

# Some N.C. legislators want pay raise

By LAURIE DUNCAN  
Staff Writer

After one of the longest legislative sessions on record, prominent N.C. General Assembly members said legislators' workloads have grown enough to justify a pay raise, but they stopped short of endorsing a full-time General Assembly.

Rep. Billy Watkins, D-Granville, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, said the workload has gradually grown and justifies a pay raise.

"I think you could still have a citizen legislature if you paid a better salary," said Watkins, a 10-term member.

North Carolina operates under a part-time legislature primarily responsible for planning a biennial budget. State lawmakers meet for a long session, lasting from February

until August, when they plan the budget. The following June they hold a three or four week session to wrap up loose ends and address other issues.

House Speaker Liston Ramsey, D-Madison, said legislators' salaries should be raised from \$10,140 to \$15,000.

A study committee composed of non-legislators was appointed last session to study whether legislators should raise their salaries, and will issue a report in next summer's short session, Watkins said.

North Carolina spends the lowest amount per capita on its legislature of all the states, said Senate Majority Leader Tony Rand, D-Cumberland.

"I think some adjustment of that is certainly justified," he said.

In recent years the legislature has begun dealing with more complex

issues because of a rise in environmental, educational and consumer concerns, said Thad Beyle, professor of political science at UNC. The sheer number of issues has increased as well, and the size of the budget has expanded tremendously, he said.

Some officials suggested that North Carolina is moving toward a full-time professional legislature because of the increased demands upon legislators.

But General Assembly members said they prefer the present citizen legislature because it includes a cross section of the state and of the people.

"If we went professional we would lose that, and I think that would be a terrible thing," Watkins said.

In professional legislatures, such as those in California and New York, members can lose contact with their constituents because they are at the

capital all the time, Beyle said. Members would be people who are retired, independently wealthy, or have large firms which can run by themselves, he said.

This would make turnover of legislators less frequent, with "no new light being pumped in," Watkins said. A citizen legislature has about a 25 percent attrition rate every election, he said. And turnover allows for both varied opinions and experience, he said.

A full-time professional legislature would be far more expensive than the present operation, Watkins said. North Carolina is among the top 10 states in population and expenditure, but runs the cheapest per capita operation in the nation.

"North Carolina is what all of the mid-South states aspire to be like," Watkins said.

# Town officials to discuss sites for shelter

By ANDREA SHAW  
Staff Writer

Chapel Hill businessmen opposed to giving the homeless shelter a permanent location in the old Rosemary Street jail will meet with town officials this week to discuss three alternative sites.

Mayor Jim Wallace appointed a special task force in February to assist the town and the Inter-Faith Council (IFC) in finding a permanent site for the shelter and soup kitchen. Two months later the committee recommended that the Rosemary Street jail would be the best location.

The IFC has temporarily operated the shelter in the jail since 1985.

The group of businessmen asked the town council in July to postpone a decision on the shelter location until November, while they look for an alternative site. The town council set a Sept. 14 deadline.

Harrison "Mickey" Ewell, spokesman for the 56 businessmen and owner of Spanky's Restaurant, would not disclose the location of the three sites, but said they are within the central business district.

The businessmen said they object to the jail location because the property is too valuable to use for a shelter and estimated costs of

renovating the building exceed the \$150,000 earmarked in the town budget for repairs.

"If they raise the money needed to make the repairs, who's to say they won't outgrow the site in a few years," Ewell said.

With new businesses locating on Franklin Street, Ewell said people consider the area "downtown," and a 24-hour shelter could hurt business.

"Here it is right in our own backyard," he said. "We're trying to keep the village atmosphere and keep downtown a viable place to do business. It's not a positive note."

But Wallace said the jail location is ideal.

"I like it," he said. "It's the highest possible use that we can get from a facility that the town already owns."

The town and the IFC want the permanent site to house both the shelter and the soup kitchen under one roof. The soup kitchen is now housed on Merritt Mill Road.

"The tragedy is that the soup kitchen is in west Chapel Hill," Wallace said. "After finding a place to sleep, a person would have to walk a mile and a half for something to eat."

IFC president Audrey Layden

agreed. "The jail location is ideal," she said. "These people need to have access to employment and other human services agencies."

While the task force was considering permanent locations, downtown businessmen never objected to the jail site option. But Ewell said they were unaware that the town had appointed a task force to search for another site.

Council member R.D. Smith disagreed.

"I can't imagine anyone in the business district not knowing," Smith said. "(The businessmen) didn't say anything until we were about to act on the committee's recommendation."

Ewell said the committee's search was "short-sided" on the IFC's part.

"(The IFC) stopped searching when the town said they could use the building," Ewell said. "The fact that we waited until the last minute doesn't make us any less dedicated (than) if we had started earlier."

Town and IFC officials have found several suitable locations in their three-year search for a permanent facility, but building prices in excess of \$250,000, excluding additional renovations, have made the task

difficult, Layden said.

