

WEIMAR JONES
Editorial Page Editor

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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1959

The Known Facts

There still are things about the proposed Nantahala-Duke power-deal that are not clear. And in the welter of speculation, opinion, and confusion about what is not known, there has been a tendency to overlook what is known.

Any intelligent conclusion, though, must be based chiefly on knowledge; and so it seems worthwhile at this time to summarize the known facts.

Here are some of them.

ABOUT THE DEAL

There are five important facts relating to the deal itself:

1. The proposed sale, so far, is a proposal only—not an accomplished fact. It can become an accomplished fact only if and when it has been approved by both the N. C. Utilities Commission and the Federal Power Commission.

2. Approval by those agencies is by no means a foregone conclusion. It is the duty of both, when such an issue arises, to base decisions on what is in the public interest.

3. It follows that the people of this six-county area can, if they wish, oppose the sale with some hope of success, but that their chances of success will be better if the opposition is so organized as to make sure the public's case is adequately and forcefully presented to these commissions.

4. A public service corporation in this state can sell to **nobody** without the approval of the State Utilities Commission. The report that Nantahala could be sold to R. E. A., without such approval, is incorrect. (The authority for this statement is the N. C. attorney general's office in Raleigh.)

5. As this is written, neither Nantahala nor Duke has filed a petition with the Utilities Commission for approval of the sale; and a Duke vice-president said here last week he had "no idea" when such a petition would be filed.

HOW SITES OBTAINED

Three important facts relate to how Alcoa got some of its power sites:

1. It is not legally possible to take private property by condemnation proceedings, except in order to serve the public.

2. Alcoa used condemnation proceedings, or the threat of condemnation, to take private property for its power sites.

3. The only way it could legally do that was to set up a subsidiary, Nantahala, and designate it as a public service corporation.

WHAT IS INVOLVED

Three important facts relate to what property is involved in the proposed deal:

1. Alcoa does not propose to sell Nantahala Power and Light Company, lock, stock, and barrel.

2. It proposes to sell its retail transmission system and four small plants—Mission, Franklin, Bryson, and Dillsboro.

3. It proposes to keep its heavy duty transmission system and all its "principal hydro-electric generating plants"—Thorpe, Nantahala, Queen's Creek, Tuckaseegee, Cedar Cliff, Bear Creek, and Tennessee Creek.

FACTS ABOUT RATES

Four important facts relate to Nantahala and Duke rates:

1. The fact that's clearest of all is that the picture, on the whole, is anything but clear.

2. Adding to the fog have been some seemingly conflicting statements. To cite just one illustration: In its advertisement in the September 17 Press, the Duke Company said, if the deal goes through, "76% of the industrial customers will get a reduction". But at last week's public meeting here, a Duke vice-president said frankly, and without qualification, that "Duke's industrial rates are higher" than Nantahala's.

3. The original announcement said Duke rates would be put in effect where they are lower than Nantahala's; where Nantahala rates are lower than Duke's, Nantahala rates would be continued "until and unless there should be a general revision of Duke rates"; but that Duke rates would apply to all new customers. Since "all new customers will be served on Duke rates", the future growth

Skimming Off The Cream



of this area would be affected by whether and where and how much Duke rates are higher or lower than Nantahala's. On those points, there seems a dearth of exact, specific public information.

4. On one rate—that of home heating—there is reasonably exact, specific information. On that point, the Duke vice-president already quoted said here last week that, in future, electric heat in homes (a) could be installed only if and when the homes met Duke's specifications, as to insulation, etc.; and (b) would be approximately double the rate now charged by Nantahala.

FOUR OTHER FACTS

These further general facts seem reasonably clear:

1. Under the proposal, the power that's already here would be taken out of the state and would be replaced by power brought in from elsewhere. There is a question as to whether that is good economics. If it isn't, somebody would have to pay the difference.

2. If this area grows, someday it may be using all the power being produced locally. It has even been suggested that a single big industry, using great quantities of electricity, might use up all the present surplus. Where would we be then? Would no new customers be able to buy power here? The answer would seem to lie in a well-established policy of governmental bodies regulating public service corporations: They must give service. An electric public service corporation, for example, must provide the power needed by the area it serves. If it doesn't produce enough itself, then it must buy from other producers.

3. If the deal goes through, all the presumably cheap hydro-electric power produced at Nantahala's big plants will be taken out of the area and out of the state—for use by Alcoa's aluminum plants.

4. If and when that happens, Alcoa will be taking, for its own, exclusive use, the fruits of what is obtained in the guise of a public service corporation.

High Compliment

That was a high compliment Editor Bill Sharpe of The State magazine paid the people of this county in the September 5 issue of The State. He describes the Maconian as "the Appalachian at his best".

