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THURSDAY, MAY 5, 1977

## The Hoke School Situation..

By Paul Dickson

It might be well for Hoke County people to take stock of the situation in the county school system right away, and see if they think damaging mistakes have been made, or that mistakes are likely to be made which could have a lasting bad effect on the system. Persons who do think so can do most to save the situation by making their feelings known now to their appointed and elected officials in the educational system.

We would make clear at the outset our feeling that no one involved has been motivated by anything but a desire to do what was and is best for the school system. Honest mistakes, however, like lies, can sometimes create a climate or an environment which leads to more mistakes. Actions following a mistake of judgment are sometimes taken under pressure to correct the first mistake, or to minimize it in the eyes of the public, so these actions with the best of us sometimes get less than our usual objective consideration.

There are those who say that County Superintendent Raz Autry's decision to get rid of Allen Edwards was a mistake. It is our feeling that no one unfamiliar with the manner of performance of Edwards and Autry can say with much authority -- strong feelings, yes, but not authority -- that this was a mistake, because Autry's job requires that he evaluate the performance of principals and recommend to the board their retention or dismissal.

The original mistake in this affair was Superintendent Autry's recommendation of denial of tenure for Principal Edwards without having complete facts on Edwards' career status, for whatever reason.

In Superintendent Autry's statement to the Board of Education, he referred to Edwards as "a fine, capable young man," and said he did not question his morals or his capabilities. His stated reasons for asking denial of tenure to Edwards dealt with Edwards' "lack of credibility with the faculty, his inconsistency in dealing with students and public, his being unavailable to his students and to his faculty, his disregard for keeping appointments." These charges were withdrawn after it became apparent that Edwards already had tenure, but Autry still recommended that Edwards be replaced as high school principal, insisting that his charges were serious ones and expressing his amazement that many people don't agree with this.

So, to compound the first mistake, the board made a decision to move Edwards to Upchurch junior high school and to move Principal Earl Oxendine from Upchurch to Hoke High. They indicated further that after a year he could reapply for the Hoke High position, apparently implying that he would have a chance at that time to get the job back. This momentous decision, incidentally, was made by only three-fifths of the board the people elected to run their school system. The chairman, Robert Gibson, was present, along with the two newest members of the board, Ruth McNair and Mina Townsend. Two veteran members of the board, W.L. Howell and Dr. Riley M. Jordan, were not present for this action, which many consider among the most important to be taken by the board.

The selection of Earl Oxendine as Hoke High principal was not because he was qualified, and this is not to say that he is not, but was simply for expediency -- if they move Edwards to Upchurch they have to put Oxendine somewhere, they have to keep him too. It is a fact that two years ago when Edwards was employed Oxendine was available if they had thought him the best man for the job. Again emphasizing that we have nothing against Oxendine, we think the people of the county are entitled to the best man who can be found for the job at the high school, and not just to having it filled by someone who happens to be around.

As we understand it, the county will have to supplement Oxendine's pay several thousand dollars in the Hoke High job because Edwards can't be cut for the smaller school job. This expenditure of their money will certainly be subject to some question by the people who pay the taxes, and we are among those who think its approval as a budget item by the county board of education and the county commissioners may be subject to legal question.

Many citizens feel that Autry's charges against Edwards amount to nothing more than a personality conflict between the two, and that Autry never could quit being principal after he became superintendent; that as the charges don't involve character or ability the situation could be corrected by leadership and counsel on the part of the superintendent.

Others say that Autry doesn't work for the board of education; they work for him, and we did notice a few signs of dominant personality in the Las Vegas business some months ago.

We can't suggest the answers to these problems, and we can only express regret that the people of the county are not getting the full benefit of the experience and new blood and openmindedness they thought they were electing to the board of education. We do know that the members of this board are there because they asked the people to put them there, and that they have the obligation to sweat and pray and whatever else it takes to work this mess out and to start running our school system with some authority.

We remind school board members and school officials again that they are servants of the public and that the schools belong to the public.

'I hope we've got this ol' rig capped and under control'



by Marty Vega

## More Loose Talk

The heavy tax on gasoline which has been proposed by the President will mean very serious consequences for just about everybody if it goes through.

