

Editorial Views



Optimism prevails for park

The Seven Peaks Park, near Newport, just off I-40, is still "Go" according to a report recently in The Newport Plain Talk.

Officials of the project said they have had to change priority on the project and the first will be a convention center and hotel. Then will come a craft city followed by Stan Brock's Wild Kingdom.

The newspaper report, quoting officials, said the amusement park will take about two years long to complete since it is the hardest to finance.

A recent failure of a similar

development plan in Tennessee has raised the caution flag for the Seven Peaks group. However, officials of other amusement parks have indicated they want to have a share of the Seven Peaks project.

The delay has been blamed on the money situation. The developers now hold 600 acres of land and are trying to acquire control of all land within a mile of the park.

It appears that optimism prevails on the other side of the Smokies for a project destined to attract huge crowds each season.

Sheriffs dislike regulations

Many of North Carolina's 100 county sheriffs are upset over what they see as a growing encroachment of state regulation over their local domains.

The key issue is minimum standards for deputies, and the state agency set up to enforce those, which sheriffs complain interfere with their constitutional powers.

Not only are encroaching state regulations feared, but federal rulings which deal with how local jails are run and other aspects of sheriffing, cause the elected officials to worry.

Several sheriffs met recently with a legislative committee to talk about the problems and suggest remedies.

Most of the complaints centered around the standards for employment drawn up and enforced by the Criminal Justice Training and Standards Council.

For deputies and local police, that means an applicant must be 21 years old, a U.S. citizen, a high school graduate, pass a written test, and a physical exam, and undergo a background investigation and fingerprint check to make sure he has no felony criminal record. Additionally, a 160-hour training course is required in the first year of employment.

Standards are also set for State Bureau of Investigation agents, highway patrolmen, paroles and probation officers, and correctional employees.

At first, the supervising council operated independently, but was moved under jurisdiction of the Attorney General in 1975. The council is made up of 21 people, with the state sheriffs Association allotted five; police chiefs allotted five, and others

from the courts, Justice Department, Motor Vehicles Division, education and some appointed by the governor rounding out membership.

Increasingly, the sheriffs complained to a meeting of the Governmental Operations Commission chaired by State Senator I. C. Crawford, D-Buncombe, the council has usurped local authority.

For example, said Buncombe Sheriff Tom Morrissey, a fingerprint check might take a month or two to clear, but even if a sheriff knows the applicant and his family well, he can't go ahead and put him to work without requesting such permission in writing from Raleigh.

Applicants must pass a written test given by the Employment Security Commission, and if they fail must wait five years before retesting — and appeals to the council in such cases have invariably failed, the sheriffs said.

Boiled down from the various specifics is the feeling among sheriffs that Raleigh is nibbling away at local authority, changing regulations without touching base with those affected, constantly moving to take away constitutional responsibilities from elected sheriffs.

The standards are making lawmen standard and respected statewide while in the past there have been communities which not only tolerated but wanted less than professional, competent law enforcement.

The sheriffs said they are not opposed to minimum standards, but the imposition of regulations from the state level without enough involvement of local officials in writing those rules.

Tar Heel Medicaid Program

The administration of Republican Gov. James E. Holshouser is anxious to demonstrate that private enterprise can do the job. So is Health Applications Systems, and other private firms. But amidst much confusion and a contract measuring a foot thick, there was room for a lot of slips.

Then entered liberal interests from the federal level; both in Congress and in the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Those interests have a stake in this: the bureaucrats because their domains would be sharply reduced should private enterprise prove successful; the liberal Congressmen because success would prove that big government is not always the best solution to problems.

In a short time, the in-depth probe of the North Carolina contract carried out at Congressional insistence by the watchdog General Accounting Office should be made public. It will undoubtedly portray a lot of problems with the present contract, as already demonstrated by the hassle taking place almost daily in Gov. Holshouser's office between state officials and the

contractors. It would be to the benefit of the opposing sides to reach a settlement. The answer obviously

prove neither simple nor quickly available.