It is a high compliment, because the folk who inhabit the Southern Appalachians, generally speaking, are a high type people—usually scrupulously honest; courteous but plain-spoken; hospitable and generous; independent, courageous, determined; kindly and sympathetic with those in trouble; ready to sacrifice for the future good of their children and their community; and possessed of a store of common sense, acquired through generations of wresting a living from rocky hillsides.

Even the mountain people at their worst often are rather admirable, because their worst faults are really exaggerations of virtues. Take the two things the mountains are best known for among those who have learned about us only through novels and the movies—feuding and moonshining.

The feuding—and though the shooting kind was

rare, even in the old days, feuding still crops out sometimes in hard-to-heal family or community differences—was simply an exaggeration of one of the greatest of all virtues, loyalty. And the moonshining, also always the uncommon exception, rather than the rule, was chiefly an expression of the mountain man's determination to maintain what he considered his rights. And even the laziness and shiftlessness sometimes characteristic of a minority in the mountains are merely a distortion of a philosophy that is sane—take life as it comes, live it a day at a time, and make the most of it while it lasts.

Mr. Sharpe catches something of this mountain character, as he writes of Maconians:

... A superior North Carolinian, the Appalachian at his best. Mostly descended from original settlers, the people are rural and conservative.
For all their setting, however, Macon people do not fit into the traditional roles of isolated mountaineers.
A high regard for education and a determination to provide it have persisted for generations, and a large percentage of Macon children attend college. At considerable sacrifice, Macon has taxed itself to build and maintain a modern school system.
A newcomer forty years ago recalls her astonishment at finding excellent libraries in Macon homes. The citizenship today is as well informed, as well educated, and has as much interest in outside matters as the people of any county.
Community development programs have revolutionized living, too. This has been advanced by the drift of farm people to town jobs and of town people to farm ownership—a cross blending of the population until it is hard to tell who is country and who is town.
If Macon has departed somewhat from the popular notion of a backward hill county, its people have clung to some of the old pioneer characteristics.
They are more like New Englanders than anything else—conservative, frugal, phlegmatic, extremely independent; more given to understatement than exaggeration. But they are sociable, hospitable, and helpful. "It is impossible for a mountain man to ignore an appeal for help", as one man put it.

Who's A Slowpoke Now?

Does your liver need a good shaking up? Do you want to learn how good your nerves are? Would you like the experience of driving one of the worst roads in this whole region?

Then have a try at that narrow, crooked, rough stretch of 441 South, between Clayton and Wiley, Ga.

Motorists on that section of 441 might well paraphrase: Good roads to the north of them, good roads to the south of them...

For North Carolina now has a fine highway from Franklin to the Georgia state line; and Georgia has done an equally good job from the state line to Clayton; and, to the south, a new highway is under construction from Tallulah Falls to Wiley.

But the Clayton-Wiley strip is untouched; unlet, so far as we can learn; unremembered, apparently, by Georgia authorities.

A few years ago the Georgia highway folks did a bit of goading of North Carolina for its tardiness in getting the road built south of Franklin—and we joined them in the goading.

Now who's the slow poke?

Strictly Personal

By WEIMAR JONES

Last week Governor Luther Hodges spoke at the dedication of the Fayetteville sewage disposal plant. The week before, U.S. Senator Everett Jordan spoke at the dedication of a sewage works in Gaston County.
Now I'm holding my breath till I read where the President has "dedicated" some town's new garbage dump.

I don't know who wrote the verse below (sent me by a friend), nor do I know the age of the author.

One thing I do know—he (or she) will never be really old; because the words reveal two traits that are adept at staying the hand of old age.

One is realism. The author doesn't dodge the facts of (elderly) life—not even the fact of being elderly.

The other is a sense of humor—that rarest of humor, the ability to laugh at oneself.

Can YOU laugh at your own foibles like the person who wrote these lines?

How do I know my youth is all spent?

Well, my get-up and go has got up and went.

But I really don't mind, when I think with a grin.

Of all the grand places my get-up has been.

I'm happy to say, as I close the door,

My friends are the same, perhaps even more.

With my ears in a drawer, my teeth in a cup.

My eyes on a table until I wake up.

Ere sleep dims my eyes, I say to myself,

"Is there anything else I should lay on the shelf?"

When I was young, my slippers were red.

I could kick my heels right over my head.

When I grew older my slippers

were blue,
But still I could dance the whole night through.

Now I am old and my slippers are black,
I walk to the store and puff my way back.

Since I've retired from life's competition,
I busy myself with complete repetition.

I get up each morning, dust off my wits,

Pick up the paper and read the "obits".

If my name is missing, I know I'm not dead,

So I eat a good breakfast and go back to bed.

Driving down to Franklin from Highlands the other night, we had several miles through fog so thick you could have cut it with a knife—and the Highlands road is not the one most of us would pluck as ideal for driving through fog!
We couldn't see 20 feet in front

of us, and we couldn't see the edges of the pavement. The one thing we could see was the center line—and how grateful we were to highway forces for their recent good job of re-marking that line so that it stands out, clear and distinct, even in fog!

