

THE PILOT

Southern Pines

North Carolina

"In taking over The Pilot no changes are contemplated. We will try to keep this a good paper. We will try to make a little money for all concerned. Wherever there seems to be an occasion to use our influence for the public good we will try to do it. And we will treat everybody alike."—James Boyd, May 23, 1941.

Mental Health: An Auspicious Beginning

The Pilot welcomes formation of the Moore County Mental Health Association.

Seldom has an organization started under more impressive sponsorship or with more widespread support from diverse elements in the county's social structure.

The new association forms a common meeting ground for physicians, public health workers, welfare department, law enforcement officers, ministers, attorneys and laymen who are concerned about mental health.

All of these groups encounter almost daily evidence of mental sickness among human beings with whom they deal—evidence ranging from mild maladjustments to breakdowns that result in acts of violence, disruption of family life and other tragic consequences.

Through the newly formed association these

people who have to meet and deal with the mental health problem in their daily work—as well as all others who are interested—can pool information and points of view and can all become better qualified to guide and help the persons who are handicapped by mental sickness in greater or lesser degree.

It is noted with approval that the new local association is affiliated with the recognized state and national mental health groups and, through them, will be kept informed of developments in the field elsewhere and will receive information and advice based on practical experience in other communities.

This newspaper pledges its assistance to the new association, in whatever way it can help. We see the need and we are gratified that this advance is being made to meet the problem in Moore County.

Should State Lower The Voting Age?

We are not so sure that a proposal to lower the voting age to 18 would be the influence for good government that it is cracked up to be.

Again, in the General Assembly, a bill has been offered that would set the minimum voting age at 18, rather than the present 21. Two states, Kentucky, and Georgia, now allow 18-year-olds to vote.

The sponsor of the bill says that he thinks if we can get young people to begin taking part in government immediately after graduation from high school, it will make them better citizens. He also offers the often-cited argument that if an individual is old enough to wear the uniform of his country, he is old enough to vote.

Voting, however, is only a small part of an interest in government. The problem is to instill such an interest in young people while they are in school. The three-year gap between graduation from high school and eligibility to vote gives them an opportunity to study issues and government in the light of the knowledge they have acquired in school and in the light of their own developing maturity.

As we recall from personal experience, those years between 18 and 21 were ones of changing opinions and broadening of understanding on political and all other subjects. Looking back, we are grateful that we did not solidify an association with a political party or point of view at age 18—an association that might have checked our mind from ranging over a variety of ideas and viewpoints. We feel we were much more qualified to vote intelligently at age 21 than at 18. Of course, the experience of other persons in other circumstances may have been different.

We have never thought much of the comparison of military service and voting ability. They are totally different fields of action. The only logical connection between the two is the idea that it is unfair to draft young people if they have no voice by ballot in their destiny. This makes some sense, but we are again brought back to the basic consideration: maturity of viewpoint is more important in voters than simple right of expression.

We do not believe that 18-year-olds have had enough experience or enough independence to form the political judgments that would help control not only their own destiny but that of all the rest of us, too.

Welfare Budgets Always Pose Problems

It is interesting that comments on Welfare Department operations in both Moore and Lee Counties have in recent weeks shown that Welfare problems are not eliminated or even apparently greatly alleviated by "prosperous times."

The Pilot's field trip to visit welfare families with a case worker led this newspaper's editor to observe: "The fact is, the prosperity of the nation, if true prosperity it is, hasn't seeped down."

The case worker told The Pilot's observer that it is a curious anomaly of social service work that prosperity, such as the nation is enjoying now, doesn't bring any marked decrease in welfare rolls. Because of the high cost of living, the poor are poorer in good times than in hard times, it was pointed out.

These observations were made in connection with the fact that Moore County's "Poor Fund"—which provides money for emergency welfare cases—had been exhausted at little more than the halfway point in the fiscal year. (An additional appropriation has been made by the commissioners for the fund since that time.)

In Lee County, the shortage in welfare funds was in money provided by the county for the regular Old Age Assistance, Aid to Dependent Children and Aid to the Permanently and Totally Disabled programs.

In its comments on that situation, The Sanford Herald recognizes the responsibility of the commissioners to hold departments to their approved budgets but also points out that Sanford and Lee County are growing areas and that "it is one of the curses of progress that poverty matches its pace." The problem has complications that defy any arbitrary decision as to how much money should be spent.

There must be some kind of welfare budget. The commissioners can't write a blank check to the Welfare Department. Yet the inevitable fluidity of Welfare's needs must be recognized. These needs are human needs—and human needs defy forecasting with an accuracy that is possible in other county departments.

An approach that recognizes this basic factor is needed to help alleviate the perennial conflict between Welfare departments and the county fathers who hold the purse strings.

