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CAPITAL REPORTER

Scott Summers

RALEIGH.—The last gavel has rapped for the 1951 General Assembly, and the time has come to try to evaluate the actions of the Legislature just ended.

In the final days of the session, the lawmakers themselves were trying to do a bit of reviewing themselves. The "hold-the-liners"—perhaps better described as the status quo or "do-nothing" boys—were on the defensive as they tossed bouquets at each other, terming this "the best" Legislature of them all. At the other extreme were those who called this "the worst" Legislature in history, with the possible exception of reconstruction days.

In between were the bulk of the legislators, who had come to Raleigh honestly hoping to do what was best for the State, regardless of what legislation was recommended by whom.

And they were in the middle. Lobbyists combined with Scott-administration haters to take over the so-called House leadership. Special interest advocates were in the saddle in the Senate. The liberals had no leadership.

"I feel as though I've been beating my head against a stone wall for three months," one of these caught-in-the-middle lawmakers said. "It's hard to think of anything really constructive that this Legislature has done."

Rep. Bill Rodman of Beaufort, an honest and sincere hold-the-liner, said he thought the outstanding accomplishment of this General Assembly was the acceptance of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation offer of a million dollars worth of art. This will be matched by the State's \$1,000,000—appropriated and set aside in 1947 for the purchase of art treasures.

"This is the first big step in making North Carolina the art center of the Southeast," Rodman said. "We will be able to look back with pride upon our part in the establishment of a great art center here."

That was a major action, it is true. But there are two other pieces of legislation that stick out in my mind as the ones that this Legislature will remember with pride—and they had better treasure these, because they are among the very few actions of the 1951 General Assembly that would not be better forgotten.

First is the great forward step taken to provide for the treatment of the mentally ill. For years we have been housing our mentally ill—inadequately in many instances—and that is all. Little if any treatment has been provided. We just put a roof over their heads, fed them and gave them clothes, then let them wait around either to die or cure themselves.

But this Legislature set up a psychiatric teaching hospital at the University of North Carolina. It provided an extra half million dollars to give more adequate physical and mental treatment of patients.

And they earmarked \$50,000 a year to be spent in getting the top psychiatrist or psychiatrists in the country to be brought to North Carolina and take charge of the psychiatric school and treatment in the hospitals. Salary was to be no object. (A top man was found, but Assistant Budget Director Dave Coltrane, for reasons known only to himself, refused to approve his hiring, despite the mandate of the Legislature.)

The second most important good thing done was establishment of a policy concerning paving of secondary roads. In many instances throughout the State it has been found that the paving of a road did not bring all of the desired benefits expected. Farmers found that under the eight-ton weight limit, because of thin top-coatings in an effort to pave as many miles as possible, hampered them in getting their produce to market. This low weight limit also has been found to be a drawback to industries wanting to set up on secondary roads, in some instances. Tougher weight

penalties were passed into law to protect all highways, but the important thing is that a series of conferences between highway officials and legislators resulted in establishment of a secondary road policy.

Summed up it is this: North Carolina will not build, or rather pave, secondary roads that are less serviceable to the farmer and industry than they were before being paved.

It may mean that we will get fewer paved roads, but those that are built will not be torn up by reasonable truckloads of produce going to market.

Probably just as important as these two steps was the new farm census law fostered by Senator Adam Whitley of Johnston. This act will double the appropriation for the farm census, making \$64,000 a year available, and will allow county commissioners to hire persons to take the census yearly.

"A good farm census is invaluable in our farm programs, getting allotments, and in any number of things to help improve farm income and living conditions," Senator Whitley said. "This will help us get a good census instead of the half-way one we had."

The Assembly also had on the credit side of the ledger:

1. A foot-in-the-door stream sanitation measure. Although written by industrialists, who—naturally—would not do themselves wrong, many believe it will lead to a really adequate, workable stream sanitation law in the future. It is so tied down with wheres, ifs, ands and buts, however, that it might react much like the motor vehicle inspection law and result in the death of stream sanitation in North Carolina for a long time to come.

