

The Franklin Press

and

The Highlands Maconian

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THURSDAY, AUGUST 23

The Pearsall Plan II

When you and I stand in the voting booth September 8 (that's just a week from Saturday), we cannot shift our responsibilities to others. If we are good citizens, we already will have consulted our own minds and consciences, and our decisions will be our own. Shall we vote for or against the constitutional amendment that is the heart of the Pearsall Plan?

Let's look at the proposition.

WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT THE PLAN?

The first thing that is good about it is that it is proposed by a group of intelligent men who have made a long, careful study of the situation.

And they are honest men. They are sincerely convinced:

(a) That unless something is done to meet the situation created by the U. S. Supreme Court's anti-segregation decisions, the people of North Carolina, through their legislators, will refuse to provide enough tax money to operate the schools. Thus, they argue, their plan is one to SAVE the public schools.

(b) That this plan, by authorizing educational grants to children assigned to mixed schools against the wishes of their parents, and by giving the people of a local school unit the right to suspend one or more schools, by majority vote—this plan, they believe, by offering these two methods of "escape", will reassure the people so that they will continue to favor adequate appropriations for the public schools.

The second thing that is good about it is that, by comparison, it is a moderate course. It provides for neither educational grants nor school closings, now; they are merely authorized, in the event they seem necessary. More radical plans have been suggested in other Southern states; a far more radical plan, in fact, was proposed at the recent special session of this state's General Assembly. It can well be argued that, unless we adopt this relatively moderate plan, the extremists may force us into taking a more dangerous road.

The third thing that is good about it, it seems to us, is this: It leaves the decision to individual parents, as to whether they will permit their children to attend mixed schools; and to the voters in a local school unit, as to whether conditions are so "intolerable" as to warrant closing one or more schools within the unit. Presumably the plan would permit one local unit to hold on to segregation, while another tried integration—depending on local conditions.

WHAT'S BAD ABOUT IT?

There has been too much haste about this thing—that is the first thing that is bad about it. While it is true the Pearsall committee worked long and hard on the plan, it was adopted by the General Assembly in just a little more than four days, and with virtually no debate. And now the people are being asked to pass on it with only slightly more than a month for consideration.

The second thing that is bad about it is that the proposed constitutional amendment is really two amendments, one dealing with educational grants, the other with school closings. They are two separate questions. The people should have been given the opportunity to pass on them separately. When it refused to do that, the General Assembly both denied the people a basic right and betrayed a lack of confidence in the people's judgment.

Another thing that is wrong is the detail of the size of the grants. The state proposes to put up the average amount it costs to educate a child in the public schools, or about \$135 per year. In a private school, that is hardly more than a drop in the financial bucket. The result might easily be freedom to choose, for the well-to-do; enforced integration, for children from poorer families.

The final thing that is bad about it is it is evasion; look at it any way you will, it's an effort to "beat the devil around the stump". This news-

paper hates evasion as a form of dishonesty; it fears it for its effect on the character of the evader. Supporters of this plan no doubt are convinced that the Supreme Court exceeded its authority, and they probably are convinced, as well, that the court knew it was doing just that; hence, they argue, you have to "fight fire with fire". Well, we'd say it is a temptation, not a necessity; and we'd add that two wrongs never yet have made a right. Finally, we would argue that the South's one hope of getting something done, about what it considers the court's dishonesty, is to come before the nation's public opinion with its own hands clean.

If the time ever comes—and that time has not yet come—when we must choose between evasion and defiance, there should be no hesitation about which to choose; for one is cowardly and dishonest, the other courageous and forthright. We hasten to add that defiance need not necessarily be violent; passive resistance, in fact, often is the most effective kind. But if we're determined to keep segregation, let's make no secret of our goal.

WHICH WAY TO VOTE?

It is not the responsibility of this newspaper to tell the people of Macon County how they shall vote—we would not, if we could; and we could not, even if we would. For, happily, most Macon County people do their own thinking.

It is the responsibility of any newspaper, though, to express an opinion, to take a stand.

This is not the kind of issue we can say "it's all good" or "it's all bad". We have to strike a balance, to weigh the arguments for and against.

Well, we think the arguments against this change in the state's constitution outweigh the arguments in favor of it—heavily outweigh them.

Added to that are two other factors:

1. The Pearsall committee's whole program is based on the assertion that the people of North Carolina will not support the public schools without these "escape" provisions. While we do not doubt that the committee members are honestly convinced that is true, we ask them: "Where, gentlemen, is your proof?"

2. Moderate as the Pearsall plan is, by comparison with others, it carries a threat to our public school system, a system built laboriously and by sacrifice over a period of half a century. The Pearsall plan is crisis action—and there is no crisis yet.

With all respect for those who advocate it, we take our stand **against** this constitutional amendment. We cannot be honest and take any other.