Casual Violence: A Challenge To Society

In his interesting book, "Southern Accent," the late William T. Polk attempted to analyze the South's penchant for violence, noting among other points that Dixie assaults often take place somewhat mysteriously and inexplicably between individuals who describe themselves—before and often even after the event—as the best of friends.

North Carolina's exceptionally good statewide news coverage in the leading dailies results in a good deal of crime reporting. Readers of these newspapers receive almost daily proof of Mr. Polk's point: the details of an assault are all there, but there is no reasonable explanation of why the shooting or knifing or beating occurred.

There's a story in today's Pilot, for instance, about a Moore County case described by an investigating officer as "the most brutal and senseless assault I've ever seen." A man was beaten unconscious and put into the hospital for two weeks. Why? From all the information that officers could obtain, it appears that he did nothing more provoking than to ask a simple question. There may, of course, be more to the story than that—but from all that's learned and all that's published about the incident, there remains a great blank in understanding: normal standards of human motivation appear to be lacking or suspended.

A classic example of paradoxical violence appeared recently in The Chatham News of Siler City, in a neighboring county. The large front-page headline reads: "Walks Four Miles

to Kill Friend."

The victim was shot while sleeping, in the middle of the night. The shooter rose from his bed, four miles away—he told officers after he was arrested—decided to kill his friend, went downstairs, changed his mind, went upstairs and back to bed then changed his mind again about an hour later, got up the second time, picked up his rifle, walked to the friend's home, entered, turned on the light, shot his victim once in the chest, turned off the light, walked back home and went to bed. Presumably, after that, he slept better.

It seems that the friends had had an argument the previous afternoon—that much was learned—but again there is no adequate motivation for murder.

What was the killer thinking about as he trudged the four miles with his rifle in the middle of the night? Why didn't that cool him off and bring him to his senses? Did he look up at the stars at all while he was walking, lonely and insignificant, through the darkness? Did he think about what he was going to do?

The answers to these questions are lost in the mystery of violence—a mystery that we cannot help but view as tragic, indicating a woeful sickness of mind and spirit among the protagonists in these frequent cases.

And the last question is perhaps the most puzzling of all: what will be society's reply to this challenge of violence? How widely and how deeply must we look to find the cause and the cure?

"Come On, I'll Race Ya—Straight Up"



'KITTY HAWK, 1894': A REMINISCENT POEM

Robert Frost Once Visited Coast

In his column in The Chapel Hill Weekly, Louis Graves, the veteran editor and now contributing editor of that esteemed publication, recalls that Robert Frost (one of our favorite poets and American personalities) visited the North Carolina coast when a very young man. This was something we hadn't known, nor had we known of or read a reminiscent poem, "Kitty Hawk, 1894," printed by Mr. Graves in the Weekly.

Perhaps the poem has never been published. The Chapel Hill editor says that it was given to him by Mr. Frost's daughter, Mrs. Leslie Frost Ballentine, and also by another friend, Mr. Frost has made several visits to Chapel Hill, to read his poems and to lecture, in recent years. We had thought this was his first intimate experience with North Carolina.

The poet will be 83 on March 26, Mr. Graves points out—and it was 63 years ago, when he was 19, that he landed at Elizabeth City. Mr. Graves surmises that the trip "was another case, one among millions since time began, of a youth's eagerness to get away from the commonplace, the humdrum." The poet, a native of Massachusetts, had just left Dartmouth with a distaste for academic life.

The "reminiscent poem" consists of 116 lines of four or five words each, Mr. Graves says, but he printed it "in blocks," as follows, with capitalized words indicating the beginning of lines.

This makes it less effective as verse, but allows the condensation necessary for newspaper publication:

"Kitty Hawk, O Kitty, There was once a song, A prophetic ditty, I might well have sung When I came here young Sixty Years ago. It was then as though I could hardly wait To degenerate. Habit couldn't hold me. I was, to be sure, Out of sorts with date, Wandering to and fro In the earth alone. You might say too poor Spirited to care Who I was or where.

"Still I must have known, Something in me told me, Flight would first be flown, It is on my tongue To say first be sprung, Into the sublime Off these sands of time For his hour glass. I felt in me wing To have up and flung An immortal fling.

"I might well have soared, I might well have sung, Little more, alas, Than Cape Hatteras; And I fell among Some kind of committee From Elizabeth City, Each and every one Loaded with a gun And a demi-john, Out to kill a duck, Or perhaps a swan Over Currituck.

"This was not their day Anything to slay Unless one another. Being out of luck Made them no less gay, No, nor less polite. They included me Like a little brother In their revelry; Even at their

height All concern to take Care my innocence Should at all events Tenderly be kept For good gracious' sake.

"And if they were gentle They were sentimental. One drank to his mother While another wept. All which made it sad For me to break loose From the need they had To make someone glad They were of no use. Manners made it hard, But that night I stole Off on the unbounded Beaches where the whole Of the Atlantic pounded.

