

SQUARE DEAL vs PORK BARREL

(By JOHN SPRUNT HILL)

Democratic Apportionment of State Highway Funds By Law to All the People, Against Bureaucratic Apportionment of State Highway Funds to a Few People.

That Governor Gardner's proposed "scrapping" of the present highway Commission, and his proposed new central bureau to handle all these funds, is to meet stern opposition in the state is evidenced by the following. It is a communication written by John Sprunt Hill, Durham, to Fred N. Tate, of High Point. The full letter is reproduced because it gives in detail many facts connected with the highway system that is not generally known to the public.

The letter follows:

Hon. Fred N. Tate,
High Point, N. C.
Dear Mr. Tate:—

I thank you very much for your telegram expressing opposition to the Governor's suggestion to "scrap" the State Road Law. I spent all day yesterday in Raleigh looking over the situation, and found very little support for the proposed Centralized Road Commission.

Apparently the information, upon which the Governor acted, was half-baked, false or "green-eyed," and he has been misled into making a premature and unfounded attack upon the State Road Law and the State Highway Commission. The Governor is a personal friend of mine, hence I am very much embarrassed to oppose his views, but, having spent most of the year 1920 working on a road bill, as a member of the Commission appointed by the Good Roads Association to draft a bill for the Legislature, and having spent ten years upon the Highway Commission at great personal sacrifice, and practically without compensation, I feel that it is up to me now to stand squarely by the democratic faith that is in me and to uphold the fundamental principles of the State Road Law as vigorously as possible. The issue is clear-cut. It is.

Square Deal vs Pork Barrel

The issue is democratic apportionment of State Highway funds by law to all the people, honestly and fairly, against bureaucratic apportionment of State Highway funds by political pull and propaganda.

The bed rock, upon which the whole structure of the State Highway Commission stands, is the honest, fair allotment of funds to the nine districts into which the State was divided by the Legislature of 1921. The allotment of funds is decentralized by the same method as Federal Aid is allotted by the United States Congress, this is, one-third in proportion to the area of the district to the area of the whole State; one-third in proportion to the population of the district to the population of the whole State, and one-third in proportion to the miles of State Highways in the district to the mileage of State Highways in the whole State. As the districts are made up of counties, the books of the Highway Commission are kept on a district basis, but, at the same time, show the allotment of State Highway funds to which each of the counties composing the respective districts is entitled by reason of its area, population and State Highway mileage. These records of the State Highway Commission are open at all times to the public at Raleigh, and the allotments of each District are also on file in the office of the District Commissioner, at all times open to inspection to every man, woman and child in the counties constituting the District. It is the job of the District Commissioner to so handle these funds as to build a county seat to county seat State Highway System in co-operation with all the other Commissioners, keeping in mind the funds and needs of each county, and in the long run giving to each county one hundred per cent. of the funds to which it is entitled. It is clear, therefore, that the allotment of State Highway funds in North Carolina is not only done on a democratic basis, but on an honest, open and certain basis.

The whole State Road Law was built up around this democratic distribution of State funds and a county seat State Highway System. The Legislature of 1921, in its profound wisdom, put its stamp upon this democratic plan, and a great deal of the success of the State Highway Commission, in building the splendid road system of North Carolina, has been due to its faithful adherence to these principles. For ten years no serious objection has been raised to this method of allotment of State Highway funds, and it has become fixed in the minds and hearts of the people of

