

Editorials

What Did Survey Tell Us?

Foregoing a lot of rhetoric, we think the recent Public Opinion Survey told us one thing above all others. It is simply this: public relations between the local school system — on all levels — and parents and other taxpayers is in dire need of improvement in Madison County.

This fact is borne out in the comments made by respondents to the survey, and by the statements, or non-statements, made by public school officials during interviews last Thursday and Friday. (See article on Page 1.)

The public had its say in the published results of the survey (The News Record, Sept. 17 edition). The respondents perceived politics, what they think of as unqualified teachers, and poor administrative leadership as major problems in the local school system. It is a cause for great concern that it took an opinion poll which provided anonymity to enable some, if not most, of these citizens to voice their thoughts and feelings publicly.

Public school officials were given the opportunity to have their say last week, and those few who chose to comment dwelled on nitpicking about the survey per se and had little, if anything, to say regarding the public's attitude toward the schools or the problems as perceived by the public. The officials seemed intent on discrediting the validity of the survey by declaring 139 responses as insignificant out of a 3,500 newspaper circulation. Again, it is cause for concern that the officials, for the most part, showed little interest in acknowledging the opinions of the public.

As the prison camp foreman said to Paul Newman in the motion picture Hud, "What we have here is a failure to communicate." And, as that failure to communicate led to a lot of pain and suffering for the character played by Newman, poor public relations between the schools and the people can cause much harm to a large segment of this county's population — the students.

Terrell Bell, U.S. secretary of education, recently said that responsibility for the

quality of public education lies on the shoulders of public educators at the state and local levels. This responsibility is going to weigh even more heavily as the federal government decreases its role (and money allocation) in public education in the near future. Local school officials are going to find it necessary to rely more on local public support, through taxes and local revenue bond issues, to adequately maintain the operation of the schools. Turning a deaf ear to the public now is no way to gain its support at election time or when the hand is stretched out for those all-important dollars.

Therefore, good public relations seems to be a needed, immediate goal that would benefit everybody concerned with the local schools — school officials, parents, administrators, teachers and students.

By good public relations we do not mean a Hollywood-type "PR hype" that sells the public a fantasy. School systems all too often take the position that "all's right in the world" and have a tendency to gloss over any deficiencies that may exist. No one likes to admit their faults, especially in the eye of the public. But, that's exactly to whom public educators are accountable — the public. Consequently, any public relations methods and messages should be honest and sincere in order to bring about strong public support that is going to be needed in the future.

Generally, the public wants what's best for its children, especially in the area of education. We think people are willing to fork out time, effort and money to assure a high quality of education for kids. But, they need to be given the opportunity to give that time and effort, and they have a right to know where every penny of their money (for taxes, school activity fees and fund raisers) goes. Good public relations should mean a good working relationship between the school and parents.

The verdict is in on the matter of needing good public relations between the school system and the public. Now the next question is: "Is anyone willing to listen and act on it?"

Heard and Seen

By POP STORY

French Broad River Week was a great success from all I can hear. The climax of the celebration in Marshall was the presence of the huge Channel 13 balloon Saturday morning on the island.

Bill Norwood, "Mr. Bill" skillfully operated the balloon and several members of the Marshall Volunteer Fire Department assisted by handling the ropes to be sure the balloon didn't blow down the river. Everything went off smoothly until 11:30 a.m. when the wind made it impractical to continue taking passengers up for the short rides. Hundreds of kids and several adults enjoyed the balloon ride, including this writer.

I've been up in small and large airplanes and helicopters but this was my first trip via balloon. I enjoyed the ride very much and I enjoyed talking with Norwood. Several of us tried to get Dave Wilson, "Shorty" Rector and others to go up but they declined saying they preferred to stay on the ground. Fire Chief Jackie Davis and firemen Frankie Davis, Ray Crowe, and others preferred to keep charge of the ropes which "anchored" the balloon.

Softball games were enjoyed Saturday

afternoon and "live" music was enjoyed Saturday afternoon and Saturday night. All in all, it was a fine day. Congratulations to those in charge of "Riverfest" and thanks to Bill Norwood and WLOS-TV for bringing the balloon to the island.

My friend, Judson Edwards, underwent successful cataract surgery last Friday at Johnson City and expects to return to his home at Beech Glen this Thursday. Judson's vision hasn't been too good for a long time although he could see the checker board well enough to most always win. Now with corrected vision in his right eye he just might keep from winning any games. Maybe Carroll Radford and I together can at least get a few draws. We'll just have to wait and see.

