

# THE PILOT

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## TEN PER CENT THEATRE TAX

The seriousness of some things is humorous. The ten per cent tax proposed by the legislature on admissions to moving picture theatres is one of the funny tragedies. The theatre is set down as a luxury, therefore to be taxed. It is regarded as an institution that gets money easy, therefore to be taxed.

And the legislators go around with their heads in paper sacks deluding themselves and the people, or rather submitting to the people who have their heads in paper sacks, for many of the legislators see the humor of the delusion. As much discussion has been indulged over the question as to what is a luxury as over the important proposition of which end to crack the breakfast egg, and it is only in the last few hundred years that progressive folks have come to realize that either end will let the egg out of the shell. A few folks have begun to realize that the line between necessity and luxury was never yet defined and never will be. And a still smaller number has gained a faint glimpse of the more important fact that the difference when one is found will be of absolutely no consequence.

The funny part of the whole business is that whether the theater is a luxury or not is of no consequence whatever, especially as far as paying tax is concerned. Some day perhaps a wise man may find a way to gather taxes without calling on the people to pay. That day is so far in the distance that no one yet can imagine its coming. Whether the theatre is a luxury or not is of no concern, but it is fact that any tax levied against it is paid by the people if it is paid at all. The theaters have no more money than a polar bear. Their whole source of revenue is the people, and while a tax may be laid and collected from the theaters it will be paid by the people, for it can come from no other source. Of course the people may not come to the theater if higher taxes make higher admission fees, but in that event the tax will not be paid, for ten per cent of nothing is nothing. But the point is that whatever is paid the people will have to pay, and if they don't pay the theaters will be closed and the ten per cent tax will be ten per cent of nothing.

## THE TEST OF THE PUDDING

When the Seaboard morning train last Saturday pulled into Southern Pines with 22 cars loaded with people for Pinehurst and Southern Pines, making a record for ordinary schedule traffic, it presented evidence that the Sandhills have not been overlooked by the folks in the North who are seeking a playground and winter retreat. This is still February, and winter does not end for some little time in the North. But here it has not made much of a show since the Christmas holidays.

So the folks come south. But it is not winter alone that sends them here in droves. The attractions, the horses, the golf, the various opportunities to get out in the pleasant sun and open air, act as the big influences. Moore county can never count as its good fortune the lessening traffic that has been going toward Florida this winter, for what does not go to Florida probably does not go very far in any direction if it is old Florida travel. But the point is that Sandhill travel finds here what it wants and convenient enough to reach in a few hours, and the satisfaction it seeks when it gets here.

This year may not be a record maker in winter visitors in the Sandhills, but it will not be so

low down in the scale as some folks have suspected, and it will be a big one if one or two of the leading years are expected. It may stand close to a record if the continued arrival of new folks holds out the way the movement is now tending. The growing interest in horses, with the better knowledge of the suitability of the Sandhills for horses, is one of the certain forecasts of the future.

Twenty-two cars of people for this community, coming in three sections of one train, makes some of us look again at the cards and see what the movement means. Evidently it is not the sign to awaken much alarm.

## THE OWNERS OF THIS COUNTRY

When we are drawing a line between big business and the people it may be informative to note that the people generally are big business. The Forbes Magazine has been looking up the ownership of big corporations, and finds that 128 of the leading business concerns of the United States have over seven million, three hundred thousand and stockholders. The much damned Standard Oil company has over a hundred thousand stockholders, the Pennsylvania railroad 233,000, the Electric Bond and Share company that we like to slash a bit once in a while when we are complaining of light charges, 108,000 stockholders, United States Steel is owned by 181,000 persons, General Motors by 261,000, American Tel. 540,000, and so on. Moreover the ownership of these big corporations as well as the smaller ones is swiftly spreading out among more people every year. The number of stockholders in twelve of the largest corporations of the country increased from 1,300,000 in 1928 to 2,611,000 in 1930—doubling in two years. Electric Bond and Share company had in 1928 only 38,000 stockholders. Last year the number had grown to 108,000. General Motors in that same two years increased from 71,000 stockholders to 199,000. Standard Oil almost doubled the number of its stockholders in a similar period.

