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The County's Financial Plight

THE audit of Macon County's books, the report of which was made public this week, offers plenty of food for thought for taxpayers.

In some respects the report is quite gratifying; in others it is distinctly disappointing, if not downright alarming.

All of us are glad to hear that the county's records are efficiently kept and that "the affairs of the county under the present administration have been very ably, efficiently and economically carried out;" but one wonders at the same time what the commissioners intend to do about the bond default of \$70,260.

There is plenty of money owing to the county in taxes—long past due taxes—to take care of this default; but little has been done to collect these delinquencies. Although tax sales have been ordered and held for 1932 and 1933, no sales of land for delinquent taxes for the years 1928 through 1931 have yet been held, albeit the tax moratorium legalized by the last General Assembly has expired. Delinquent taxes for these years alone amount to considerably more than the sum needed to wipe out the county's bond default; but unless definite steps are soon taken to collect these delinquencies, the county might as well erase them from the books and those who make a habit of paying their taxes prepare themselves for an increased levy on their property.

The audit shows the county had a fund surplus on June 30 of \$166,471.25, more than enough to meet the budget for two years or longer; but as long as this surplus appears on the books alone, instead of in the county treasury, taxpayers may expect no improvement either in the default situation or in the county tax rate. If proper steps had been taken at the proper time, most of this surplus might now be in the treasury; but it will be a pleasant surprise if the county is ever able to realize fifty per cent of it. Many of the delinquent taxes now listed as assets are utterly worthless, and if the lax policies of tax collecting which existed in this county prior to 1932 are allowed to continue, practically all of these delinquent assets will be voided.

Not only could the county meet all bond payments now due, if it could collect existing delinquencies; but it also would have a large balance on hand which it could use to advantage in buying anticipated bonds at a considerable discount; which would mean a saving to taxpayers in the future.

Disclosure in the audit report that \$5,466.92 in tax certificates for the years 1925 and 1927 are missing, demands immediate investigation and action to locate these certificates, or, if they cannot be found, to place the responsibility for their disappearance. Macon county taxpayers already have suffered because of a similar loss of tax records and they should not be willing to sit idly by and permit such an occurrence to happen again.

Soil—Our Chief Asset

THE greatest asset of any agricultural section is its soil. For that reason it is distressing to learn that soil erosion has reached a severe stage on many thousands of acres in this county and that its worst ravages have occurred in the valley of the Little Tennessee which by all rights should be the most fertile land in this entire region.

A report just made public by a soil specialist of the Department of Interior after making a survey of the 10 westernmost counties of North Carolina shows that Macon ranks third in the amount of damage done. More than 25,000 acres were reported seriously eroded, nearly 10,000 acres abandoned on account of erosion, and approximately 23,000 acres eroded in lesser degrees. In view of the fact that only a comparatively small portion of this county's total area of 332,800 acres is cleared land, and that it is on this cleared land where most of the erosion occurs, these figures are painfully significant.

Government forestry forces, with the assistance of the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Tennessee Valley Authority, are doing much to check costly erosion on government property; but it remains for the individual land owner to cope with the situation on his own property. Some farmers already have taken steps to prevent the loss of their topsoil by planting lespedeza and other crops of similar nature, by terracing their hillsides and constructing check dams where necessary. Those who fail to take such constructive soil-preserving measures where necessary will wonder some day why their farms no longer yield them a living.

Big Boy, Take A Bow! — by A. B. Chapin



THROUGH CAPITAL KEYHOLES BY BESS HINTON SILVER

HOPES TO CRACK WHIP—

Representative Tam C. Bowie, of Ashe County, has given up hopes of running for Governor in 1936 and tells close friends that he will back Congressman R. L. Doughton if the latter seeks to succeed Ehringhaus. At present Mr. Bowie is tearing his shirt for Representative Willie Lee Lumpkin, of Franklin, for Speaker of the 1935 House. Bowie hopes to control the next session of the House and thinks his best bet is to elect Lumpkin Speaker. The grapevine reports that Mr. Lumpkin might give Mr. Bowie the chairmanship of either the House appropriations or finances committees.

STRATEGY—

Capitol Hill has the Speakership campaign figured out this way—Robert Grady Johnson, of Pender, in the lead with Lumpkin and Laurie McEachern, of Hoke, running hard for second place. The dopsters predict that in the end either Johnson or McEachern will withdraw and combine forces to defeat Lumpkin. The gentleman making the sacrifice is expected to be rewarded with the chairmanship of one of the important committees and a place on one or two other good ones. That makes sense if you understand the game of politics.