North Carolina. Why break faith with them at this late hour because a public accountant of the Institution of Government Research, at Washington D. C., makes a hurried trip to North Carolina, and, body sets up his opinion that "this division of the State into districts is inherently unsound in principle?" This same Henry T. Seidemann is probably a very able auditor, but he admitted in Durham that he knew nothing about roads. I think, therefore, that he should be told to mind his own business and tell us about budgets and finance and not attack upon his half-baked opinions about road matters against a great body of North Carolina citizens who have qualified in the eyes of the whole world as road experts. The building of the State Highway System under the present State Road Law has met with such a degree of approval, both at home and abroad, that it seems to me any thinking man would hesitate to advocate a radical change without very serious and compelling reasons. The facts should be clearly placed before the people of North Carolina, and every one have ample opportunity to judge for himself between the present democratic apportionment of funds, and the proposed bureaucratic and political apportionment of State Highway funds. If Mr. Seidemann had made a thorough study of the State Highway Act, he would have found that the present State Highway Commission, now vested with full executive authority, so as to give efficient, centralized control of letting contracts and handling money, with nine District Commissioners without any executive authority but acting as a Board of Directors, each one charged primarily with certain responsibilities in his respective district. The Central Highway Commissioners, now Hon. R. A. Doughton, is responsible for the expenditures of road administration and road maintenance, and the District Commissioner, generally speaking, recommends the projects in his District to be constructed. The amount of money that each District Commissioner has on his program for construction of roads in his District, in which his local people are vitally interested, is dependent upon the economy and efficiency with which the Chairman and his organization conduct the administration and maintenance programs. The practical effect of this arrangement is that the central organization at Raleigh is now being watched constantly by the nine District Commissioners, who are intensely interested in seeing that every dollar possible is saved for the construction of State Highways.

Location of Roads
The location of roads to be constructed in each district is, under the present State Road Law, largely in the discretion of the District Commissioner, but State Highway engineers are sent out from Raleigh to make a survey of the road, working entirely from the central office at Raleigh, and are entirely independent of domination by the District Commissioner. After all the facts concerning the different locations have been found by the State Highway engineers from the Raleigh office, these facts are made public for the general consideration of all interested citizens in the particular locality involved, and after due consideration, and as a rule after careful observation and study on the ground, the District Commissioner arrives at a decision as to the location, and he makes his recommendation as to a particular location to the full meeting of the State Highway Commission. Maps prepared by State Highway engineers from the central office are then presented to the full Commission showing the locations of the competing roads, costs, distances, geographic locations and estimates of the engineers as to the number of people to be served by the competing roads.

After a full discussion of the maps showing the locations, and without any political interference whatever, the location of the road is determined by the full Highway Commission, and resolution is passed authorizing the Chairman to advertise the project for construction. Generally speaking, the report of the District Commissioner follows closely the report of the State Highway engineers from the Raleigh office, but occasionally the District Commissioner finds himself in opposition to the report of the State Highway engineers, and then the full State Highway Commission has to determine the controversy. In a number of well-known cases the judgement of the District Commissioner has been overruled by the full Commission.

There are no arbitrary practices about the State Highway Commission. It always works along democratic lines. The State Road Law provides for the right of appeal from the report of the District Commissioner, and many times citizens have exercised this right of appeal. There has never been any suggestion of fraud or any charge of extravagance against the individual Commissioner or against the State Highway Commission, and its work has been approved by four Legislatures and by every political platform proclaimed during the past ten years. It is not true, therefore, that we have no properly co-ordinated State Highway Commission in North Carolina, and there is no foundation for Mr. Seidemann's charge that the highway work in North Carolina "is actually controlled by nine individual Commissioners." No doubt it was this same "mushroom" road expert, Seidemann, that told the Governor that "the time has come to discontinue the building of State Highways in piecemeal fashion." Anybody can look at

the present road map and see for himself that North Carolina has a great coordinated State Highway System. I submit that it is up to the Governor to present his facts before we make such haste to tear up the road law and throw the whole business into confusion, and create a Bureau composed of a Chairman and four Commissioners at large, and lump the entire State Highway funds, under the power and discretion of the Governor himself, on a political basis. The people of outlying counties would be forced to be continually running down to Raleigh Bureau of State Roads, at great expense to themselves and endless confusion to the Bureau, in order that they may secure consideration of their road matters. During the past ten years I have personally held about six hundred road hearings in the Fourth District, and it may be safely said that almost as many hearings have been held in each of the other Districts. Judging by former experience, the Governor's Centralized Bureau of Roads at Raleigh would average, for the whole State of North Carolina, about two hearings per day, and even after the hearings take place, members of the Bureau would not be in a position to act intelligently upon the merits of the controversy without personal observation of the roads themselves. The whole conception, therefore of a Centralized State Highway Bureau is undemocratic, impractical and runs in direct opposition to the experience and practice of the people of North Carolina.

