

The Franklin Press

and

The Highlands Maconian

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Cause For Thanks

At this season of giving thanks, Americans have much to be grateful for.

Of all our many blessings, the greatest, of course, is personal freedom. And the most important and most precious of our personal freedoms is the right to think our own thoughts, to put our thoughts into words without fear, to disagree with any, or all, of our fellows.

It takes no seer to sense that that freedom is imperiled today; to recognize that it has been impaired somewhat, by law, by court decision, and by mass fear.

Happily, though, there is good cause for optimism that the pendulum will swing the other way; because there appears to be a growing realization that America is not free because it is strong and great, but is strong and great because it is free.

Absentee Voting Here

This newspaper would be the last to suggest that all things political in Macon County are spotless. We are sure they are not. And we've called, long and loudly, for improvement.

But we wonder a little at the way this county has had the finger of suspicion pointed at it by some of the state's newspapers — on evidence that is purely geographical and arithmetical.

Not only have no specific charges been made of absentee ballot corruption in this county; there hasn't even been an official indication that an investigation is in order. Yet Macon, because it is in bad geographical company — it adjoins counties where charges of absentee ballot corruption have been made — is lumped in with them.

The geography comes in by the simple addition of the sum of absentee ballots issued in this county. There were many; so it is assumed there was corruption.

Now the first basis for finger pointing is a perfect example of guilt by association — geographical association; a basis considered by most thoughtful people as insufficient. And we find ourselves unable to follow the reasoning that it is the quantity of absentee ballots that creates the evil. It doesn't seem to us numbers have anything to do with it; the question is: Were the ballots cast according to law?

As a matter of fact, the numbers lose much of whatever significance they might have, when analyzed. It is true that 1127 applications for absentee ballots were issued in this county, and it is true that that represents something like 20 per cent of the votes cast in Macon County at the 1952 election. But only 523 of those applications were returned, and the number of absentee ballots actually cast and found in order was 423. That is approximately seven per cent of the Macon vote — not 20.

Actually, it is quite possible that a 20 per cent absentee vote here would be properly cast, because a very large number of the persons who still call this county home work and live elsewhere; indicative of how large the number is the fact that approximately 20 per cent of the people who subscribe to this newspaper are former Macon residents who now live elsewhere.

We think the finger of suspicion has been pointed at this county without sufficient evidence. And we are convinced, from long observation, that the political ethics of Macon County people are far above the average.

Having said that, we hasten to say some other things.

We have no doubt that the absentee ballot has been and is abused in Macon County. We think it is the duty of every good citizen to present every scrap of evidence they possess on the subject to the grand jury. We hope the county Republican chairman, who is dissatisfied but unspecific, will deliberately seek evidence and present it to the grand jury.

Meanwhile, we'd welcome an investigation by state authorities. Whatever is wrong here ought to be brought to light and remedied; and whoever is guilty ought to be punished, severely.

We think the bad features of the absentee ballot far outweigh the good, and we think the General Assembly should repeal the absentee ballot law. Furthermore, we do not see how a Democratic Legislature can justify absentee voting in the general election when the Democrats will not permit it in their own primary.

And while we're cleaning up, we'd like to see something done about two other election evils that, in our opinion, are even worse than the evils of absentee voting.

We consider the way political henchmen haul voters in to the polls, like cattle, a travesty on the theory that elections are to determine the will of the people, voluntarily expressed.

And we think the system of "markers" at the polls is indefensible. With the exception of the blind, no man who isn't intelligent enough to mark his own ballot is intelligent enough to cast a ballot.

The Davies Case

The case of John Paton Davies continues to bob up in discussion; it will continue to do so for a long time. The reason is it involves something basic.

Mr. Davies, an American career diplomat of 23 years' distinguished service, was dismissed recently by Secretary of State Dulles.

Now Mr. Dulles has — or certainly should have — the right to discharge any man in his department with whom he cannot work. But that is not the reason Mr. Davies was discharged; he was dismissed as a security risk.

Eight times within the last five years, Mr. Davies' loyalty has been investigated, and each time he has been cleared. But a ninth security panel recently recommended that he be dismissed, as a security risk, and Mr. Dulles followed the recommendation.

A security risk because he is disloyal? Not at all! Both the security panel and Mr. Dulles emphasized that he unquestionably is completely loyal. No; Mr. Davies is a security risk because he is charged with showing "bad judgment", a number of years ago, about the situation in China.