SECRETARY OF STATE—

The old grapevine has trotted out a potential opponent of Stacey W. Wade for his post of Secretary of State in 1936. Editor J. B. Bonton, who publishes several weekly newspapers and lives in Benson down in Johnston County is said to be toying with the idea that he would make a good Secretary of State. Editor Bonton long ago cultivated a taste for things political and is a former Chairman of the Johnston County Democratic Executive Committee.

HORSESHOES—

Proponents of the proposed revised constitution see a lot of four-leaf clovers and horseshoes in the Supreme Court's decision that the changes in the basic law cannot be voted on this November because the repeal election last year was a "general" election and the first after the General Assembly voted to submit the document to the will of the people. Nobody realized better than the proponents that the new

constitution was doomed to defeat at the polls. Both sides agree prevailing unsettled conditions make it a bad time to vote on anything as important as a constitution.

MAKING POLITICAL HAY—

Women Democratic officials are forming their lines for the November campaign. Mrs. Charles W. Tillet, Jr., of Charlotte, recently elected vice chairman of the State Democratic Executive Committee, and Miss Mabel Penny, of Raleigh, recently elevated to the post of vice president of the Young Democratic Clubs of North Carolina, are letting no grass grow under their feet and are actively engaged in field organization. These two women take their politics seriously and know the advantage of getting in the first punches. No activity on the part of Republican women is in evidence in Raleigh.

CONSIDERED A BET—

If Clyde R. Hoey, prominent Shelby Democrat, doesn't run for Governor in 1936 he will embarrass more than one political prophet in North Carolina. Around the State Capitol it is considered a sure bet that Mr. Hoey has already made up his mind to enter the lists. Lines are already being drawn between Hoey supporters and backers of R. L. Doughton in Raleigh with Hoey unquestionably the favorite on Capitol Knoll.

JUST WON'T DIE—

Despite the fact that he has announced that he is "too busy" to make a campaign for Governor, the rumor machine still rates Julian Price, president of the Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Co., of Greensboro, as a potential threat in the coming race. Price's friends haven't given up hope of his running and it is largely their enthusiasm that is keeping the Greensboro man in the political news.

NOT ALL VIRTUE—

All you have to do is read the newspapers accounts of investigations of election charges to learn that the primary system of selecting party candidates is not the instrument of political purity it is supposed to be. From all accounts a primary can be just about as corrupt as a party convention and much more expensive.

COMES TO BAT—

George Ross Pou, former Executive Director of the State Highway and Public Works Commission took a lusty swing at diversion of Highway funds in a recent article written for Carl Goerch's weekly magazine "The State." Proposing

an amendment to the State constitution which would prohibit diversion of the stupendous tax bill of 148 Hee, motorists, the former Director pointed out the need of improvement of rural roads, used largely by farmers, decent wages for employes of the highway department and safety on the public roads. He asserted a tax should be used only for specific purpose for which it is levied.

JUST COASTING—

Wallace Winborne, of Marion, Chairman of the State Democratic Executive Committee, is taking his time about opening headquarters in Raleigh. While he has made no announcement regarding delay in starting the campaign, it might not be a bad guess that the textile strike has had something to do with it.

NO CHANGE—

The State Highway and Public Works Commission and Governor Ehringhaus are taking their own sweet time in naming a chief engineer to succeed John Waldrop who was killed in an automobile accident but Charles Upham, who held that position when Frank Page was chairman, is still considered in Raleigh as the best bet to get the job. Upham knows the State road system as well or better than most candidates for the job and is said to be the choice of the Governor. He came to Raleigh to confer with high-ranking friends of Ehringhaus about the post and is said to have agreed to quit a better paying job in Washington to get back in North Carolina.

WANTS A SCALP—

Political wisdom vendors are now quoting Judge M. V. Barnhill as warning that if no other candidate can be found to oppose Senator Josiah W. Bailey the Judge himself will tackle the job. There is much sentiment for returning Mr. Bailey to the ranks of a private citizen being voiced at present but the difficulty seems to be in getting a man-sized candidate to make the race. Many names have been mentioned but so far no one has answered the call.

Jacobean Furniture

The term Jacobean, as applied to furniture, refers to furniture made in the period between 1603 and 1625, or an imitation of it. If it is genuine Jacobean furniture it is an antique.

The two things that cover a multitude of sins are charity and the code.