But have you considered the effects this could have on the local press in Raeford? Since this writer and the other friendly local news reporter, S.H. Aplin, both "stay" over in Fayetteville, the imposition of such a tax will probably end our careers here, what with driving 200-plus miles a week.

Now, some of you may say Pshaw. But there are others in the same boat, not really the same boat, but in the same sea, who live in Raeford and commute to Fayetteville. If you won't help us, will you help them? (If you won't help us, you can't help them, because if you help them you'll be helping us, and if you can't see that, I can't help it.)

The thing to do is try and get some efficient mass transit in here. A high-speed monorail between Raeford and Fayetteville could be built and people could pay something fair, like 75 cents. 50 cents would be even fairer.

If people would object to a monorail for aesthetic reasons, let them make it a subway instead. Or they can see their doctors. We don't care. But a monorail would make for a more scenic ride.

This could become a reality, if enough people would just get out and push.

If it doesn't, the alternatives are grim. Your friends in the media will have to go begging for dimes in the street, or we will have to buy one of Clarence Lytch's mules for making the trip back and forth.

Depending on the price, the latter might be the most workable alternative, as it has been stated down at the restaurant, I'm told, that this would be a very appropriate form of transportation for the press, as it would be hard to tell one from the other.

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To Preacher Lee, who phoned our office last week to make objections to the proposed massage parlor downtown, you can set your mind at rest.

I'm sorry I wasn't in the office to speak to you directly, but the information the secretary gave you was correct.

You needn't worry about the old Maultsby home becoming a massage parlor. It seems there is a little-known regulation which prohibits such a business from within 50 feet of a filling station. It is believed that the combination there could be an explosive hazard, what with such volatile activities associated with those enterprises.

So we're presently scouting for another location around town, and we'll keep you informed.

## This Is The Law

By Robert E. Lee  
 Sponsored by The Lawyers of North Carolina

### FRAUDULENTLY OBTAINED DIVORCE

A husband, although he knows where his wife is living, alleges that she deserted him two years ago and that her present address is unknown and, therefore, obtains a divorce in North Carolina.

Because the wife was not informed of the divorce proceeding she may have the divorce decree set aside -- if she acts within a reasonable time after learning of the divorce.

The wife never had her "day in court" because the untruthfulness of the husband prevented her from appearing and making a proper defense.

Even if the husband remarries, the first wife may set aside the divorce decree, and if she does, the second wife is without a husband. The first wife may not be able to make the man return and live with her, but she can require him by court order to support her.



## Letters To The Editor

I agree that it is time Hoke County citizens show more interest and make a special effort to attend the county board of education meetings. Listen and observe their views and actions. Are these members really interested in our students and their parents? You voted them into office -- it's your duty to talk to them. Let them know that your views on school matters should be just as important as the chairman of the board, or the superintendent. We are not "curiosity seekers", but a pat on the back and a big roaring "hello" on the streets is not enough from our superintendent anymore.

Mr. Autry has stated that the public does not realize the seriousness of the four charges made against Mr. Edwards. I really think the board members themselves do not realize the seriousness of their own charges -- or each one of them would have made a special effort to be at all these meetings. Instead they have chosen to leave the voting "of such serious charges" to the newest and least experienced members.

Even the chairman (Mr. Gibson) stated in our April 28 News-Journal that not being an educator he did not feel qualified to have an opinion of his own. Why not? Is it because his wife is in the school system, or is it that he is overpowered, as many others seem to be, by our superintendent. If he has no opinion of his own, why should he be allowed to vote? We have tried to teach our children to say, "I'm sorry" -- "I've made a mistake". So in view of all that has happened in the last few weeks, it's time for our board and superintendent to swallow "Mr. Pride" and say, "Thank you, students and parents, for helping us see our mistake". Hoke County citizens have been through a lot together over the years so we can certainly work this problem out better than the results we've heard so far. If not, I for one hope you readers will not forget this at election time.

Know more about the one you're voting for -- and a campaign smile and speech should not be enough. We don't need any more "yes" men governing our schools. Remember, your taxes aid for the new county education building -- you voted for the members. So be there the first Monday night of each month for the meetings. Not as "curiosity seekers" but interested in our schools as parents and students.

