



# Capital Letters

By Thompson Greenwood

**GAGGED**—A letter which Oduis M. Mull is supposed to have written in the fall of 1940 when he was campaigning for the Speakership of the House explains the origination of the so-called gag rule—which during this Legislature has attracted more attention than health, education, and everything else combined.

As this column is being written, that Mull letter has not been made public. Maybe it will have been by the time you read this. However, the odds are against it.

Mr. Mull, regarded as an ardent dry, is said to have written this letter to a prominent member of the Legislature. That man is still a member of the Legislature. In the letter he intimated he had worked out an agreement with Eastern North Carolina legislators whereby they would support him for speaker if he would fix it so that the State could not vote on whether it wanted liquor.

Mull became Speaker of the House, and in 1941, as planned a rule was adopted making it so that any bill getting a minority report in a committee had to receive a two-thirds vote of the House before it could be considered by the House. This rule has been continued by subsequent Legislatures.

Why hasn't this letter been made public? Why doesn't Mr. Mull give its secrets? He knows them. The State has a right to know them. The person—it wasn't Ry Gars—to whom the letter was allegedly written has discussed it and knows that the papers—some of them at any rate—want it.

(When the above paragraphs were typed, the word "wrote" was used flatly instead of "sup-

posed to have written" and "said to have written," etc. The changes were made advisedly, because this column has not had the privilege of seeing this letter, but believes there is no doubt it was written—a fool thing for Mr. Mull to do, incidentally.) If Mull was originally responsible for the gag rule, he has done more than any other man this century to undermine the people's confidence in their Legislature.

**FEARFUL**—The U. S. Employment Service has drastically curtailed its services in national and regional offices—and there are fears that Congressional cuts in appropriations may reach right on down into offices operating here in North Carolina.

The Republicans seem to feel that people who want to work can find work, and that consequently the maintenance of a vast array of employees at a tremendous expenditure of money is a flagrant waste of the taxpayer's dollar. That's why you observe so many of the Federal workers walking on tip-toe these days.

**IAPES MEETING**—An "Apes" get-together will be held in Raleigh next week-end, April 12, the IAPES being the International Association of Public Employee Services, North Carolina chapter, and at that time plenty will be heard about the recent cut in Federal appropriations for employment services from about \$6,000,000 to \$900,000. Aside from this, a good time will be had by all—if past meetings are my criterion.

**SURPRISING**—While the GOP's are working to balance the budget, it may interest you to know that of March 1 there were 30,000 citizens of this State in the ranks of the unemployed. Service—and include only those registered with this agency—usually about 10 per cent of the actual figure.

**ON ANOTHER JOB**—Theodore S. Johnson, who rattled the bones of OPA violators during the war as head of this work in North Carolina, was last week made liaison officer between construction men revamping State College and the officials of the college. His salary: \$3,900 per year. His salary as the efficient OPA bone-rattler: around \$3,000.

**GOING AGAIN**—He may deny it, but Oscar Pitts is in politics again. Yes, the man who was regarded as the Broughton hatchet from 1940 through 1944 when he headed the prison department, is now in Asheville operating the Asheville Livestock Auction Market. He went into this work before incoming Governor Gregg Cherry could get around to him—and has done well. He knows cattle.

He will manage Deacon Green's efforts to get back into the saddle in Buncombe County politics by leading the forces attempting to elect a Green-supported GI ticket in the city vote in May.

This is interesting in view of the fact that Cherry is supposed to have little regard for Pitts . . . but Brandon Hodges, Cherry wheel horse for the Legislature, is expected to work hand in glove with Pitts in this new undertaking . . . strange bedfellows.

**NOTES**—There is some chance that many of this State's radio stations will go off the air when the telephone strike goes into effect next Monday . . . Eastern North Carolina legislators say Charles Johnson will be the next Governor, but the Westerners say: "It looks like Ballentine up my way" . . . As expected, this Legislature has been anti-labor, passing the anti-closed shop bill and defeating the minimum wage-maximum hour legislation . . . The State Fair can now borrow as much money as it wishes (if the banks will accept the security) on money earned from its operation . . . Lloyd Griffin of Edenton engineered the appointment of Chester Morris of Currituck and John Graham of Edenton as new judge and solicitor for the Albemarle district . . . He could have had either place . . . Sam Blount of Washington, defeated by Morris for solicitor of this district several years ago, is beer lobbyist in the Legislature again . . . and is the best of the 131 lobbyists registered . . . most effective, anyway." . . .

**AT HOME ON LEAVE**  
Laverne Hewett, son of Mr. and Mrs. McKinley Hewett, of Shallotte, is spending a 20-day leave at his home. He is stationed on the U. S. S. Huntington a light cruiser, now in port at New York.

# THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR A TELEPHONE STRIKE AND WE ARE TRYING HARD TO AVOID ONE

Negotiations With The Union Have Been Going On Since February 17. They are Still Proceeding and Your Telephone Company Has Hopes That An Agreement Can Be Reached That Will Be Fair To Everybody.

The Southern Bell Telephone Company believes that its employees should be well paid, and that their wages should compare favorably with those paid by other concerns in the community for work requiring similar skill and equivalent training. To make sure that this policy is carried out, we are continuously comparing

our wages with other wages.

In the present negotiations with the Union, we have offered a renewal of our present liberal contract, but the Union insists upon unreasonably large wage increases.