There is considerable evidence that Mr. Davies showed better judgment, at that time, than his superiors. But that is beside the point. The point is that we have now come to brand men as security risks for stating honest opinions — unless those opinions prove correct.

This is another long step along the road toward trying and convicting men not for their actions, but for their thoughts.

That road has no turning. And its destination is slavery of the mind.

Stacey Russell

Stacey Russell was an adopted son of Macon County who served the Highlands community faithfully and well.

Retired, he had the time to do civic work; and he gave unstintingly of both his time and his energies. For years he was active in Rotary and the Red Cross; but perhaps his greatest contribution was his work for a community hospital in Highlands. His vision, enthusiasm, and devotion in that field have borne abundant fruit.

We in Macon County are the richer for his having lived the latter years of his life among us.

Some Handshake

Now we've heard everything: The Senate of the United States has had to go into recess, for 11 days, because Senator McCarthy, on trial, is hospitalized by injuries suffered shaking hands!

FARM PRODUCTION DROPS

(N. C. Agricultural Review)

North Carolina has less land in farms and fewer people on farms in 1953 than in 1952, according to the annual County Farm Census Summary released recently by the Statistics Division of the State Department of Agriculture.

Total land in farms declined 73,146 acres, but harvested cropland increased about 2,000 acres, improved pastures gained 55,387 acres, other pastures increased by more than 218,197 acres, and idle cropland decreased by 4,530 acres.

People of all ages living on Tar Heel farms in 1953 totaled 1,426,798, a decrease of 40,000, or 2.7 per cent, from the previous year. This downward trend in farm population has been under way for some years.

OUR DEMOCRACY — by Mat

THOUGHTS and THANKS

AS A NATION WE ENJOY NOT ONLY MATERIAL BLESSINGS NOT DREAMED OF BY OUR FATHERS WHO ESTABLISHED THANKSGIVING — BUT, WHAT'S MORE, WE'VE GROWN IN TOLERANCE, IN NEIGHBORLINESS, IN APPRECIATION OF THE FREEDOMS THAT WE HAVE WON IN OUR DEMOCRACY.



WE CAN ALL BE THOUGHTFUL OF, AND THANKFUL FOR, OUR NATIONAL HERITAGE — AND PARTICULARLY FOR THE VALUES OF THE SPIRIT THAT IT EMBRACES.

Others' Opinions

RACE LABELS

(Greensboro Daily News)

Mrs. Elizabeth Avery Mills Hoffman Waring and her husband, former federal Judge J. Waties Waring, returned to Charleston the other day for a visit — their first after two years in the North.

Mrs. Waring is the Detroit divorcee who, having married Judge Waring, is credited with changing his views on segregation and other matters concerning racial relationships in the South.

A news story about the Warings' return noted that 99 per cent of the 300 persons who greeted the couple were Negroes.

The low percentage of whites in the crowd which welcomed Mrs. Waring is understandable.

In 1952, Mrs. Waring reportedly told a Negro audience in Charleston that Southern whites were "decadent, stupid, selfish, savage, full of pride and complacency, introverted and morally weak and low."

Let us hope that Mrs. Waring's two years of association with anti-prejudice groups in the North have taught her to observe one of their chief precepts:

Never pin labels on any race . . . ma'am.

STRICTLY

PERSONAL

By WEIMAR JONES

Thanksgiving inevitably calls to mind the Thanksgiving dinner, and that, in turn, suggests thoughts about how people's eating habits have changed.

Thanks to modern refrigeration, gadgets like thermostatically controlled ovens, and scientific knowledge about such things as calories and vitamins, people undoubtedly eat much more intelligently than they once did, and possibly better. I am sure, though, they don't eat as much, and I wonder sometimes if they eat as flavorfully.

Thanksgiving dinners of a generation ago, for example, really were things to behold — and to hold. Today we may or may not have turkey, but certainly most of us have only one meat dish. In the old days, no self-respecting hostess would serve less than three. And whereas today's well balanced meal calls for three, or possibly four, vegetables, the Thanksgiving table of another day groaned under a score, ranging from dried beans and celery to stewed pumpkin and cabbage. There'd be half a dozen kinds of pickles, and jellies and jams without end. And bread! Nobody in that day would have thought of serving rolls and stopping at that.