2. A clamp down on another loan shark racket. The lawmakers put an ax to an extremely profitable practice of small loan outfits. These folks have been, many of them at least, forcing persons getting loans to take out health and accident insurance policies. These would insure payments of loans if the debtor was run over by a car, or had some other accident, or if he happened to get sick. Incidentally, the cost of the loan premium in many instances ran as high as 70 per cent of the total amount loaned. It was a sweet way of avoiding the State laws against usury, and it paid well—even one supposedly respectable banker was using this method in his own little small loan outfit, according to ex-Banks Commissioner Gurney Hood. Anyway, the lawmakers made it so that the rates for any such policies in the future will have to have the approval of Insurance Commissioner Waldo Cheek.

I suppose that you also will have to classify "no new taxes" as being on the favorable side of the assembly action. Certainly, no one wants his taxes raised if he can help it. The lawmakers were instructed by the folks at home that added taxes were not wanted, and they voted that way. They refused to put new taxes on or to eliminate any sales tax exemption despite the fact that many of them felt they were leaving Raleigh with a red-ink budget. It will be a miracle—or rather, it will be sure 'nough inflation—if the present tax schedule brings in enough money to meet the record half-billion budget—some \$502,000,000, to be more accurate.

On the other side of the ledger are quite a few black marks.

One of the most flagrant pieces of bad legislation was the Hamilton Bill, reportedly a rewriting of the judges' retirement act but actually a bill passed to get Judge Luther Hamilton of Morehead City back on the State gravy train to the tune of some \$555 a month. This is the same Judge Hamilton who became totally disabled two days before he was to have been dropped from the list of special judges. He also is the same judge who admitted he sentenced a man to die—although he did not believe he merited a death sentence—be-

(Continued On Page 4)

U. S. WORKERS RANK SECOND IN FOOD PURCHASING POWER

WASHINGTON, D. C.—The purchasing power of American workers hourly earnings—in terms of food—ranked second among 20 countries in 1950, the U. S. Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics reports in its February, 1951, Monthly Labor Review. Australia was the only foreign country studied where less working time was required than in the United States to buy a given amount of food.

Following Australia and the United States, in order, were: Norway, Canada, Denmark, Israel and Sweden (tied), Great Britain, Czechoslovakia, Ireland, and Switzerland, Finland, Netherlands and Western Germany, Chile, France (Paris); Austria (Vienna), Hungary, Italy, and the Soviet Union.

Soviet workers had to work seven times as long as Americans to buy a given quantity of food, according to the best available estimates of 1950 earnings combined with 1950 food prices. Wage earners in Canada, Great Britain, Israel, and the Scandinavian countries had to work 20 to 64 per cent longer than Americans.

Workers in Sweden, Great Britain, and Israel were able to buy more food with their hourly earnings in 1950 than in previous years, relative to the United States.

In comparing food purchasing powers of various countries, BLS points out that between 1937-38 and the spring of 1950, U. S. food prices less than doubled and hourly earnings more than doubled—increasing the power of American workers' earnings in terms of food at the market by about 17 per cent.

The amount of food U. S. hourly earnings can buy rose almost 5 per cent between March, 1949, and March, 1950, because of a 3 per cent drop in food prices and a 1-1/2 per cent increase in earnings. This broadened the existing gap between the food purchasing power of U. S. workers and most other foreign workers during the year.

In 13 of the 19 foreign countries covered in the survey the purchasing power of the wages of workers with family responsibilities is increased by means of family allowances. In some of these countries, the increase is substantial. The largest family allowances are reported from France, where the food purchasing power of the worker with a wife and two children is one third higher with the family allowance than without it.

The Bureau stresses the difficulty in evaluating the economic significance of these variations in work time required to buy food in different countries. War damage in most of the foreign countries increased the disparity between U. S. and foreign food purchasing power in the postwar period as compared with prewar. Currency devaluations in September, 1949, were a factor in changing food purchasing powers between 1949 and 1950.

Differences in food purchasing powers cannot be considered indicators of the relative well-being of wage earners in different countries, since indexes of the purchasing power of earnings in terms of food are but one factor concerning relative welfare, BLS notes.

In Arkansas, where they have about as vicious a state law against Unions as you'll be able to find anywhere, the state supreme court ruled that picketing is just as basic an American right as free speech. The ruling came in a case where the strike already had been settled. The Arkansas court ordered the lower court to wipe the injunction off the books.

On March 23 the railroads announced that they're now going after a 15 per cent increase in freight rates. If their past success on this score is any indication, they'll get it.