Eddie Stines told me a few days ago that he, too, is enjoying his Cable TV and the added channels it affords. Lonnie Plemmons says he's interested in a cable TV after reading my column last week. All those who have Cable TV like it but wish the company would add Channel 17 to the list.

Living And Growing

The Things We Use As Band-aids In Our Lives

By CARL MUMPOWER, M.S.W.

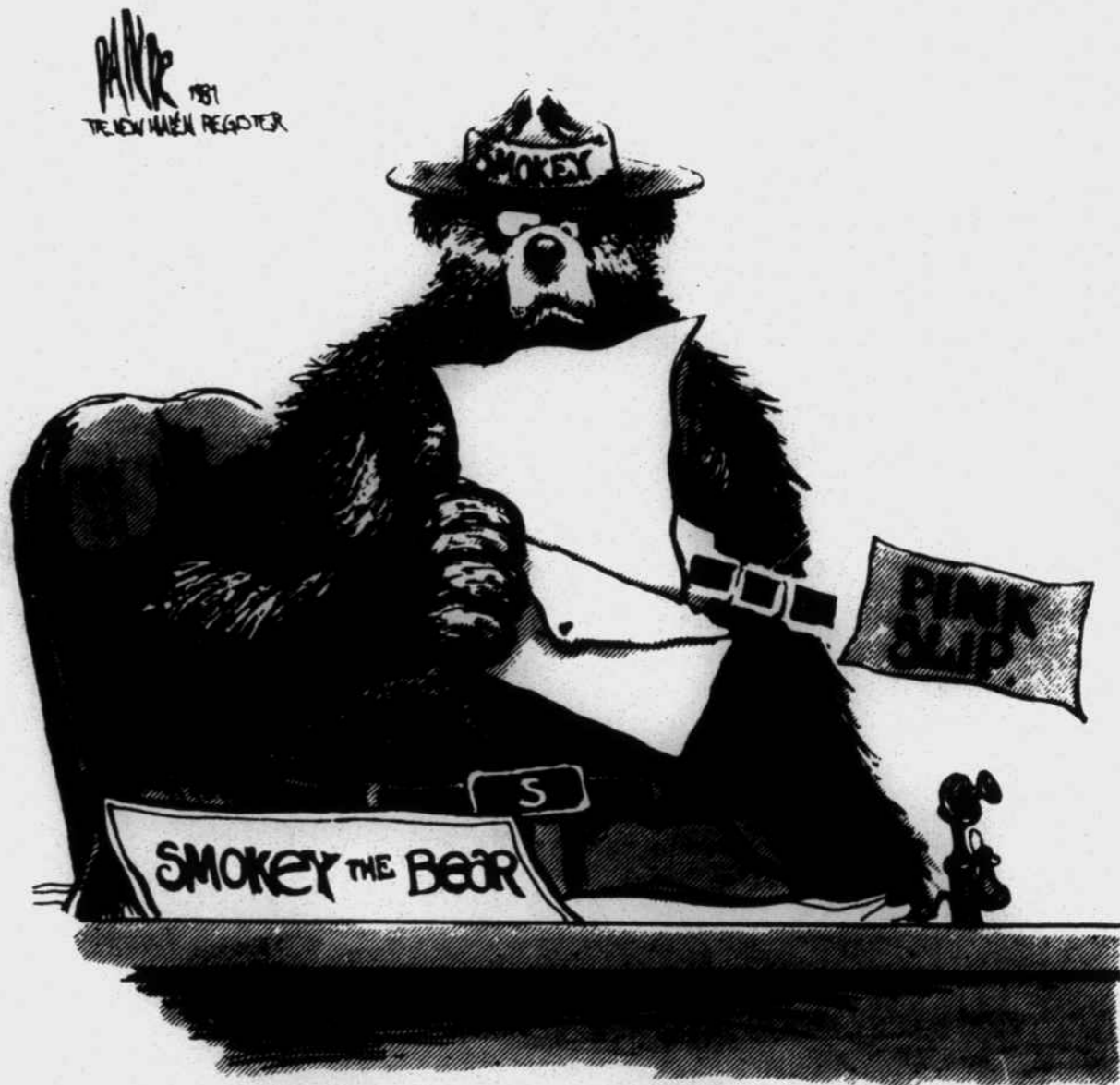
Asheville Counseling Center
The other day my daughter and I made a trip to Charlotte during which she located a first aid kit that I had stored in the car. Inside the kit were all sorts of odds and ends, but true to ways of kids, it was the band-aid pack that really caught her attention. Before the end of the trip, she managed to wreck the pack of band-aids in her attempts to put one on an old mosquito bite and "make it better." It dawned on me later that my daughter was not much different from many of us who call ourselves