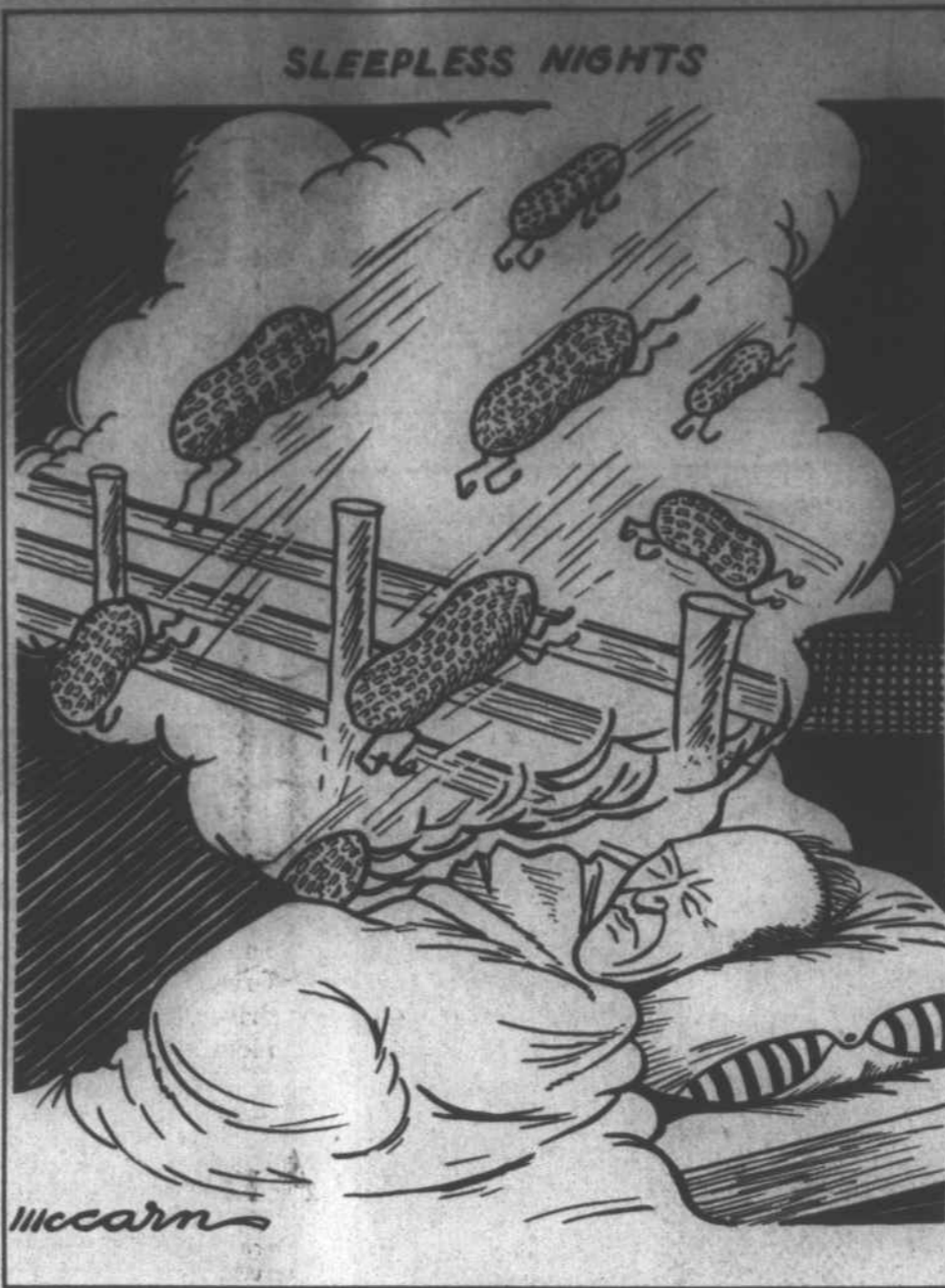
With North Carolina as the proving grounds in the great battle of Government-Versus-Private Enterprise, then, two knotty problems have been unveiled:

1. There is no control over eligibility. If a person meets whatever criteria are established, he must be paid. Thus, the rolls continue to expand.

2. There is no control over the major expense item: money paid to health care providers for services rendered. The guideline is that charges must be usual and customary — and charges keep going up sharply.

When Health Applications System said it could do the job better than government (and cheaper) it meant it could cut administrative overhead, hold down payrolls by hiring fewer people, use computers to weed out cheaters and double payments. All that done, the amount has proved terribly insignificant in the face of rising numbers of eligibles; and escalating payments to hospitals, doctors, and nursing homes.

Can government let private enterprise define eligibility; set rates for health care providers; limit payments to those eligible for various reasons? The answer obviously



Mobile homes seldom move

From 12-wide, to double-wide, and now to triple-wide, mobile homes continue to gain a commanding position on the North Carolina landscape.