Lavinia Patterson  
 Rt. 4, Box 104  
 Raeford

I attended the last three Hoke County Board of Education meetings with a great deal of interest, and had concluded the School Board and Superintendent had not given the public adequate informa-

tion on the actions concerning the status of Allen Edwards as principal of Hoke County High School. However, after the school board meeting Monday night, May 2, 1977 many questions were answered satisfactorily for the first time by Chairman Gibson and Superintendent Autry. It is unfortunate they waited so long to answer these pertinent questions.

I still do not agree with the decisions made in this matter, or the manner in which it was handled; but I feel the Superintendent and Board Members were individually sincere in their actions and earnestly feel they acted in what they think is in the best interest of education in Hoke County. This is exactly what they were hired or elected to do.

I am reassured in the fact we have some truly dedicated individuals directing our school system who I respect and pledge my support.

Eric W. Vann  
 540 College Dr.

We, the undersigned students, feel very strongly about what is happening to our principal.

First of all, we would like to know why he cannot stay in his present position. The Board of Education said he had a contribution to make in the Hoke County School System. Why can he not make it at the high school?

Secondly, why should two schools be disrupted not only during this transfer, but the transfer to take place the next year? These disruptions are not necessary. The Board of Education says they are concerned about our welfare. These disruptions would be detrimental to our welfare.

We begin to question the values that we are learning from this situation. We are being taught that power is always right, even when it is wrong.

People tell us that we should be proud of Hoke County High School and our community. We have very little to be proud of now. We are ashamed of what the Board of Education is doing to our principal.

Sincerely,  
 Becky Coker  
 Dick McNeil  
 Allen Black  
 Wayne Baldin  
 Leo McEachern  
 James Tillman  
 Paula Johnson  
 John R. McIntosh  
 Kenny Blackshear  
 Rene Sessoms  
 Cheryl Maxwell  
 Jill Williams  
 Debra Scarboro  
 Ann Furr  
 Kathy Williams  
 Mary Willcox

## Report To The People

by Senator Robert Morgan



The one topic in Washington that dominates everything else at present is Energy.

President Carter, of course, turned the national attention to energy when he went before the Congress a few nights ago and announced that unless we started using less energy and finding new methods to produce energy that the nation and the world will be in trouble in a few years.

Probably one of the hardest tasks the President faces as he asks Americans to modify their life style is in getting the public to believe that there is, indeed, a danger of running short of energy by 1985.

The people are suspicious, and it must be acknowledged that they have cause to be skeptical. Many feel that they were ripped off when the government, under a previous administration, sold huge quantities of wheat to Russia at favorable prices and the cost of bread jumped at the supermarket. Many feel they were hit in the pocketbook needlessly when the price of oil more than tripled in 1974 as the result of the international oil cartel. They remember the recent sugar shortage when the price of sugar rose to outlandish figures and they wonder if the same thing isn't happening now with coffee.

Furthermore, the real crunch is energy probably won't occur for another ten years or so, and it is hard to get some people concerned about something that far in the future.

But the President was taking his text from what I regard as probably the best authority there is in gathering world wide intelligence and that is the Central Intelligence Agency. No matter what mistakes they may have made in the past in

their zeal to protect this country's interest -- actions that were taken on orders from higher authority -- the CIA's agents have the highest capability to get and evaluate the facts about the world's energy now and in the future.

Because of its sophisticated instruments and its world wide sources of information, it seems to me that we cannot disregard the CIA's evaluation of the energy outlook to 1985, which is just eight years away.

"In the absence of greatly increased energy conservation," says the CIA report, "projected world demand for oil will approach productive capacity by the early 1980s and substantially exceed capacity by 1985." That simply means that by 1985 the world will not be producing as much oil as it is using and we'll all be in trouble.

There is much more to the report, but given that simple assessment, there seems to be ample justification for the President to call upon the country to start conserving now.

There will be some real battles, no doubt, as Congress seeks to come up with a program that will work and which will be fair to everyone. The large oil companies have already started to attack the Carter program, and the automobile manufacturers will also be unhappy. There will be other groups with their own interests.

But if there is to be a workable program at all, then the great majority of the American people must believe there is a problem to be faced and solved. And even they are convinced in the process, I have confidence that they will work together to conquer it, just as they have done in critical times in the