## Wage Rate Increases In 1945 And 1946 Amounted to Approximately 26 Million Dollars

Telephone employees wage rates are now the highest in history. They have been increased 75 per cent since January, 1941. The largest increases have been in recent years, and only last year and in 1945, wage increases granted added approximately 26 million dollars to the annual pay of our employees.

These are increases in wage rates and are in addition to millions of dollars in regularly scheduled

raises given our employees. This is an important point to remember in any discussion of telephone wages.

These regular raises have been an advantage to telephone employees for many years.

Under our present contract, thousands of our employees receive wage increases as often as every three months. Other thousands receive increases every six months of every year.

## HERE ARE SOME TYPICAL RATES OF PAY

A five-day, 40-hour week is the basic work period. Non-supervisory employees, such as operators, linemen, installers and repairmen receive overtime pay for work beyond eight hours a day, 40 hours a week, and also receive premium pay for Sunday, holiday and evening and night work.

The following table shows some of the present wages paid, according to the size of the telephone exchange—

| Large Exchanges     |       | Starting Rate |       | Top Rate  |                    |
|---------------------|-------|---------------|-------|-----------|--------------------|
| Operator            | \$27  | to            | \$39  | per week  |                    |
| Installer-repairman | \$28  | to            | \$62  | per week  |                    |
| Stenographer        | \$125 | to            | \$190 | per month |                    |
| Medium Exchanges    |       | Starting Rate |       | Top Rate  |                    |
| Operator            | \$25  | to            | \$35  | per week  |                    |
| Installer-repairman | \$27  | to            | \$58  | per week  |                    |
| Stenographer        | \$120 | to            | \$180 | per month |                    |
| Small Exchanges     |       | Starting Rate |       | Top Rate  |                    |
| Operator            | \$22  | to            | \$31  | per week  |                    |
| Installer-repairman | \$27  | to            | \$56  | per week  |                    |
| Stenographer        |       |               |       |           | Not usually needed |

These rates do not include premium pay mentioned above.

We believe most people would agree that these are good wages. There are, in addition to good wages, many other advantages in working for the Telephone Company, including pensions (with full cost paid by the Company), sickness and death benefits, attractive working conditions, holidays with pay, and vacations with pay of one, two or three weeks, depending on length of service.

## UNION DEMANDS TOTAL \$69,000,000 A YEAR THIS IS EQUAL TO AN INCREASE OF \$3.30 A MONTH IN THE AVERAGE TELEPHONE BILL

The demands of the union on wages and other matters would increase the cost of providing telephone service by about \$69,000,000 a year. This comes to 70 per cent of the Company's wage payments in 1946. It is more than 6 times our net income in 1946. It would make our payroll alone over 2 million dollars more than the total of all the money we took in last year.

In terms of the average telephone bill, it amounts to about \$3.30 per month for every one of a little more than 1,731,000 telephone subscribers, and it is the telephone user, after all, who pays us the money that we pay out in wages. Wages that are too low are not fair to the employees - who do the work. Wages that are too high are not fair to the public - who buy the service.

## FURTHER INCREASES IN WAGES WOULD NECESSITATE ADDITIONAL INCREASES IN OUR RATES

We earnestly desire to go as far as possible in meeting the wishes of our employees and the union. But their demands must be practical and realistic. The earnings of the Company are such that we are now appearing before the Public Service Commission throughout the southeast asking for increases in rates to help meet

the cost of wage increases granted last year. Should present negotiations result in large wage increases, we must immediately seek additional telephone rate increases to meet the increase in expenses. It is with this in mind that we are proceeding in our present negotiations with the union.

## AN OBLIGATION TO THE PUBLIC WELFARE

The Telephone Company is asking union leadership to recognize the obligation of all of us to you - the public.

We are pointing out to the union in our meetings that only by rendering a constantly improved service in the most efficient manner possible can the employees, the union, and the management continue to deserve your good will. We must not disregard the welfare of the public, either in our charge for service or the quality and continuity of the service we render.

working practices as requested by the union, nor for such large wage demands. Consequently, we have offered the union a year's renewal of the present liberal contract, but with the right to re-open the matter of wages at a time when changes in conditions may justify. We sincerely hope the union will accept this offer. We want to keep our employees happy about their wages and their jobs. We want to keep you pleased with your telephone rates and service. And, we want to keep our investors satisfied about the money they have put in the telephone business. For it takes three - telephone user, worker and investor - to keep this business going.

In view of the facts presented here, there does not seem to be justification for a complete revision of our

**A Telephone Strike Would Be Such A Serious Thing For You, For Telephone Employees, And For The Telephone Company That Everything Possible Is Being Done To Prevent It. THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR A TELEPHONE STRIKE.**

SOUTHERN BELL TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY, INCORPORATED



We offer these **BANKING SERVICES**

- Checking Accounts
- Automobile Loans
- Monthly Payment Personal Loans
- Commercial Loans
- Safety Deposit Boxes
- American Express Travelers Cheques
- Life Insurance Loans
- Savings Accounts
- Veterans Loans
- Banking by Mail
- Real Estate Loans
- U. S. Victory Bonds

We invite you to use our complete banking service for all of your financial needs.

Your Financial Island

**WACCAMAW**  
BANK AND TRUST COMPANY