Once considered a home on wheels which the owner could hitch up and haul away to a new job in a new town, today's mobile homes are seldom moved more than once — from the sales lot to a parking place.

The growth in size of the modern units to rival that of many standard three-bedroom stick houses is reason enough for that change.

But the lack of portability is one of the prime reasons those in the business are now pushing for another name change: from mobile homes to manufactured homes. The campaign to change the public image is similar to that which accompanied the name change from trailers to mobile homes.

MATTER OF MONEY
Economics are obviously the foundation of the mobile

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Editor, The News Record:

We want you to know how very much WNC Lung Association appreciates the support you and your staff have given our program in use of news items and announcements which we've sent to you from time to time.

It is very true that without such support, our association could not carry on its program, nor reach the public. You all are, in a very real way, helping the health of your own community and many others, also.

We hope you can display the enclosed certificate somewhere in the building, and each time you and the staff sees it, believe you hear us saying, "Thank you!"

GERTRUDE RAMSEY
Program Director

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Treasurer drops bombshell

State Treasurer Edwin Gill invited the leadership of the General Assembly to his office in the Albemarle Building on a recent early morning to drop a bombshell in their laps.

He had no intention of doing so, literally. Nonetheless, in the course of the meeting, a telephoned bombthreat was received in the building, and treasurer, lieutenant governor, speaker, and the rest had to hastily adjourn to other quarters.

THE REAL BOMB
Legislators weren't nearly as scared by the telephone call as by the news which Gill handed them: Blue Cross and Blue Shield, which handles the hospital-medical insurance for state employees, is raising rates.

The total bill for this coming fiscal year will be \$7.5 million higher than anticipated, and that is for just nine months of the year, since the hike would take effect Oct. 1. The total annual bill for employee insurance runs more than \$40 million; dependent coverage is paid by the employee, in addition.

At a time when legislators are trying to cut the budget, raise new funds, and provide a raise for teachers and other state employees, Gill's news was bad, indeed.

"This request for more money during these difficult budgetary times does not give me any pleasure and, I assure you, I would not make such a request except for my concern for the well-being of our teachers and state employees," the treasurer said. He also outlined three options: reduce the insurance coverage to cut cost; let the employees pay the increased cost; or increase state spending for the insurance. He recommended the state increase its spending.

Legislators will lean toward that solution, but some are already figuring the dollars will have to come out of the pay raise which employees have been promised — such fringes are, after all, a part of the benefits and paying out \$7.5 million more for insurance will just have to come off the raise, some legislators say.

Mid-Town Mayor
ONE OF THE PROJECTS IN THIS COMMUNITY THAT NEVER GETS DONE IS USUALLY SOMETHING WE AS INDIVIDUALS WERE GOING TO COMPLETE.



BONUS, INSTEAD
Meanwhile, the tax withholding idea put forth by Lt. Gov. James H. Hunt and endorsed by Gov. James E. Holshouser that some \$75 million from the next fiscal year be pulled into the 1976-77 fiscal year and spent for pay raises is beginning to raise legislative eyebrows.

There has been little public reaction, but there is a growing mood that using next year's money for this year's expenses — which would also have to be paid next year, if spent for a recurring item like pay raises — is not a very good suggestion.

Work is moving ahead in North Carolina's six regional health planning areas to set up the Health Systems Agencies required by a new federal law.

Despite a suit soon to be filed by the State Department of Human Resources and the N.C. Medical Society challenging that law, and a pending suit against it by the American Medical Association, state officials expect the regional organizations to be in operation before summer.

The theory at work is simply this: a number of health officials consider the new federal approach a blatant takeover of local and state authorities, but figure steps to comply will be essential to gaining federal funds.

Recently resigned Human Resources Secretary David T. Flaherty labels the new law a step toward socialized medicine, and one which creates a "health czar" to dictate all federal spending.

FEDERAL CONTROL
Archie T. Johnson, assistant human resources secretary for health, says the new approach is deliberately designed to become the mechanism for eventually implementing a federal health insurance program.

Any health program in which federal funds are used is affected; nursing homes, hospitals, medical schools, rehabilitation centers, health clinics, etc.

In a nutshell, the law requires regional agencies (six in this state) to set priorities for all health programs and major investments in expanded or new facilities or equipment.

It also gives the secretary of the federal Department of Health Education and Welfare full power to deny or approve all plans.

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