The fact seems to be that people are widely investing their money in the industries of the nation, and that the American people are the owners of the big industries. If 128 corporations alone have over 7,300,000 stockholders it is evident that the entire corporate holdings of the industries of the United States, which numbers thousands of big corporations, must include a vast proportion of the adult population having any money saved. The inference is that the people generally are becoming the owners of the industries and that one of those days baiting big business will cease to be a thrilling sport.

It is not theory, or politics, or any of the hallucinations that are destined to shape big business, but the natural economic developments that are taking place. The people are finding it worth while to be the owners of industry, and they are buying the stocks. These things work themselves out, and they are governed by natural conditions and laws. Therefore we need not worry about what transpires. Popular clamor and hullabaloo has no chance against popular quiet regard for economic laws, which govern all industry and financial relations regardless of any attempt at control.

## COURTS AND THE CRIMINAL

Much talk has been common lately concerning the multiplication of crime, and everything has been cited as the cause. The courts have been criticised, the jails, the penitentiaries, society as a whole, the home influences, the greater freedom that mankind steadily assumes. But in the end we get nowhere and crime multiplies. The penitentiary is daily complaining about its growing population. The courts are perplexed in their efforts to deal with criminals. But we make small progress.

The sorrowful observer regrets that folks don't do as they should, and points good the old days when we burned witches, and had a long string of crimes punishable with death, and when people submitted to austere and harsh restrictions that they will not tolerate now. One thing that makes crime more common is that we have vastly more people now than ever before, and we have advanced our individual

liberties and by common consent concluded to drop from the list of crimes many of the acts that were years ago regarded as severe infractions of law. To tell the truth law is no longer the test of crime, but rather the matter of the offense than of law. Law is all right in its intents in most ways, but in its fact it is not venerated as it once was.

Law is a human creation as far as our statutes go, with the character of the offense determined by the opinion of the men who wrote the law. But nowadays we do not accept the old ideas of what law should cover in the relation of man to man. We recognize the right of the law only so far as law prescribes the transgression of one man on another. What is actual transgression is in these days differently interpreted than it was years ago. So court, judge, jury, individual—all of us, do not regard all things as criminal that once were so accepted.

It is possible that the trouble with our criminal situation is that the popular sentiment is not with the idea of law that aims to make men good. When we ask of law that it confine itself to preventing one man from transgressing on another, and cease in its attempt to make men good according to varied opinion, people will have more regard for law. So will the courts and the judges and the jurors and the witnesses and the people. Then the desire to look out for the people who are in the meshes of the law will not prompt so much interesting manoeuvring to get out from under the mandates of the law, which is one of the troubles now.

## WHO SPEAKS FOR THE FARMER

A protest now goes up because the state prison is employing convicts to produce rock for use on the roads, and it is sug-

gested that the convict should be kept on the farms alone, where he would not come into competition with free labor. Which provokes a smile. Why should the convicts compete with the farm worker any more than any other worker? Why is not the farmer as much a member of the state's industrial fabric as any other individual? Why should the farmer be made the victim of industrial competition if such a thing is objectionable to any one more than men in other occupations?

Is it that the farmer has been the goat so long that custom has fixed the sign on his neck, and that when the melons are cut they are all given to some one else than those who work on the farm? Or is it the climax of a narrowness that breaks out at times in all human procedure? Probably the farmer is facing a keener competition than any other occupation. His cotton is met at the port of exportation by the prices made by Egyptian cotton, by cotton from India, by the increasing cotton crop from every place. But the employe of manufactured products finds different conditions at the port with incoming imports. A tariff is laid there for protection. The wheat farm meets the competition of foreign wheat, the American pork export trade is in the doldrums through the competition of foreign made things in its line. The whole American export trade of the farm is caught with its feet in the tar barrel.