County seat to County Seat and Farm to Market Roads

A glance at the map of the State Highway System shows that practically all trunk lines in North Carolina have been built by the State Highway Commission. Here and there a short stretch of some trunk line, built years ago and treated with road oil, is worn out under heavy traffic. At the last meeting of the State Highway Commission steps were taken to immediately replace most of these worn-out links of road oil treatment roads with modern concrete roads. The present work of the State Highway Commission, therefore, is not building trunk line roads and fantastic coordinated roads, but its job is mainly to complete a county seat to county seat State Highway System connecting various county seats by the most direct and practical routes, and the building of farm to market roads, running into villages and small towns and large settlements of people that have not yet been provided with adequate road service by the State Highway Commission. From time to time during the past few years the State Highway Commission has been constantly adding to the State Highway System these county seat to county seat roads and these farm to market roads until now about 2000 miles of these roads have been added to the System, many of which remain unbuilt. Records of the State Highway Commission show that it will require about five years for us to build and properly surface all of these county seat to county seat and farm to market roads, at a cost of something like \$80,000,000. All of the District Commissioners are familiar with the problems arising from the addition of this new mileage, and they are making every effort to give the people of North Carolina these new county seat to county seat and farm to market roads. Is it better to trust this great work for the people of North Carolina to road experts, giving their time practically without cost to the State, who are already familiar with the work that is to be done thorough the by-ways and hedges of North Carolina, or, is it better to trust it to a Centralized Bureau at Raleigh, under the control of the Governor subjected to political influences, and follow the advice of the distinguished Mr. Seidemann of the Brookings Institute of Government Research? I am slow to follow Mr. Seidemann's suggested Pennsylvania plan, where the Governor controls the Highway Bureau and the personal of the Highway Bureau operates on a political basis and generally goes out of office with every new Governor.

Economy

The North Carolina State Highway Commission and the District Commissioners have always practiced rigid economy in the construction and maintenance of State Highways. Its overhead charges are strictly in proportion to the volume of road work to be done. Four years ago, when we had a \$12,000,000 annual State program, the Fourth District kept seven engineering parties in the field. Today, with a \$6,000,000 road fund, we have only two engineering parties in the field. Indeed, it is not claimed by the advocates of the Centralized Bureau that it will cut down expenses. Their claim appears to rest upon "coordinating State Highways" so as to facilitate the building of trunk lines. The only serious criticism which I have heard of the Highway Commission was that it broke a number of contractors and cut seriously into the profits of the bonding companies. The State Highway Commission has steadily cut down the cost of roads in North Carolina. It has budgeted its income and its road programs and has already shown a surplus at the end of the year. The State Highway Commission has strenuously resisted all efforts by other State Departments to divert State Highway funds to other State Departments. It has at all times been glad to give a full accounting of its stewardship. The State Highway Commission has at all times tried to follow the legislative will as expressed in the State Road Law.

Let us turn on the light, and let all the people of North Carolina learn the facts, and judge the merits of this controversy. I believe in the democracy of the State Road Law, and with the help of God, I will stand by the faith that is in me.

Oakland News Items

T. B. Reid was in the Toxaway section on business the first of the week.

Jim Galloway of Glenville, visited friends here recently.

The many friends of R. J. Galloway will be sorry to learn that he is in very poor health.

Mrs. Mary Burgess reports twin calves at her house.

The marriage of Mr. Fred Revis and Miss Rosa Bell Lee came as a surprise to their many friends here.

Mrs. S. E. Alexander was on the sick list last week.