THE IMPORTANT QUESTION

"There will be thunder claps and lightning bolts!" boomed the preacher as he described the Day of Judgment. "The oceans will overflow! Flames will pour down from the heavens! There will be floods, earthquakes and tornadoes!"

Her eyes shining with excitement, the small girl turned to her grandmother. "Grandma," she asked eagerly, "will we get off from school?"—Pageant.

LETTERS

Veterans And Pensions

Editor The Press:

I was interested in Mr. E. L. Johnson's letter (in the Sept. 17 issue) discussing the recently enacted pension bill. We Americans are given to having, and expressing, differences of opinion; and as I am a World War I veteran, I would like to express my viewpoint in regard to this bill and to pensions in general.

Yes, the young and vigorous were called on to defend our Country. In reality we were defending ourselves, our families, and our property. Who should be doing it but the young and strong? Do we veterans think it should have been done by our sisters, mothers, wives, or sweethearts? It would seem so, as they are the ones that are now called on to help contribute the tax money to support us when we do not care to work any longer. In many cases these women underwent as many privations and inconveniences as the man in uniform! No one is advocating a pension for them.

There were 11,000,000 of us in the first World War to "defend our country" but a rather small fraction of that number saw actual combat service or were in danger. Many were in for only two or three months and a vast majority were mustered out in better physical condition than they were at the time of enlistment. The wounded are in a different category and I am glad to say they are being well cared for.

Our veterans' lobby for a continuous handout from the taxpayer is something many veterans deplore, and, on that account, they have refused to join any veterans' organizations.

The taxpayers are losing patience with the various pressure groups that feel the public owes them a living. Many people over 65 are working and paying taxes to support these people. Of all pressure groups, the veterans have been able to get through legislation that was most shameful. These two examples will illustrate my point:

Veterans with non-service connected disabilities, if there is such a thing, drive up to veterans' hospitals in Cadillac and Lincoln and demand hospitalization at public expense. It is true that they have to sign a statement saying they are unable to pay, but that doesn't take much ink. It is also true that the hospital administration is not permitted to verify the truthfulness of the statement.

Only a few years ago I knew the widow of a Civil War veteran. She was born nine years after the war was over! She was financially able to spend her winters in Florida and her summers in New England. But the public was supporting her because some old veteran married her.

After all, what good do the pensions do? I have yet to hear any one living off the public express any gratitude for it. The only comment heard is that the stipend should be greater.

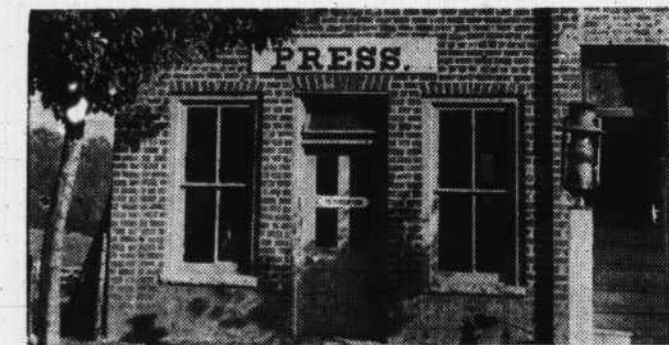
The above may seem harsh but I have only expressed facts. I would like to see the veterans take the attitude that they can do something for themselves, their families, and their country without demanding that they be coddled for the rest of their lives.

J. P. JONES, M. D.

Wakefield, R. I.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Looking Backward Through the Files of The Press



65 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK
(1894)

The concrete work is being put in for the vault in the courthouse.

Mr. Zeb Baird went to Asheville Wednesday and returned Saturday.

Uncle Bill Cochran, the boss Republican of White-oak Flats, was in town Monday.

Postmaster David Norton and wife, of Highlands, are spending a few days in Franklin, the guests of Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Stallcup.

We were glad to see Mr. A. W. Horn, of Iota, on our streets Saturday, after near three months' confinement with a severe attack of fever. Wint came very near going through the lines.

35 YEARS AGO
(1924)

The first attraction appearing on our Lyceum course this year will be the Lombard entertainers.

Mr. Sam Corn gave the young people a singing last Sunday evening.—Tryphosa item.

Officers of the Woman's Club here are: Mrs. W. B. McGuire, president; Mrs. Wade Crawford, vice-president; Mrs. Lester Conley, secretary; Mrs. W. W. Sloan, treasurer.

15 YEARS AGO
(1944)

A total of 596 elementary students and 366 high school students are enrolled at the Franklin school. On the faculty are 26 teachers and the principal, George H. Hill.

5 YEARS AGO
(1954)

The County Health Department expects to move into the new Macon County Health Center on Riverview Street this week end.