The Other Amendments

We think the constitutional amendment, known as the Pearsall Plan, passed by last month's special session of the General Assembly, should be defeated by the people in the election September 8.

At the same time, the people will vote on three other amendments, submitted by the regular session of the Legislature in 1955. Those three amendments, much less important, seem to us good ones.

One would pay members of the Legislature for up to 120 days, instead of just 90, when it is necessary for the General Assembly to remain in session longer than 90 days. It also would give legislators a travel and subsistence allowance when they travel on state business. That seems only fair. Furthermore, in this field, as in any other, you get just about what you pay for; if we pay legislators more adequately, we are likely to get better ones.

Another proposed change would move the time of convening of the biennial sessions of the General Assembly from January to February. This seems desirable, since the date for filing income tax returns has been changed from March 15 to April 15, and it thus is after April 15 before the legislators, who have to levy taxes and make appropriations, can know how much revenue the state will get from income taxes.

The third amendment would authorize a husband to give his wife written authority to sign and acknowledge deeds for him, when he is away from home. There seems no reason whatever why such a course should not be made legal.

Others' Opinions

(Opinions expressed in this space are not necessarily those of The Press. Editorials selected for reprinting here, in fact, are chosen with a view to presenting a variety of viewpoints. They are, that is, just what the caption says—OTHERS' Opinions.)

Why Bother With It?

(Greensboro Daily News)

Governor Hodges' appointment of High Point Editor Holt McPherson as chairman of a 40 or 50-man committee to push the Pearsall Amendment parallels the two most recent state-wide election campaigns on special issues—the Kerr Scott Better Schools and Roads drive and the Umstead bond issue for mental hospitals and schools.

In both cases Governors in charge took no chances. They

conducted state-wide campaigns which paid off in victory; Governor Hodges has the same goal in mind.

But in the Pearsall Amendment election (called the Public School Amendment by the Governor's publicists) the issues are far more confusing to the average voter than in previous campaigns. The bond issue elections simply called for support or rejection of an obviously constructive program, involving bricks, mortar, asphalt and concrete.

The Pearsall Amendment—up for vote in a general election on September 8—involves several curiously negative aspects. The program is difficult to explain because it embraces a somewhat fanciful and impractical plan for private schools, combined with repeated admonitions that same will not be used "much."

The average voter, looking at the plan, immediately asks: Then why bother with it?

The Hodges-Pearsall leaders have a good reason for bothering. In the emotional atmosphere of school desegregation they foresee a show-down conflict between the court decision and the public school system. In such conflict, with no "safety valves" available, they fear either outright defiance of the law or wholesale destruction of the public schools. Rather than let these issues collide headon, they prefer, in words of the Christian Science Monitor, "accommodation rather than defiance."

Such "accommodation" does involve dangers to the public school system. It amends the State Constitution so that a simple majority in a local option election can close the schools in a community. The Smithfield Herald opposes the Pearsall Amendment on that ground, saying:

"We would no more favor a plan for letting a simple majority take away from a child [its] right to educational opportunity than we would favor a plan for letting a simple majority take from American citizens their right to freedom of thought and speech. In the American system of government there are basic rights which even majority rule cannot or should not disturb."

But the Herald forgets that the people of North Carolina face a condition, not a theory. If the Supreme Court insists on integration, but the people of a community refuse to accept it, the schools might go down anyway. Or even worse the General Assembly might pass an inflexible state-wide segregation plan far more binding than the Pearsall program and guaranteed to wreck the schools.

The Pearsall Amendment is not error proof. But it is better than no plan at all or a policy of drift toward some major, inflammatory crisis.

During the four weeks remaining before September 8 the McPherson Committee must explain the real purpose of the Pearsall Amendment to the state. The job is not easy.

Patton Fills The Need

(Raleigh News and Observer)

The selection of Judge George B. Patton as Attorney General is a fortunate one. He is not only qualified by every reasonable standard to perform existing duties of the office,

Continued on Page Three—

STRICTLY

PERSONAL

By WEIMAR JONES

A Congressman from this district is said to have remarked, early in this century: "Politics—she air one so-and-so."

Had he been able to view the recent national conventions by television, we suspect that opinion would have been reinforced.

After watching some of the sessions, I found myself agreeing with the almost unanimous exclamation of British correspondents covering our quadrennial political gatherings. How, they asked in amazement, can the United States ever get a good President in such an atmosphere—that is a strange combination of a three-ring circus, many "smoke-filled rooms", and a free-for-all fight among adolescents.

Except for the contest for the Democratic Vice-Presidential nomination, both conventions were dull affairs, since the results were generally taken for granted long before the balloting began.

That doesn't mean, though, that some strange and—to the layman—inexplicable results didn't come out of the conventions. They did.

The most obvious oddity is the men chosen for the nominations, in the light of their past histories.

