

by Norman Black  
Staff Writer

# 18 years old: you're an adult

There are quite a few problems encountered when lowering the age of legal adulthood.

Sen. Zeb Alley of Haywood County is finding that out.

Alley was responsible for getting the legislature to enact his bill to grant majority to 18 year-olds as soon as they got the vote.

The bill will take effect within the next few days, after the final touches are put to the 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The Amendment was ratified last week, and lowers the voting age from 21 to 18.

Alley's bill was passed last week by the N.C. Senate, and was formally adopted and signed last Thursday.

Because of Alley, teenagers can now begin to think about some other matters besides their right to vote.

For example, 18 year-olds are now legally eligible to enter into contracts, get credit cards, buy a car on time without their parent's signature, buy and sell land, and sue and be sued.

In the meantime, Alley must straighten out the N.C. general statutes dealing with age as a qualification. In order to accomplish this, he has introduced an omnibus bill that would deal with these problems.

For instance, there is one section of the state laws that prohibit sale of alcoholic beverages with more than 14 per cent alcohol and wines and liquor over 28 proof to minors.

Literally read, that means the ABC stores can now begin to expect some younger customers.

Alley has found, however, two more sections in the law that prohibit sales of alcoholic beverages to anyone under the age of 21.

One or the other has to be changed to eliminate confusion.

Alley said he plans to introduce a bill that would probably prohibit sales to those under 18 rather than 21. This would conform with the legal age for buying beer.

Unless specific changes are made in the omnibus bill, the following revisions are now made possible:

-Those 18 years and older no longer have the protection of the Domestic Relations Court and must stand trial in the District Courts.

-Women over the age of 18 can now obtain an abortion without the consent of their parents.

-Parents can no longer claim their children over the age of 18 as dependents for tax purposes.

-Young people 18 and older no longer fall under the protection of the laws dealing with the employment of minors.

Alley expects little trouble with his proposed changes, though he does see some potential objection to the laws dealing with the sale of alcohol.

The omnibus bill is currently being considered by the Senate Committee on Courts and Judicial Districts.

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