"Do take some of this lamb, Cousin Mary; it will go so well with your beef roast and turkey . . . and it always seemed to me mutton just calls for gooseberry jelly; try some of this that Cousin Hilda gave me for my birthday . . . And you'll need some candied sweet potatoes with it . . . My! I hadn't noticed you were out of cream- Irish potatoes . . . And bread, (as though I needed to be urged!) . . .

and butter'em while they're hot. . . . Or maybe you'd prefer some of this light cornbread with it, or some Boston brown bread . . . and have your biscuits later with jelly or honey — there are plenty more biscuits in the oven . . . And if eating habits have changed, so have the customs that go along with it. There was a time in Macon County when it wasn't uncommon for one family to invite half a dozen other families to Thanksgiving dinner. And that was the day of big families.

What modern hostess, no matter how many gadgets she has, would attempt to feed 20 or 30 or even 40 guests! And what a difference in the way children are treated. Then, the children took it as a matter of course that they should wait for the last table; and that might be the third, or even the fourth. Today? . . . exactly! the children are served first. And that, believe me, is as it should be. For if this recitation of food lists makes my mouth water, the recollection of the last table is even more vivid in my memory. It is terrible even to contemplate being as hungry as children got in those days of interminable delay. Many times I've grumbled:

"I don't mind waiting on 'em to eat, but why do they have to talk so long" . . . and had my feeling of injustice confirmed by the apology of Aunt Susie or Cousin Sally or whoever the hostess was: "My! I know you children must be hungry. We sat and talked too long (as though I didn't know it!) . . . Well, sit right down (as though I needed to be urged!) . . .

News Making As It Looks To A Maconite

By BOB SLOAN

A great deal of attention is being focused on the absentee vote situation here and throughout the rest of Western North Carolina. There are two or three facts that hit me hard when the situation was first brought to my attention.

First, some of North Carolina's bigger and supposedly better newspapers are guilty of some pretty sloppy writing. They not only editorialize in their news columns, but they are also guilty of not really digging into the facts.

They started with the fact that here in the mountain counties, particularly Macon, we have a high absentee vote in proportion to the registration. After seeing this, they then concluded, or at least so implied, that the sole cause was crooked work in the elections. Far be it from me to attempt to say that every absentee vote, Democrat or Republican, cast in Western North Carolina or Macon County was strictly legal. Frankly, I don't think so. But neither do I think that every absentee vote cast in any other county in North Carolina is strictly legal. What gripes me is that the newspapers, had they stopped to think or even investigated the situation as good news men should, would have come up with these obvious answers as to some of the causes why we have a large absentee vote here.

1. Many of our people have one or more members of their families working away on a job. According to the chairman of the board of elections about 80 per cent of the absentee votes issued went to people outside of the county, most of whom have found it necessary to do so in order to gain employment.

2. Here in the mountains, people have a much more difficult problem to get to the polls than in cities, therefore, older people are more inclined to request ballots. In Franklin, the precinct is too large and many old people do not like to climb the Courthouse stairs. All these factors had something to do with the number of absentee votes cast in this county. But none were mentioned by the big papers.

Before labeling this large absentee vote as "evidence of fraud and corruption," honest reporters and editorial writers would have ascertained and mentioned all the contributing factors.

To me, the whole thing is just another example of the fact that newsmen are quick to grab at the sensational and the obvious. There is a good story in the fact that there is a relationship between lack of employment and the absentee ballot, but it would take lots of work and it would not be nearly as sensational.

To me, the whole thing is also a good example of why, we, the people, should not give "The Press" a shotgun to fire scatter shot with without at least having a modified choke. At present, I think at least some are guilty of firing rather wildly.

Do You Remember?

(Looking backward through the files of The Press)

50 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving Day and turkeys are 20 cents a pound.

Highlands is pretty well represented this week at court. Among those present we see Messrs. David Norton, W. W. Smith, J. J. Smith, Jerry Pierson, Dr. G. W. Hayes, Sumner Clark, Henry Stewart, Jr., Charley Wright, and others.

25 YEARS AGO

Vitaton heard at local Movie. Feature pleases full house of fans who came to "Talkie"—Headline.

Mrs. L. S. Conley has been conducting the local Red Cross roll call this week.

Miss Cornelia Smith, of New York, is visiting Mrs. D. D. Rice for a week.

10 YEARS AGO

Sleet Sunday afternoon and night encrusted forest and telephone wires from Cullasaja Falls and over Highlands. Phone wires were down between Franklin and Highlands from Sunday to Tuesday afternoon. Highlands was in a black out, due to ice on the power lines, from Sunday night to Monday afternoon, it is reported.