Four years ago, the voters emphatically rejected Mr. Stevenson for the Presidency—but the Democrats nominated him again! And in 1952 and again in 1956, Democratic leaders themselves held that Mr. Kefauver lacked the qualifications for President—but this year they nominated him for the Vice-Presidency, an office removed from the Presidency by only a heart-beat.

The Republicans, in their turn, nominated part-timers—one known, one preferable. For Mr. Eisenhower was a blithely part-time President, even when he was in good health. Now, it is reasonable to assume, he will devote even less time to the

biggest job in the world. And if Mr. Nixon should ever become President, a possibility by no means remote—well, most Americans, whatever their party, will feel that the more part-time he is, the better for the nation.

Since the purpose of politics is to get votes, another illustration of the strangeness of politics is the mild stands the two parties took on civil rights. The Supreme Court desegregation decision, almost every political leader will tell you, is the law; but the two parties, in their platforms, did not endorse it. They not only failed, they refused—to indorse the law of the land!

Why? All the evidence suggests that almost nothing, this year, could drive the South out of the Democratic party and into the arms of the Republicans. And isn't it still true that the Negro holds the balance of power in 17 states, states that are far more important, politically, than the South? It would seem that even the Democrats would have run little risk, and have stood to gain much, by adopting a strong civil rights plank. And that would seem even truer of the Republicans.

Back of these maneuvers, there must be good, realistic politics. But the strategy is much too deep for this layman.

The strangest thing of all, though, was to hear such ardent and undoubtedly sincere integrationists as Mrs. Roosevelt and Mr. Truman plead with the Democratic party not to advocate enforcement of the desegregation law.

It is the dictum of the Supreme Court; therefore, by all the rules, it is law. And undoubtedly Mrs. Roosevelt and Mr. Truman believe it is a good law. "But we mustn't try to enforce it", they warn! Instead, let's reach the goal by persuasion and education.

As a means of bringing about

social change, nothing could make better sense. But as applied to law . . . ?

Do we give violators of the laws against treason or theft "time to adjust"? Do we try to convert traitors and thieves by persuasion and education, meanwhile suspending enforcement of the law?

Mrs. Roosevelt and Mr. Truman pointed up, as nobody else could have, how far its desegregation decisions took the Supreme Court into a legal never-never land.

VIEW

By

BOB SLOAN



To me, it doesn't seem right asking the filling station operators to stop washing cars. Maybe in case of an emergency it is justifiable, but when an emergency becomes a habit that continues for years, that, as the saying goes, is a grey horse of another color.

There are approximately 24 filling stations within the city limits of Franklin. To cause that large a group of business firms to curtail their business, year after year, usually right at the height of the Summer season, is unfair and an undue hardship.

However, as long as Franklin continues to depend on wells for its water system we will continue to be faced with periodic water shortages. When the last well was dug it would prevent shortage for at least ten years, "they" said. Living in a section that has one of the highest rainfalls in the United States and having to limit the use of water from time to time are two things that I find hard to make fit together.

There is one answer, of course, and that is a watershed. The sooner Franklin officials wake up and realize this and start planning accordingly the better off we will be—I am sure the filling station operators join me in this.

I don't exactly understand why the Republicans are so elated over the mythical balance that President Eisenhower has achieved in the budget this year. In the year 1948 THAT man Harry Truman, whom the Republicans like to label a terrible waster and reckless spender, showed a profit or surplus in receipts over expenditures of more than eleven billion dollars. He will have to go some to match that.

Do You Remember?

(Looking backward through the files of The Press)

50 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

The Franklin High School is opening the fall term September 6 under the principalship of Misses Laura Jones and Margaret Bulgin.

Miss Lucy Sloan, of Greenville, S. C., is the guest of relatives here for two or three weeks.

Mr. F. H. Nolen has moved into his new store on Cartoogehay and now has room for quite a large stock of goods. Jay Moore is clerking for him.

25 YEARS AGO

Gov. O. Max Gardner made a surprise visit to Franklin late Saturday afternoon, and while here chatted for a few minutes with old friends. The governor and his party came to Franklin after visiting the Great Smoky National Park.

Miss Kathryn Porter will leave Thursday for Barnardsville where she will teach English in the high school.

Mrs. John Trotter and Miss Ethel Hurst returned last Friday from Baltimore and New York where they had been buying new fall goods for the Trotter's store.

10 YEARS AGO

Mrs. Burdell Ray, who is employed at the Ray's Florist Shop in Waynesville, spent the weekend here with her daughter, Mrs. Clyde Clark, and Mr. Clark.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Sanders left Tuesday for Columbia, Mo., to be present when their son, Sol W. Sanders, is graduated from the journalism school of the University of Missouri.

Holt McPherson, district governor of the 194th District of Rotary International, will pay his annual visit to the Highlands Rotary Club next Tuesday evening at 8 o'clock.—Highlands item.