Word has been received here that Mr. and Mrs. Dan Reid made a safe journey and are now enjoying the sunshine of Florida.

Otto Alexander of Brevard called on Mr. and Mrs. I. S. Sanders Sunday afternoon.

L. E. Cash and daughter, Myrtle, visited the latter's grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. George Alexander, Sunday.

T. E. Reid of Brevard, was the dinner guest of Mr. and Mrs. Claud Reid on Sunday.

Mrs. J. L. Sanders is quite ill at her home at Toxaway.

Born, to Mr. and Mrs. Hovie Chapell, a daughter, on Jan. 12.

Wade Nicholson was a Sunday visitor at the home of Bill Brisco.

Mrs. I. S. Sanders visited Mrs. Claud Reid Monday.

Mrs. Lee Norton has returned from Brevard and reported a very pleasant visit.

Among the pleasant events of the past week was a social given by Mr. and Mrs. Norton. Those enjoying the occasion were Miss Iva Sanders, L. C. Sanders, Miss Inez Alexander, Miss Blanch Arrowood, Cleon Williams and J. C. McCall of Toxaway. Misses Lora Bell and Louise Lyda of Porterdale, Ga., Miss Evaund Sanders, Ray and Robert Sanders and Miss Myrtle of Oakland, and Dock and Guffie Whitmire of Quebec.

The rain and mud has prevented good attendance at Sunday school and church, although there are those "Faithful few" who had the courage to brave the weather last Sunday, even though they had to walk. Let us all profit by their example.

CULLOWHEE ALUMNI ASKED TO REPORT TO THE SCHOOL

Cullowhee, Jan. 21.—The annual staff at Western Carolina Teachers College is requesting that all students who were at the college in the fall or who plan to attend the spring quarter be represented in the annual. If this is to be done, those students are asked to communicate with Mrs. Rowe Henry, Editor-in-Chief. This should be done immediately as the annual will go to press about March first.

Want Ads Are Good Selling Agents.

Selica News Notes

We are glad to see warmer weather at this writing, as a little sunshine and wind would do wonders for our side roads.

Miss Jewel Waldrop of Cherryfield, was a visitor in our section recently. Mr. and Mrs. Copa Lee and children of Lake Toxaway, were Selica visitors last week.

H. C. McKinna was a caller in Fletcher, N. C. on Sunday.

Ward Breedlove went to Brevard on Sunday afternoon to visit his sick father, J. A. Breedlove, and reports some improvement in his condition.

A birthday dinner was given at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John McKinna in honor of their son, Robert, and a good time reported by all.

Bill Dunn of this place, is working as automobile salesman this week.

Mrs. Mays Waldrop gave a party for her friends Saturday evening. A good time was reported by all present.

Rev. N. H. Chapman preached a wonderful sermon at Catheys Creek Saturday evening, which was enjoyed by a large congregation; also Sunday at eleven o'clock.

A number of our men have made application for jobs on the Pisgah road work, but very few have gone at this writing.

Oates Bryson, who has been very sick with pneumonia, is able to be out again.

John Wood has moved to our section. We are glad that people think our burg is a nice place in which to live after all.

The M & B Lime works started operations again last Monday afternoon, and team work was to begin on Tuesday. They hope to have lime for sale in a short time.

Our next Saturday evening prayer service will be from 2 Tim. 4th verse, conducted by Vernon Barton.

The midweek prayer service for January 28, will be held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. David Orr, conducted by Fred Barton. Scripture will be from Matt. 28.

THE RIGHT WAY TO TRAVEL is by train. The safest. Most comfortable. Most reliable. Costs less. Inquire of Ticket Agents regarding greatly reduced fares for short trips. SOUTHERN RAILWAY SYSTEM

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

My factory was moved from Brevard to Asheville, N. C., for economic and business reasons and not because of any mismanagement or misconduct on the part of Miss Martha Cowan.

Because of certain rumors circulating in Brevard I make this statement at Miss Cowan's request.

F. E. PECKHAM.

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