adults. We're a symptom relief vs. problem relief society. We care more about image than quality, feeling good than being good and looking effective over being effective. There are lots of examples of this theme, not the least of which is the over-the-counter drug business that's been going on since time began. Do you have any idea how much those people make selling us stuff that takes away symptoms, but rarely addresses the problem behind the symptoms? Aspirin, nasal sprays and cough syrups are a few examples of the goodies we spend a small fortune on each

year. In using these medicines, we fail to recognize that in most cases when we feel discomfort or pain it's our body's way of telling us we're not treating it the way we should. So what's our response? Well, all too often we run out and try to mask the symptoms as quick as possible rather than take a good look at the way we are living and how it might be undoing our health and well-being. I wonder if, over time, we pay a price for that temporary relief? Television is another commonly used band-aid. How many hours a day do you spend with your mind on hold while you poke your nose

through the T.V. watching all of the intellectually stimulating programs that are offered? It's much like an elixir that numbs you to the point you feel no pain. Even the television producers themselves acknowledge that quality programs usually don't rate very well because they cause the audience to think something that many of us are directly trying to avoid. Shopping sprees, purchasing a fancy new car and getting drunk on a Friday night are other examples of frequently used symptom relievers. All of these and others can have the effect of temporarily making us feel better, but how about over the long haul? No, probably not. These, like most other distractions, get old and have to be replaced with new distractions that will, for a short time, make us feel better.

True satisfaction, comfort and security in life comes not from prusing temporary relief, but through a search for personal improvement, depth, quality and purpose. Temporary patch jobs just don't cut it. Any carpenter will tell you that. Over the long run they cost you more and create more headaches than they save. So give it some thought. Search beyond the symptoms for the source of your discomfort. Deal with that source and you'll have a more permanent peace. It may be more difficult than pursuing symptom relief, but borrowing an analogy, at least you won't cover the cancer up to the point it's too late to treat.



"FROM INTERIOR SECRETARY WATT,
DUE TO OUR BUDGET CUTS, THE FOLLOWING LAYOFFS..."

At NCAE Meeting

Local Teachers' Group Adopts Information Project

The local chapter of the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) met Monday at Madison High School and adopted a yearly project designed to disseminate news and information concerning the local schools to the people of Madison County. Saying the teacher organization "Needs to communicate with our parents more than we are doing," NCAE President Rozella Ramsey described the project, titled "Mutual Concerns For A Complete Community Information Service," and called on Marshall radio station WMMH and The News Record newspaper to assist in the county-wide effort.

Mrs. Ramsey said the main vehicle for informing the public about the workings of the local schools will be a monthly newsletter published by the Madison NCAE unit and circulated to parents through students at school. The first newsletter, scheduled for October, will feature basic statistical facts about Madison schools and how they compare to surrounding school systems, Mrs. Ramsey said. Dean Shields and Karen Rice of WMMH - Radio told the local educators they were welcome to conduct interviews and present individual talks over the local station. Shields suggests the educators plan on producing a weekly program which could be broadcast two or three times on a given day.

Editor Nicholas Hancock told the group The News Record would be "happy to cooperate" with the organization by publishing the monthly newsletter and other informative articles submitted to the newspaper. "However, we are limited as to the size and number of articles we can print sometimes because of space limitations determined by advertising," Hancock said. According to Norris Gentry, local NCAE vice president, the local chapter of professional organization represents 90 percent of the regular classroom teachers in the county. Other local NCAE officers for 1981-82 Wanda Capps, secretary; and Tom Wallin, treasurer. Current officers of the local

Association of Classroom Teachers (ACT) are Robena Adams, president; Isabella Maynard, vice president; Jamie Briggs, secretary; and Sandra Randolph, treasurer. The Political Action Committee of Educators (PACE) chairman for the year is Barbara Ray.

Correction

Last week, The News Record incorrectly stated the school board approved an electrical maintenance contract with Garland Adams for Madison High School. Mr. Adams informed us that his contract is for maintenance of the pneumatic controls system at the high school. The pneumatic controls regulate heating, cooling and other related equipment, he said. The error in the report resulted from an incorrect entry in the minutes of the school board meeting which stated Adams' contract was for electrical maintenance.



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