Scene at a bright leaf tobacco auction sale in one of Kinston's 14 tobacco warehouses. (Photo by Whitaker-Lefeur, courtesy of Kinston Chamber of Commerce.)

(See Kinston Story On Page 3)

Cost Of Living Index Brought Up-To-Date

MILWAUKEE, Wis.—The UAW-AFL Research Department has received several inquiries relevant to the government's announced changes in its computation of the cost of living index. Users of the UAW-AFL Binder are particularly concerned as to how this will affect monthly releases under the cost of living section.

Beginning with January, 1951, figures, the Bureau of Labor Statistics will issue both the improved adjusted index and the old index as compiled heretofore. The UAW-AFL research service will supply both figures with the complete breakdown for the old series—the one which will be used by those unions having escalator clauses in their contracts. As

new contracts are signed, they are expected to embody the new cost of living index and eventually this will replace the old one.

Index includes:

1. Correction of the rent index to take account of the effects of higher rents charged for newly built rental units.
2. The use of 1950 population figures in combining separate city indexes into a U. S. index.
3. Modernization of the market basket of goods and services priced for the index to reflect postwar consumption and spending habits. Both the items priced and the importance attached to various items in the market basket are being adjusted to reflect the pattern of family spending today.

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP BRING PRICES DOWN

WASHINGTON.—The United Labor Conference adopted this program for action:

The need for an effective anti-inflation program dealing with prices, rents and taxes is obvious to all the American people.

Action must be undertaken by the Administration and by Congress to protect every American and to safeguard the defense program itself.

Action will be taken if the American people make their voice heard in unmistakable terms.

To carry out the declaration of principles adopted here today, we agree:

1. To enlist co-operation in support of this anti-inflation program from all community organizations which support our democratic institutions and are devoted to the anti-totalitarian objectives of America's defense program.
2. To promote public meetings, radio and television programs, speeches before community groups and other appropriate means of alerting every citizen to the need of improved defense mobilization and anti-inflation policies.
3. To forward letters, telegrams, petitions and memorials to President Truman and members of Congress in support of the principle of equal sacrifice and fair play in the mobilization program. Our first objective is the improvement of the Defense Production Act.
4. To help establish local consumer committees through which the people may be fully advised of the developments in Washington, violations of price regulations may be publicized, and to co-operate with public spirited merchants for local anti-inflation programs.
5. To secure the widest pub-

RENTS JUMP SKY HIGH WHEN RENT CONTROLS ARE OFF

Rent control ended in Hammond, Ind., March 2. By the middle of March the office of Rep. Ray Madden (D., Ind.), whose district includes Hammond, was swamped with protests.

Telegram after telegram add up to this: Hammond landlords are gouging the city's tenants. Here are some of the wires:

"Rent decontrolled. Landlords hog wild. We are at their mercy. Can anything be done? Please help . . ."

"Since rent decontrol our rent for one and a half rooms has increased from \$50 to \$75. My salary has increased 10 per cent. What is to be done?"

"I beseech you to act at once regarding unfair rentals. My rent is to jump 65 per cent first of next month. Now I ask you in God's name, is that fair?"

"Since rent controls were removed in Hammond our rent, one and a half room apartment, has been increased 50 per cent. Unfair."

"Since rent decontrol in Hammond I have had my rent increased 58.5 per cent. This is certainly unjust."

"Since rent decontrol has gone into effect in Hammond, Ind., my rent has been increased from \$55 to \$77.50. Seems unfair."

FOOD GAMBLERS GET FAT WHILE FOOD PRICES GO HIGHER

The smart boys are gambling in food. It's better than stocks or horses. That's because you need to pay only 10 per cent down to buy corn, wheat, soybeans or other farm products in commodity markets.

But if you want to buy a chunk of General Motors or some other company listed on a stock exchange, you have to put down 75 per cent. And if you're playing the ponies, you have to plunk down cash on the barrelhead.

Gambling going on in food is a big reason you pay so much for groceries. The big-business defense program has placed no restrictions on food gamblers. Congress last year beat a proposal to control food gamblers.

