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APRIL 9, 1953

Plain Common Sense

It is just plain common sense, it seems to us, to say that:—

1. The General Assembly of North Carolina, meeting 300 or 400 miles away in Raleigh, is not the proper group to say what persons shall serve on Macon County's board of education.

2. The present system, under which members of the county board of education are nominated in the Democratic primary one spring and appointed by the General Assembly the next spring, has everything to be said against it and nothing to recommend it—it is cumbersome and long drawn-out, it divides rather than centers responsibility, and it creates confusion and uncertainty.

3. Considered purely from the viewpoint of partisan politics, the present system is bad. It tends to disfranchise all Republican voters, insofar as naming a school board is concerned. And any such disfranchisement of a large group of voters ultimately is sure to discredit the party responsible—in this case, the Democratic party.

4. There is nothing partisan about the problems of administering this county's public schools, and the membership of the school board should be determined without reference to the political affiliations of the persons chosen to serve. The governing boards of the towns of Franklin and Highlands are elected on a non-partisan basis, and the plan has proved highly successful.

In short, common sense suggests that the members of the county board of education should be elected outright by all the voters of the county, and that the choice should be made on a basis of individual fitness rather than political affiliation.

Macon's Rep. Walter Dean has introduced a bill in the General Assembly that seeks to do just that.

Mr. Dean's bill probably is not perfect. Many persons, no doubt, could suggest improvements. Two years' experience with it as law may show the need for amendments.

But this is a first step in the right direction. As such, it deserves the active support of good citizens, regardless of party, who want better schools and better local government.

If the people of this county are indifferent about this matter, Mr. Dean's bill may die in committee. If, on the other hand, enough good citizens are interested enough to write or telegraph Mr. Dean or this district's senator, Dr. J. H. Crawford, or the chairman of the house education committee, to which the bill has been referred, the measure can be enacted into law.

The Grand Jury Report

It has been the somewhat amusing experience of Franklin Press reporters to find that they could safely write and set in type a grand jury report before the grand jury is even chosen.

For one grand jury after another, in reporting on county institutions, etc., says the same things.

In fact, the wording of the reports is sometimes so nearly identical we have even wondered if, on occasion, the grand jurors simply went back to the court records and copied the report of the preceding grand jury.

That situation is amusing, but it also is disturbing. It tends to discredit local government in general, and the grand jury system in particular.

And so we express the hope that next week's grand jury, if it sees fit to repeat recommendations that have been made court after court and year after year, also will give thought to means of seeing that its recommendations are heeded. Otherwise, it might as well save its time and breath.

It Should Be Repealed

Two weeks ago, the N. C. General Assembly, in haste and without either committee study or giving the public an opportunity to be heard, wrote into law an important amendment to the state budget act.

That act for 28 years has provided that the Assembly's joint appropriations committee and its sub-committees should hold open meetings. The amendment authorizes the appropriations committee and its sub-committees to meet in secret sessions.

Those are the committees, it is important to remember, that determine how the state's three-quarters of a billion dollars of tax money shall be spent during the biennium. It is worth remembering, too, that the appropriations bill is so complicated it must, of necessity, be left largely to committee. And it is a matter of record that it is rare indeed for a major change to be made in an appropriations bill after it comes out of the sub-committee. In other words, the sub-committee pretty well writes the appropriations law.

Under the amendment, it is writing that law in secret sessions.

That fact aside, it is a highly dangerous thing for a legislature to write into law specific authorization for secret sessions. It is a precedent that is especially dangerous at a time when the rights of freedom of information and freedom of thought are under attack in many places and in many ways. It is the kind of precedent that could be—and in other lands has been—the beginning of the end of freedom.

Because those things unquestionably are true, the General Assembly surely will give serious consideration to the proposal now before it that this secrecy amendment be repealed.

Letters

MEN'S STYLES

Dear Weimar:

I have just read your "Strictly Personal" column in The Press of the 26th inst. and in which you referred to the styles which women adopt.

I, too, have given this matter some thought, but my critical attitude quickly passes when I think of some of the styles men have adopted. To use your expression, "once upon a time", (and you and I remember it!) men wore trousers that were termed "full peg" and I could name men in Franklin who have seen those full peg trousers adorned with pearl buttons on the cuffs and along the side seams. Have you forgotten the button shoes, "pistol leg" trousers and the derby hat? I have a photograph of my Grandfather Fouts and a Mr. Cagle, who was later a United States marshal and killed in the "dark corner" while trying to make an arrest. This photograph made by Uncle Green Trotter, shows the long handle-bar mustache. After all, I believe men are just as vain as the women when it comes to styles, make-up, etc.

Please do not get the idea that I am reminiscing as I write this, because to do so might be an indication of advancing years!

Cordially yours,

Burnsville, N. C.

DOVER R. FOUTS.

Others' Opinions

YOU READ A NEWSPAPER

(Mocksville Enterprise)

You pick up your newspaper. The dateline on it reads 1964 or maybe it's 1965—the date is of little consequence.

You glance at the bulletin released by the public relations office of the N. C. General Assembly that is in session in Raleigh.

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STRICTLY

PERSONAL

By WEIMAR JONES

This is my strictly personal hours of his own time to listening to a man who is about to retire from public office.

He is singled out through no disrespect for others who have served with him and who also are preparing to retire. It just so happens that I am personally acquainted with his efforts as I could not possibly be with those of other members of his board.

I have had the opportunity, as few other persons could have, to know how many times the retiring chairman of the county board of education has been out before daylight to ride a school bus and learn for himself if route or other changes were needed and practicable, or to see if a school furnace was being properly fired, and if so, to try to learn why it did not provide adequate heat. I have had occasion to observe his patience as he gave hours upon

hours of his own time to listening to complaints and suggestions and discussions. I have seen him working as a board member—often a minority of one; battling the majority on issues he considered fundamental, but working smoothly with the same majority on matters involving no major issue of principle. And I have seen him with the heavy responsibility of the chairmanship carried—especially during the interim between superintendents.

Undoubtedly, he made mistakes. But through his six-year stint, I have been impressed with his determination to do what he thought was the right thing—sometimes in the face of terrific public pressure.

And so I, as one citizen, take this opportunity to acknowledge a debt to Bob S. Sloan for his efforts in behalf of better schools in Macon County.

Our Great America by Woody