"There I next fell in With a

ENCOURAGING

(Al Resch in Chatham News)

One of the most encouraging things on the local scene is the heightened interest among the people in school affairs. It matters not that some of this interest is born of controversy. It is, generally, an uplifting thing, is this increased awareness of the schools and what is being done for, to and with them.

Many of the schools' present problems would have been solved long ago if an active public interest had been in evidence. For long years public apathy was a crying shame. Parents were interested only to the extent that they delivered their children at the schoolhouse and then were on hand at three o'clock to take them home. What went on inside the building was of little or no concern.

Beauty And The Billboard

The Pilot frequently has advocated the preservation of natural beauty along highways—a conviction that has been widely shared in this area since the late Struthers Burt and others crusaded for this worthy cause a quarter of a century or so ago.

The subject has special nationwide interest at this time, and has even received attention in Congress, in connection with the proposed Federal highway system.

Commenting on the national picture, The New York Times says:

The outdoor-advertising lobby is showing its usual effrontery in a current campaign against proposed Federal control of billboards along the new 41,000-mile Federal highway system. Latest example is its claim that such restriction would constitute an invasion of states' rights.

What nonsense this is! The Federal Government is paying 90 per cent of the cost of this great transcontinental road network; it sets the standards for the roads; and the roads themselves and the motorists who travel on them create the values from which the billboard owners would profit. Yet even a mild at-

tempt to prevent America's magnificent countryside from being blotted out behind a scabrous wall of advertising signs is denounced as infringement on states' rights and a misuse of Federal funds.

The fact is that Senator Neuberger's bill, introduced last month, merely directs the Secretary of Commerce to establish standards to protect scenic beauty along the highways by controlling signs within 500 feet of the right-of-way, and to enforce those standards on Federal property. When it comes to property under state jurisdiction, the standards would be merely advisory, though if a state wanted to abide by them it would receive Federal help in the preclusive purchase of advertising rights along the highway. What could be more reasonable, even to the most sincere states' righter?

Naturally, there is no objection, except possibly from a safety point of view, to outdoor advertising in many industrial, commercial or other built-up areas. But there is a deep public interest in preventing the great through routes that are only now beginning to be constructed across the country from becoming long ribbons of billboards and hotdog stands.

Grains of Sand

North Carolina's moralistic highway signs (such as SLOW DOWN, DON'T BE LIKE THE CURVE — DEAD AHEAD) have aroused the attention of a somewhat supercilious Richmond "News Leader" editorial writer. While deploring his general condescension toward Tarheelia, we agree with his description of the signs as "little blue monstrosities."

In fact, a couple of years or so ago, when the signs first made their appearance on Route 1, we deplored their comic book approach to highway responsibility. We deplored through a whole GRAINS column, as we recall it. Then, a year or so later—and, we are confident, by no means because of what we had to say—the signs were removed from Highway 1 and appeared on Highway 301 which is reputed to carry the heaviest load of north-south, through-state traffic.

The "News Leader" writer claims that the signs prove "what Virginians and South Carolinians have been contending for several hundred years: that Tar Heels innately have no taste, and that the finer things of life are lost on them."

In addition to loose usage of the word "several," this is where the "News Leader" extends its remarks into the realm of the supercilious, it seems to us. But no matter. Let's talk about the signs.

The Richmond editorialist cites one of those entering-North Carolina signs and then composes a parody whose message we hope will reach the North Carolina Highway Department.

The sign quoted is one we used to pass at the state line, while coming back from the beach on early Monday mornings last summer—probably the worst possible time to gaze on such pretentious fiddle-faddle:

WELCOME
TO THE TAR HEEL
STATE
WHERE THE WEAK
GROW STRONG,
THE STRONG GROW GREAT

THESE HELPFUL SIGNS
WILL GUIDE YOUR WAY
SO TAKE YOUR TIME,
ENJOY YOUR STAY

Then the Richmond parody:

WELCOME TO
THE OLD DOMINION
A PLEASANT PLACE
IN OUR OPINION
IF YOUR OPINION'S
OTHERWISE

THE NEXT STATE SOUTH
MAY OPEN YOUR EYES

We acknowledge a skillful thrust by our opponent to the north. But that doesn't mean that we wouldn't rather live in North Carolina. Someday, we might even do a column on Virginia's signs—innumerable, hard-to-read historical markers, for instance.

He Went About As Far As He Could Go

Farmers will put up with a good deal but they can go just so far.

Sometimes even that's too far. Last week up in New York State, a Catskill farmer sued the federal government.

Because of the routing of the new cross-country Thruway close to his house, the farmer is obliged to travel four miles and pay a toll in order to get to his privy.

Haven't heard what the Thruway response will be: move him or it. Or maybe build him a bridge. Quick action would seem in order.

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