William Fairfield, a farm expert, tells how you can get rich quick by gambling in food in an article, "How Speculators Increase Our Food Bill," in the March 20 issue of The Reporter magazine:

"A man who has \$750 to speculate with can buy at most \$1,000 worth of stock. On a commodity exchange, however, the same \$750 can get him contracts for as much as \$7,500 worth of a farm product.

"If the stock goes up 10 per cent to \$1,100, he can sell at a profit of \$100. If the farm product goes up the same 10 per cent, to \$8,250, he can sell at a profit of \$7,500 . . ."

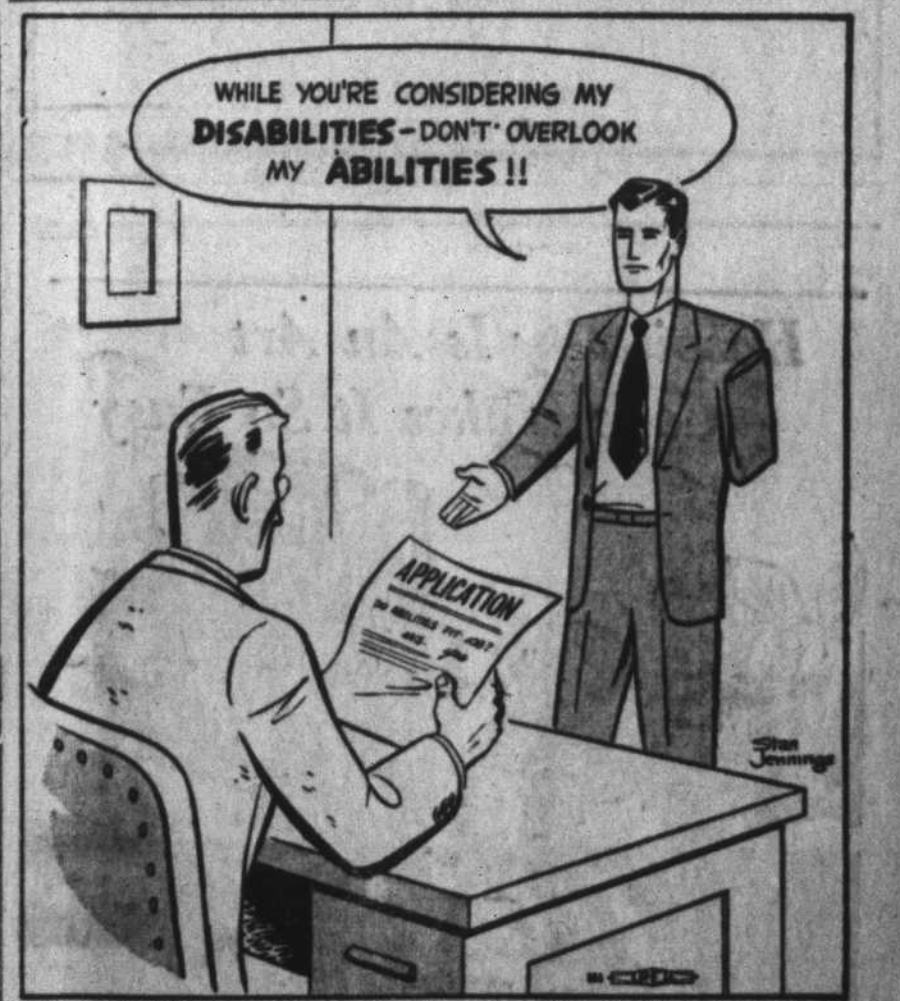
"Most of the trading on the commodity exchanges was speculative. That is, the traders played no direct part in the marketing or processing of the farm commodity involved. They were interested only in making a profit from price changes."

"On one particular day last summer . . . more than 8 in every 10 bushels of December wheat and more than 9 in every 10 bushels of November soybeans traded on the Chicago Board of Trade were bought and sold by speculators."

"During 1950, the volume of soybean futures traded on that exchange amounted to more than 15 times the size of the entire U. S. crop."

When you see a Union Shop Card you know the firm which displays it pays Union wages and observes Union working conditions. Non-Union firms do not display the Shop Card. Look for it!

Organic matter is essential to profitable production of every crop; it increases the ability of the soil to absorb and hold water, and improves the structure of the soil and its ability to utilize plant foods, especially nitrogen



Don't Be Mentally Handicapped, Mr. Employer!

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