

The Franklin Press

and

The Highlands Maconian

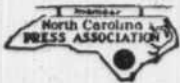
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We CAN Have Good Schools Now

At its meeting last week, the Macon County board of education:—

Vetoed the proposal to make the office of county superintendent a full-time position.

Chose a superintendent from a list of 10 applicants.

Declined to request the superintendent to visit the schools.

Approved—with virtually no discussion—the election of a new principal for the Franklin school district, and the reelection of the principals in the Highlands and Nantahala districts.

And discussed a number of other school problems.

All of this business was transacted in a period of less than two hours.

* * *

Members of the county board of education probably would be the first to agree that they have the responsibility for the upbuilding of the public schools of Macon County, and that their most important function is the election of a county superintendent. And the board members could hardly fail to agree that it is their solemn duty to seek out and elect as county superintendent the best man available.

How did a majority of the members of the board of education meet that responsibility?

The board had before it one oral and nine written applications. There was one way, and one way only, by which the board could determine which of those 10 men was best qualified for the office of superintendent—by a careful consideration of each one of the 10 applicants.

It was the first time most board members knew what the written applications contained, or even who the applicants were. Yet these nine written applications received no consideration whatever, beyond a perfunctory reading by the chairman.

It is quite possible, of course, that the man the board elected is the best of the 10; but if so, it was by pure chance. The board doesn't know, and it never will know, whether it chose the man who was the best fitted for the job, for the simple reason that a majority of the board members refused to make any effort to find out.

"Actions speak louder than words." And by their actions, a majority of the board members plainly said:

"We are satisfied with the situation. No great improvement is needed or could reasonably be expected. All's well with the schools."

All is not well with the schools. And about the only persons who do not know it are some of the members of the Macon County board of education. The school situation is poor in most places throughout the United States. It is worse in Macon County.

And if members of the board of education doubt that statement, all they have to do to become convinced is to visit the schools in other Western North Carolina counties, provided, of course, they go with open minds.

In this connection, it is worth noting—in case some board members haven't read the law—that the law provides that the board may authorize per diem and traveling expenses for such school business.

* * *

Members of the board of education probably would agree that it is their responsibility to set an example of law-abiding citizenship for the school children of Macon County. And the board made considerable show, at an earlier meeting, of complying with the law that requires that 15 days' public notice be given that a superintendent is to be elected.

But a majority of the board members, at last week's meeting, chose to ignore a second school law and to flout a third.

By torturing the language of the law regarding the duties of a county superintendent of schools, it is possible to raise a question as to the literal meaning of the law when it says a superintendent shall devote his full time to the duties of his office; but nobody who has read the law can honestly doubt

what the spirit of the law is.

A majority of the board, however, didn't even bother to torture the language; they decided just to ignore the law. (And ignore, at the same time, ordinary common sense and sound business judgment; for what private business in Macon County would pay a man \$4,100 a year, and permit him to devote only part time to his job?)

There is another law that is not subject to question. It says in plain language:

"The County Superintendent shall be required to visit each public school in his county at least twice while the schools are in session". (General Statutes of North Carolina, 1943, Section 115, Sub-section 115.)

"... shall be required".

Shall be required by whom?

Obviously, by the county board of education.

But a majority of the board, in executive session, according to Chairman Moore, turned down even the mild suggestion that the county superintendent be requested to visit the schools.

By their actions, a majority of the board members plainly said:

"We are above the law".

* * *

Members of the board of education probably would agree that, in a democratic country, public officials have the responsibility for acting "with a decent respect to the opinions" of the citizenship.

Yet a majority of the members of the board, despite widespread public opinion on the question of a full-time superintendent and of school visiting by the superintendent, chose to use its own good judgment—and to give the public no explanation whatever for its decisions.

Furthermore, the board had before it a petition signed by hundreds of citizens. If the board so much as read it, much less studied the list of signers or considered their petition, there is no record of the fact.

By their actions, a majority of the board members plainly said:

"The public be damned".

* * *

Thoughts like these have been passing through many minds during the past week, and it is well to express them and be done with it.

The fact remains, however, that the five men who make up our board of education are the men who were appointed according to law. They were nominated in the 1946 Democratic primary, and were appointed by the general assembly; and a majority of them now have elected a superintendent.

This board and this superintendent are the tools we have to work with during the next two years in attempting to make at least a start toward building a decent public school system in Macon County. It makes sense for us to make the best use possible of the tools we have.

It is true that our school officials have given little indication that they want or will accept the cooperation and support of the general public. They should have it, nevertheless. It need not, of course, be a supine acceptance of everything they do as right. We can, and should, continue to criticize and demand action; but that need not keep us from applauding wise decisions, and backing the board and the superintendent when we think they are right. And it is the duty of good citizens to offer constructive suggestions—and to keep on offering them!