"In addition to costs and finding a facility with enough room, another problem is neighborhood opposition," Layden said. "Our dedication is to finding a suitable location for our client population."

Smith, who would like to see the jail renovations begin as soon as possible, said the council probably would not extend the Sept. 14 deadline.

"It's something that's immediately needed and came from the recommendation of the committee," he said.

The council will make a decision before the Nov. 3 elections to "avoid letting another winter go by," Wallace said. "The most important thing is to put this thing together by election time."

By tabling the issue, the council might avert action altogether, he said.

The shelter served 146 people last year, and IFC officials said they expect a big increase this year. During the first quarter of this year, the shelter served 61 people.

The shelter will operate on a \$300,000 budget for the upcoming year, including a portion of a three-year \$15,000 allotment from the town.

# Soviet official offers to accept U.S. test monitoring proposal

From wire reports

WASHINGTON — A top Soviet arms control official Monday offered for the first time to accept a U.S. proposal for monitoring nuclear tests, and even offered to let the United States explode its own bomb in the Soviet Union to calibrate monitoring equipment.

The chief U.S. negotiator to arms control talks in Geneva, Max Kampelman, immediately said the offer was worth pursuing.

Colonel-general Nikolai Chervov, of the Soviet defense ministry, said through an interpreter in a luncheon speech that "the Soviet Union is prepared to accept any type of verification" on a test ban agreement.

## Use of counsels opposed

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department on Monday challenged the constitutionality of a law under which independent counsels were appointed to investigate the Iran-contra affair, the financial affairs of Attorney General Edwin Meese and possible wrongdoing by other Reagan Administration officials.

Specifically, in a brief filed in federal appeals court in Washington, the department challenged the independent counsel who is investigating a former Justice Department official in connection with a 1983 Environmental Protection Agency controversy.

The case in which the department filed the brief is sealed from public view, but law enforcement sources confirmed it is the probe involving the EPA.

If upheld in court, the department's position wouldn't affect the Iran-contra investigation or the investigation involving Meese, because independent counsels in those cases have accepted parallel appointments from the Justice Department.

## News in Brief

### Plane crashes near Thailand

BANGKOK, Thailand — A Thai Airways jet plunged into the sea near Phuket Island on Monday and officials said they believed all 83 people aboard, including two Americans, were killed.

Spokesmen said 17 bodies were recovered before search operations halted for the night because of high winds and poor visibility. Meteorologists said skies were clear when the crash occurred.

Air Marshal Narong Dithipeng, managing director of the state-run airline, told a news conference earlier Monday that the plane was trying to evade a 737 of the Hong Kong-based line Dragonair when it crashed into the Andaman Sea eight miles from the resort island's airport.

A statement from Dragon Airlines Ltd. in Hong Kong said company officials spoke to the captain of its aircraft and were "assured that the Dragonair aircraft was not involved." It gave no details and the Dragonair jet's crew would not talk to reporters when the plane returned to Hong Kong.

### Iran avenges Iraqi attacks

MANAMA, Bahrain — Iranian commandos raked a Kuwaiti freighter with machine-gun fire and rocket-propelled grenades in the Persian Gulf Monday in retaliation for three days of Iraqi air attacks, shipping sources said.

Iraq's attacks, aimed at forcing Iran to accept a U.N. cease-fire resolution in their 7-year-old war, came as a convoy of reflagged Kuwaiti tankers under U.S. escort anchored off Bahrain. U.S. helicopters looked for a reported mine.

## Wanna write? Join the DTH

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# State Department of Insurance to fight proposed rate increase

From Associated Press reports

RALEIGH — An overall 3.5 percent increase in personal automobile insurance rates sought by the industry is "excessive and unjustified," the state Department of Insurance said Monday.

Insurance Commissioner Jim Long announced a public hearing for next January on the proposed increase, which includes a 15.8 percent boost for compulsory liability coverage. If approved, that would cost North Carolina drivers about \$45 million more — an average increase of \$25.80 per vehicle.

The second part of the proposal is an 11.6 percent decrease in collision

and comprehensive coverage, which is not mandatory. Roger Langley, deputy insurance commissioner, said the proposed reduction was inadequate.

Long did not appear at a news conference at which his decision was announced. Langley said Long could not comment further because he will preside over the hearing at which industry representatives will make their case for their rate proposals.

The Insurance Department will fight the proposed increase and has retained Raleigh attorney Dan Nelson to represent the department. The hearing will begin Jan. 11 and is expected to last a week, after which Long will have 45 days to make a ruling.

If the industry disagrees with Long's decision, it can appeal to the

N.C. Court of Appeals.

By issuing the hearing order, Long indicated "an opinion . . . that the requested increase would produce excessive and unjustified automobile insurance rates for North Carolina drivers," Langley said in a prepared statement.

After deciding he opposed the increase, Long was required by law to schedule the public hearing, Nelson said.

