

At the CAPITAL

By M. R. Dunnagan, The Pilot's Raleigh Correspondent

Rarely has there been so much interest created and so much oratory turned loose in the General Assembly of North Carolina as during the past week on the so-called act which fixes the policy of the legislative body as requiring the State to take over and operate the six months school term, a measure which was adopted in both houses by substantial majorities. By it, direction is given to provide a bill raising the necessary revenue from sources other than ad valorem taxes.

While the school measure held the spotlight and consumed three-fourths of the meeting time of both bodies during the week, with three night sessions, a side skirmish, dealing with the reorganization of the State Highway Commission, taking over the county roads and raising the gasoline tax to six cents, was staged in committee and gives promise of taking the center of the stage this week when Governor Gardner expects to bring it and the Constitutional Convention matter before the General Assembly.

The Appropriation committees have been and will continue to be active for some weeks, hearing departments, institutions and agencies of the State which are seeking more funds for operation the next two years than the Advisory Budget Commission allowed in its recommended Appropriation Bill. The Finance committees are considering the Budget Revenue bill, which increases the revenues about \$3,000,000, and will soon get onto the several sales tax bills which have been referred to it. From \$10,000,000 to \$13,000,000 in additional revenue will have to be raised to provide the State-operated schools, under the measure adopted, and a sales tax may have to be resorted to.

Proponents active for the school measure are inclined toward a sales tax, at the same time saying power and tobacco companies should pay additional taxes, income taxes should be increased and a tax placed on stocks in foreign corporations. They were successful in blocking amendments which would provide the State operation of schools, when and if sufficient revenue could be found without placing undue burdens on any of the taxpayers of the State.

Opponents of the measure, practically all of whom said they were not opposed to the State operating the schools, thought it sensible to make every effort to find the revenue before adopting a policy which they might not be able to carry through. Only one or two references were made to the loss of local self-government through State operation of the schools, by which county and local officers would lose all authority in school matters. The distress from the economic depression is considered the main reason for such drastic measures.

Close on the heels of enactment of the measure came a bill directing the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Equalization to prescribe a minimum scholastic standard for a six months term, fix uniform salaries for superintendents, principals and teachers and all costs, determine the number of high schools in each county, create a central purchasing agent for the public schools, reassess and equalize the property values in all counties by May 1, 1923, and levy an ad valorem tax of 20 cents on the \$100 all over the state, to be paid into the State Treasury, the State paying the balance of the cost. County commissioners could add 20 cents for longer schools, higher salaries or other costs, and cities could supplement the term and teacher pay as much as they desire. The counties and districts would still have to pay their bonds and debt service.

County government would be further improved and cities, towns and special tax districts brought under financial control, as counties now are, by bills introduced, with administrative sanction. Uniform blanks and bookkeeping systems would be established in all counties by the County Government Advisory Commission and banks named as depositories would be required to furnish surety bonds or U. S., N. C., county or municipal bonds to cover deposits, thus insuring safety of public money.

Justices of the Peace will be limited in number and restricted in activities if two bills introduced become law. One provides for election of two justices in each township and the resident judge may appoint one additional for each 20,000 population, all to take oath before the clerk of the court and serve for two years. Com-

missions of all justices now serving, appointed by the Governor or elected by the General Assembly, would expire the first Monday in December, 1932. The other bills would require all justices to secure all blanks for processes, writs, warrants, bonds, affidavits, judgments, summonses, claim and delivery, attachment and ejectment papers from clerks of the court, each numbered, and to make report of disposition of all actions to the clerk. They would have to secure certificate of the court clerk before sending processes out of the county in which they reside.

Another bill would allow county commissioners in any of the counties to establish criminal county courts, meeting monthly at specified times, to try and dispose of cases below felonies and bind over in such cases, with judge, associate judge and clerk, who shall be clerk of Superior Court, unless he decline, and with county-wide jurisdiction. Jury trials would be provided on demand of either side, and appeals taken to Superior Court. The bill would not interfere with present courts.

Passenger busses and motor truck lines would have hard sledding if a batch of bills introduced, admittedly sponsored by railroad companies, are enacted. One would require a return of all property, tangible, intangible and otherwise, for taxation, including "rolling stock." Another fixes the method of securing franchise, laying down rules as to baggage, separate compartments for the races, stations, drivers permits and complete regulation by the Corporation Commission. Still another limits the length, width, height and load of trucks, limiting trailers and semi-trailers to one and requiring them to operate within the line of travel of the truck they follow. Their speed, if the capacity is more than two tons, would be limited to 25 miles an hour.

Lawyers would be given greater leeway in Workmen's Compensation cases by a bill introduced. It would let them and their clients agree on fees, without control by the Industrial Commission and hearings would be the same as those in Superior Courts by service of summons and filing of pleadings by both sides and the losing party would have to pay all the costs.

Costs of foreclosure sales for taxes would be greatly reduced by the bill which would limit attorney's fees, or allowance for such fees in case of a regular county attorney, to \$8 when not more than 10 actions are brought; \$6 when not more than 20, and \$4 when more than 20 are brought.

Other bills introduced and of general interest follows:

Increase State Highway Patrol from 37 to about 125; provide funds for its operation by license tax on drivers of \$1.25 for first and \$1 a year for renewals and \$5 a year for chauffeurs.

Raise maximum rate of tax on incomes from 6 to 10 per cent, remove the constitutional exemption and leave exemption to the legislature.