It's funny, for all but the farmer. The convict may work, but he may not work in competition with anybody but the farmer, and so far this paper has not heard a farmer complain at the discrimination against him and the convict. The long-suffering, short-changed, over-burdened man of meek submission. Sure. Soak him, but let the rest of the fellows go unscathed.

## GRAINS OF SAND

Taking the total wealth in North Carolina and dividing it by the 100 counties, Moore is found to be the average county. It has just one per cent of the state's wealth.

Forsyth county's wealth exceeds the combined wealth of 39 counties and almost equals that of the 40 less wealthy counties of the state.

Thirteen of the 100 counties contain 50.31 per cent of the entire state wealth. These are Forsyth, Mecklenburg, Guilford, Buncombe, Wake, Durham, Gaston, New Hanover, Rowan, Edgecombe, Rockingham, Alamance and Cabarrus. Nine of the 13 are in the Piedmont section.

The analysis of wealth and buying power is based on six factors: The insurable population, or number of white literate males over 20 years old; number of personal income returns, number of these whose incomes exceed \$5,000; number of passenger automobiles; the value added by manufacture, and the circulation of three popular magazines.

Thad Page has had a long vacation from Capitol Hill at Washington. He was Congressman Bob's secretary some 15 years ago, so goes to his duties as head of Senator-elect Bailey's secretarial staff fully cognizant of his duties. In the interim the salary of Senatorial and House secretaries has more than doubled. Congrats, Thad.

Thad is one appointee from North Carolina who doesn't have to go through a Senatorial investigation before "taking his seat." He has it on Judge Parker, McNinch and Charley Jonas.

There are 11,500 country weeklies in America. The American Press Association has gone carefully over these papers to get a boiled-down list of 3,000 which it calls the BETTER COUNTRY NEWSPAPERS. This list it recommends to national advertisers.

The Pilot has just received word of its selection as one of the BETTER COUNTRY NEWSPAPERS.

The gossip in Raleigh is that the legislators seem favorable to passage of a bill to establish an adequate licensing system for automobile drivers in North Carolina. The bill approved by the Carolina Motor Club has been favorably reported by the committee to which the bill was referred. We can see no reason why it should not pass.

Automobile accidents, measured by the records of the past two years, have claimed in each of those years the life of one person in each 3,968; and injured one person in each 125

among the country's population. Great reductions in casualties have been shown in all states adopting an operator's license law. Why should we longer submit to carelessness, recklessness, inexperience on the highways of North Carolina?

One of the sure signs of coming spring is the lively chirping of the incubator chicks that make the post-offices lively after the trains come in. Uncle Sam is a big factor in the poultry field.

Under the heading, "Struthers Burt Located," the Charlotte Observer editorialized on Wednesday as follows:

The Book League of America is not inclined to sit by and allow the literary genius of The Chicago News to tear Struthers Burt away from Southern Pines. That paper, in referring to Burt's latest book, "Festival," already attained the "best sellers list," having been made the February choice of the Book League, professes to be "filled with gloom," for it takes it for granted that Struthers will go back to his villa at Hyeres, on the Riviera, "and send us picture post-cards of life on the Mediterranean." The League advances the information that it has heard no reports of Struthers Burt on the Riviera, for "Southern Pines seems to be an acceptable substitute."

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# WEYMOUTH HEIGHTS

SOUTHERN PINES

When Webster Knight, familiar with the country all over the continent, looked about for a winter home where he might establish his stables and enjoy the sport of coaching and riding, he selected the Sandhills.

When he investigated the various locations for his projected scheme he hesitated no time at all in the choice of Weymouth Heights.

Just east of the ridge summit he is rebuilding the house and barn on the Walter Maples place, which he has bought, and there is another influence to make Weymouth still more attractive.

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