"To turn (the increase) down out of hand would be arbitrary and capricious and he (Long) would be reversed summarily" by the courts, Nelson said.

The hearing will delay the proposed increase that was to take effect early next year, according to John Watkins, general manager of the North Carolina Rate Bureau, which

represents 390 companies licensed to provide insurance in the state.

"The rate bureau feels that the filing is fully justified, and we certainly intend to support the filing vigorously at the public hearing," Watkins said.

Nelson said Long should reject any rate increase "as a minimum" and that an order to reduce rates "would be nice." But Nelson said he did not know how big a decrease would be appropriate because the rate bureau had not supplied all the information the department wants.

"They've answered 30 out of about 62 questions," he said.

For example, he said, the rate bureau said it studied "exhibits and documents" in arriving at its proposed rate increase. "We asked for copies of the exhibits that they've

studied . . . and they haven't supplied them yet," Nelson said.

Langley said Long agrees with his staff's finding that the rate bureau's suggested increase was based partly on outdated information regarding insurance industry profits.

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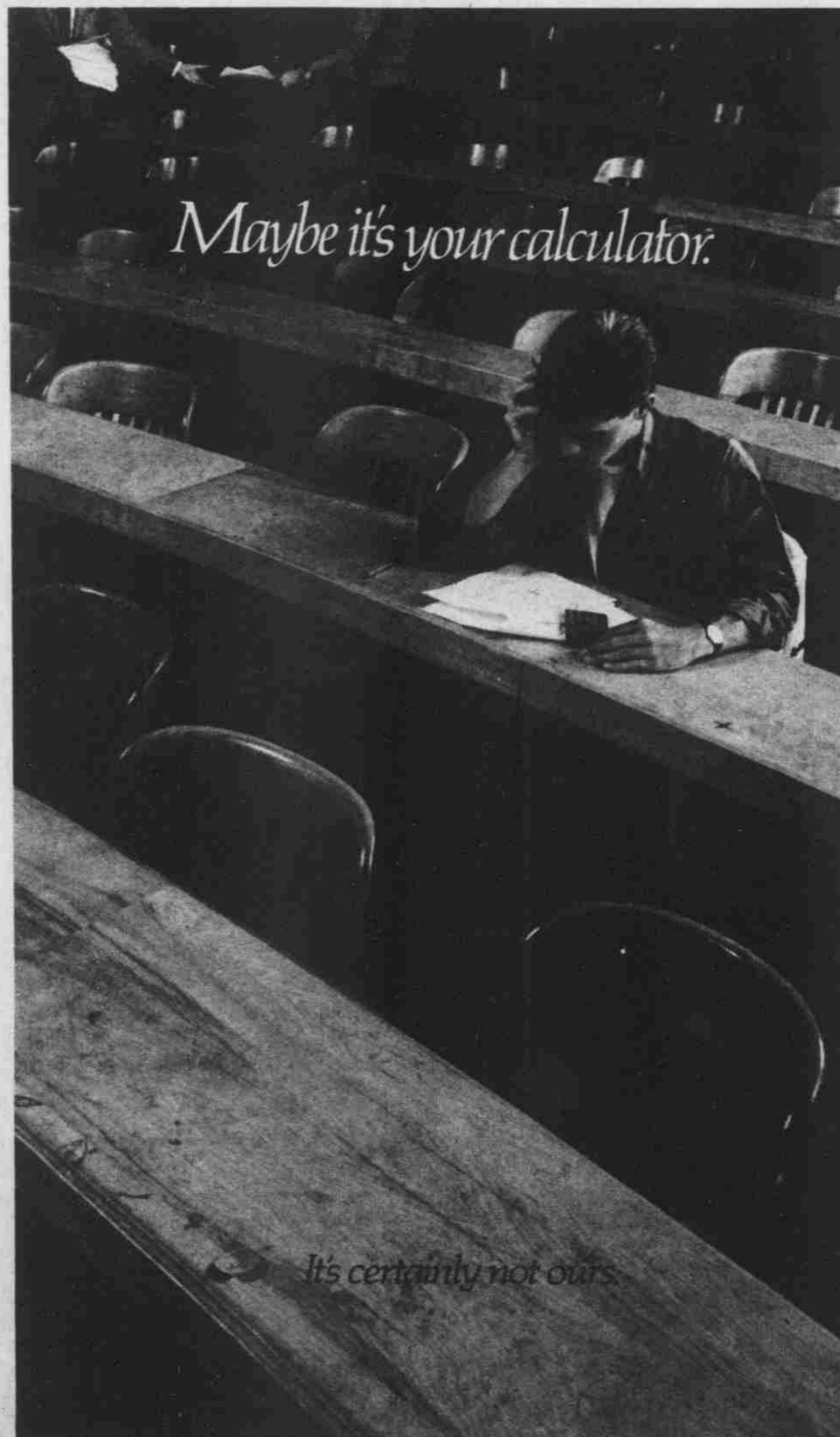
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