Provide ready method of abolishing special taxes in special tax districts. Require quarterly reports by State Highway Commission to all county commissioners of apportionments and expenditures of highway funds in their respective counties.

Increase pensions of disabled Confederate Veterans from \$365 to \$600 a year, payable monthly.

Reimburse counties from State Highway funds from allotments to the counties, on basis of area and population, cash loans, donations and amounts spent by the counties on highways of the State highway system.

Refund proportionate part of license fees paid for plates for automobiles burned or otherwise rendered useless.

Prevent erection of electrical or mechanical signs on State highway system except as approved by the motor vehicle commissioner.

Provide that certificate from the Commissioner of Revenue as to owner of an automobile with certain license number and involved in damage or injury be prima facie evidence of ownership of the car and that it was operated by or at the direction of the owner.

Big increase in the license fees charged peddlers and those engaged in selling bankrupt or fire stocks of goods.

Dr. Poate Attacks Proposal To Do Away With State Board of Health

Calls Suggested Reorganization "Dis-Organization," Imbecillity and Incredible

By Dr. E. M. Poate
The report of the Brookings Institute has been sent to the General Assembly by the Governor. This week, a committee of the General Assembly is considering that portion of the said report which recommends a "reorganization" of the State Board of Health, the State Boards of Medical Examiners, Dental Examiners, Nurse Examiners, Osteopathic and Chiropractic Examiners, and the State Board of Pharmacy, etc.

The "reorganization" suggested is an entire dis-organization. It is proposed, simply, to abolish the whole outfit—Board of Health, medical, dental, pharmaceutical, nurse examiners, and all—and to substitute a single "Commissioner of Health." And even he is not to be elected: he would be a subordinate official in the Department of Education!

This is the very apotheosis of imbecility. None but impractical doctrinaires could have conceived it. Its stupidity is incredible.

North Carolina was first of all the states to establish a Board of Medical Examiners. The system has worked so well that practically every other state in the Union has copied our plan: so well that similar examining boards have been set up for dentists, nurses, pharmacists, osteopaths, veterinarians, etc., all according to the same general plan. The State Board of Health has built up a world-wide reputation.

Yet it is now proposed—not on the authority of any responsible official, or any experienced physician or public health officer, but by a purely theoretical outfit of "experts"—it is now proposed to scrap the entire system.

Costs Taxpayers Nothing

As constituted, the system is flexible, responsive to public opinion, efficient: and (a most important point in these days), it costs the taxpayers nothing. Self-government, representation, are fundamental principles of the Democratic party; and the members of the State Board of Health are chosen, part by election of the State Medical Society, and part by nomination of the Governor. Would a lay commissioner, appointed by and subordinate to the Commissioner of Education (who, in turn, would be appointed by the Governor), and charged with numerous other duties beside, be more competent to administer matters of public health than the present board of nine outstanding physicians, representing all parts of the State?

If the public is to be protected, prospective doctors, pharmacists, nurses, etc., must be competent and well-trained. Who is better fitted to examine candidates, and determine their qualifications: The present Board of Medical Examiners, consisting of physicians of the first rank—or a single lay commissioner of health who is charged, in addition, with all the duties of the present State Board of Health? And which would be more swayed by political influences, the present board, or such a lay commissioner, not elected, but appointed by a Commissioner of Education who, in turn, would be appointed by the Governor? Such a commissioner would be twice removed from all effective public control.

Scheme Is Absurd

The whole scheme is fantastically absurd: but unless the people of North Carolina will rouse themselves, and express their wishes in no uncertain terms, we may find ourselves saddled with this monstrosity—and helpless for at least two years.

The chief absurdity is that the scheme is declared to be not only efficient, but economical. Our present system of licensure, medical, nursing, pharmaceutical, etc., costs the taxpayers nothing whatever. Yet it is suggested that we scrap it (though it has worked so well that the other

states have adopted it) and instead hire a commissioner of health.

Pay him a fat salary, too. Of course! Say \$4,000, as a minimum. He must have his secretary, too. Pay her. He must have his deputies, too: a deputy commissioner for medical examinations, a deputy for dental examinations, another for nurses, for osteopaths, for veterinarians, and so on down the line. Each deputy (at \$3,500, say) must have his secretary, too: each must have his examiners, his clerks, his neat little group of bureaucrats, responsible only to him, as he is only to his boss, and as the commissioner is to his boss, and the last-named only to the Governor. What a lot of satisfaction the ordinary private citizen could extract from any complaint made against the deputy-assistant clerk who refused to serve him!

Efficiency Smothered

The very least possible yearly payroll of such an outfit would be, say, \$30,000—doubtless much more. Add office-rentals and overhead—and talk of "economy!" . . . Meanwhile, all efficiency would be smothered in red tape, and North Carolina, instead of remaining in the forefront in matters of public health, would become a laughing-stock. God forbid!

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All such doctrinaires seem to reason alike. Behind such divagations as this lies always their basic assumption: that the people are not fit to manage their own affairs. Therefore, "experts in government" ought to be called in—and given a free hand. They know what's good for you. Wherefore, they propose a dictator, that is. (And even this election is yielded grudgingly, as a sop to "the mob"; they'd much rather choose the dictator themselves.) Give him full powers—and let him uplift the rabble, whether they like it or not.

Representative government may be cumbersome. It may not always be fully efficient. But it is better than a government of the people, by the Brookings Institute.

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