That kind of support our school officials should have. Not because they necessarily have done anything to deserve it, but because our schools are bigger than any individual or any group, and because our children's rights to educational opportunity, during the next two years, are far more important than any mere personal likes or dislikes, or even any resentment of stubborn and high-handed official actions—because better schools is the issue, and what officials we get them through is incidental.

The school board and the county superintendent, whether they know it or not, cannot go far without the public behind them. And they will find that they will be surprised amount of public cooperation will only encourage it.

* * *

If a majority of the members of the board of education will start thinking of the schools in terms of the children instead of petty politics or self-justification; if they will start basing their actions upon honest thought instead of prejudice and whim; and if they will assert themselves and insist upon wagging the dog's tail instead of being wagged by it...

And if the county superintendent will recognize that he holds no deed in fee simple to the public schools of Macon County, but that they belong to the people, and that the people—whether politically influential or not—have a right to a respectful hearing; if he will acknowledge to himself that his chief responsibility is not to a board of five men, but to the children of Macon County; and if he will substitute work for talk, and results for alibis...

If these things come about, our school officials will find their hands quickly loosed from the bonds of public apathy and distrust and resentment that now bind them.

* * *

One year from now school board members will be nominated again. When that time comes, the present administration should be weighed, not upon a basis of personalities, but strictly upon results—as to whether there has been a notable improve-

ment in our schools. (And that should mean schools, not buildings; for, when we get new buildings, they will not have been built by any school board or superintendent, but by the people of the county who made them possible by voting bonds and who will pay for them in taxes.)

If our present officials are weighed on that basis, and found wanting, the solution is simple.

But in the meantime, it should be the fervent hope of everyone of us that, one year from now, we can honestly say that our school officials have done a good job.

The children of Macon County are entitled to good schools now. And to hope that our present officials will provide them is the least we can do for the 4,000 boys and girls who look to our school officials, and to us, for a fair chance in life.

It's Up To Us

Frequently we voters are inclined to be lazy.

We say:

"There's no choice between parties and candidates. Nobody much is running. Just the same old gang. Why should I vote?"

This year the people in Franklin and Highlands can't say that, and be honest about it. For in each town exactly three times as many candidates filed as there are offices to fill. And the candidates represent many shades of thought and a wide variety of experience and background.

In Franklin and Highlands next Tuesday we shall elect the men who will direct our town government during the next two years. Who those men are to be, we shall determine. If we choose wisely, we shall have good government; if we choose foolishly, our reward probably will be just such as we might expect.

And if we don't vote at all—well, in that case, we shall have no honest grounds for complaint, no matter what kind of town government we get.

LEGAL ADVERTISING

ADMINISTRATRIX NOTICE

Having qualified as administratrix of Wm. G. Culbertson, deceased, late of Macon County, N. C., this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 16th day of April, 1947 or this notice will be plead in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate settlement.

This 16th day of April, 1947.
MARIAN A. NORTON,
Administratrix.
A24-6tp-May29

EXECUTRIX NOTICE

Having qualified as executrix of Annie Slagle, deceased, late of Macon County, N. C., this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at 200 Grandin Road, Charlotte, N. C., on or before the 16th day of April, 1947 or this notice will be plead in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate settlement.

This 16th day of April, 1947.
KATHERINE SILER ZACHARY
Executrix.
A24-6tp-May29

NOTICE OF SUMMONS IN THE SUPERIOR COURT NORTH CAROLINA MACON COUNTY

Grace Owenby Queen
Plaintiff
VS.
Ralph Wayne Queen
Defendant

The defendant above named, Ralph Wayne Queen, will take notice that an action entitled as above has been commenced in the Superior Court of Macon County, North Carolina by the plaintiff to obtain a divorce from bed and board on the ground of wrongful abandonment, for custody of their children, and support for herself and said children, and other relief; and the said defendant will further take notice that he is required to appear before the Clerk of Superior Court in Macon County at his office in the Courthouse in Franklin, North Carolina, on or before the 16th day of June, 1947 and answer or demur to the complaint in said action, or the plaintiff will apply to the Court for the relief demanded in the complaint.

This the 22nd day of April, 1947.
J. CLINTON BROOKSHIRE,
Clerk Superior Court.
A24-4tc-May15

EXECUTOR'S NOTICE

Having qualified as executor of the estate of Dr. John H.

JOIN

Bryant Mutual
Burial Association

Oldest and Strongest
in the County

Fouts, deceased, late of Macon county, N. C., this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 11th day of March, 1947, or this notice will be plead in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate settlement. This 11th day of March, 1947.

DOVER R. FOUTS,
Executor.
Burnsville, N. C.
M27-6tp-May 1

ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTICE

Having qualified as administrator of Mrs. W. T. McDonald, deceased, late of Macon County, N. C., this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 23rd day of April, 1947, or this notice will be plead in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate settlement.

This 23rd day of April, 1947.
R. H. HOLDEN,
Administrator
A24-6tp-May29

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