFDC payments today than there were in 1971 prior to reform. Those who remained on welfare had their payments increased immediately after reform by 27 per cent and by another 16 per cent in succeeding years, and there were enough savings left over to save taxpayers over \$1 billion. The California approach has since been adapted to New York and West Virginia with similar success.

Q: What types of recipients would find their eligibility or grants affected?

MARTIN: Only those persons who are misusing the system, taking advantage of an eligibility or grant loophole, should be affected. As I mentioned before, illegal aliens and strikers. In addition, persons who defraud the system, receiving benefits under a multiplicity of family names or arrangements; persons who have non-needy individuals living with them, with no recognition now being made of the fact that those individuals should be supporting themselves; persons who do not exercise maximum effort to seek employment when they are able—

TO
BE
EQUAL



VERNON E. JORDAN JR.

Food Stamp Logjam

The food stamp program seems to be going the way of the welfare program—a rational attempt to help people in need deteriorates into an irrational attempt to make getting that help difficult.

Just as in the welfare system, people trying to exercise their rights to legally-mandated aid find themselves faced by suspicion, neglect and bureaucratic hurdles to overcome. The people who are supposed to be extending help find themselves instead, trying to limit people from getting that help.

The basic reason for the problems—the food stamp program has been having lies not with the large increases in recipients, but in the attitude of administrators that something must be wrong with anyone who applies for them, and that applicants are probably not eligible anyway, and are trying to “rip off” the government.

It is just incredible how this nation can shovel hundreds of millions of dollars into openly corrupt dictatorships in southeast Asia, where local generals and officials literally steal us blind, but when our own jobless seek food stamps worth a few dollars a month, they're viewed with suspicion and distaste.

This is an attitude typical of popular ideas about human service programs. All those inflated stories about “welfare Chiselers” have finally caught up with many workers who spent their time complaining about the “cheats on welfare” and now, having lost their jobs in the Depression, find themselves in the same position of seeking aid.

The concept of blaming the victims has to be changed. People are poor and need aid not because of personal failings, but because the economic system doesn't work for everyone in good times, and in times like these it doesn't work at all for many people. It has been estimated that over a four-year period, over 80 million people are poor at one time or another.

So let's get rid of that sickness of outlook that assumes they're all trying to cheat the government. Big operators take millions at a shot, but when an overpayment of a few dollars on a welfare check is discovered, the papers start screaming “theft.”

A recent federal report indicates that some people getting food stamps are ineligible for them. Much is made of this, but what does it mean? Merely that someone applied for stamps, was granted the right to buy them and was later discovered to be making a few dollars over the eligibility limit. So what? That's not cheating, it's a bureaucratic error of no real significance, since that person's actual economic condition is still bad, and the extra few dollars doesn't change that reality.

What is far worse are all those people eligible for aid who don't get it. Although some 18 million people are currently receiving food stamps, a federal study indicates that amount to only 10 percent of all eligible people.

The law makes it the duty of food stamp administrators to inform people about the program and to undertake “outreach” programs