

The firing of Scurlock School custodian Brady Turley Friday morning was nothing but a violation of Turley's constitutional right to express himself. In fact, it was nothing less than contemptible.

Of course, the formal statement issued to Turley and others didn't say the reason Turley was fired was for writing a letter to the editor of *The News-Journal* about the Hoke County Board of Education's transferring Floyd Caldwell, Scurlock School principal for the past 14 years. (He was transferred to the principalship to McLauchlin School effective at the end of the present school year.)

What the statement, signed by County Schools Supt. Raz Autry, gives as reasons for Turley's dismissal are "insubordination" and what adds up to plain incompetence in handling his job, in use of school time, and possibly even committing a criminal violation.

Turley said none of these accusations are true and that he was willing to take a lie detector test about it.

The statement was not intended for publication, of course, but nevertheless it was seen by a number of people other than Turley and Autry, and it was intended for inclusion in Turley's personal file, whose contents are supposed to be

confidential. Autry's statement itself is ironic, in view of Turley's report of what Autry said at Friday morning's firing meeting in Caldwell's office in front of witnesses. The report is contained in a front-page news story in today's edition of *The News-Journal*. It also contains Autry's written statement of the reasons Autry gives for firing Turley.

Autry, according to Turley, told Turley he had "no qualms" about the way Turley has been doing his job. This isn't what Autry states in his written list of reasons for firing Turley.

Autry, according to Turley, also said that no employee of the county school system has the right to attack a member of the school board or its representative.

Our reference to Turley's constitutional right refers to the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of the press, since Turley's letter published in this newspaper is concerned.

The letter's strongest "attack" on the school board says, "The country is currently entering a period of austerity, which I am in complete agreement with. However, Hoke County seems to be in a quandary as to the best way to make equitable reductions in its education budget... It would seem, since the

children of Hoke County should be the prime concern in any and all budget considerations, that some recent moves by the Hoke County Board of Education contradicts this premise.... Scurlock School's proposed principal transfer is obviously one of these contradictions..." Since Caldwell is being moved to a lower-paying position, (principals' salaries are based partly on numbers of teachers employed by their schools), the county school board must make up the \$84 per month difference between the Scurlock and the McLauchlin positions, under state school law, and this pay must continue to be made up for no longer than a year, when Caldwell's pay by reason of length of service automatically will rise.

The letter also raises the question of the "real reason" for Caldwell's transfer, which the school board directed in accepting Autry's recommendations.

Even if Turley's language had been stronger, he still had the right to express his opinion, by speech or in writing, under the Constitution's First Amendment.

The only reason for dismissal would be if Turley's feelings about the matter interfered with his performance of his job.

(See CONTEMPTIBLE, page 15)

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By Hoke School Board

No Action Taken On Firing, Transfer

Around Town

BY SAM C. MORRIS

Did you get out over the weekend before it started raining? The 80-degree weather was warm enough to remove the ache from most old bones. I don't know how much rain we had, but every little bit helps.

From talking with farmers of the county, they will tell you that the dry weather is going to create a problem if it hasn't already for this year's growing season.

Let's hope that the April showers will be soon and often.

When you get past 60 years of age you will see things that will bring back memories of your childhood days. This happened to me several weeks ago as I left the office and was headed on my weekly trip to Fayetteville. As I pulled into Main Street off Edinborough Avenue the traffic was somewhat heavier than usual. I had to step in front of the J.W. McLauchlin School and as I was sitting there, I glanced to the left and was looking at the newly remodeled building that is occupied by Calico Corner and The Gingham Edition.

This is when the memories of my school days began flashing through my mind. I remember a poem that had calico and gingham in it and this was on my mind as I proceeded toward Fayetteville. The name of the poem would not come to me, but the writer of the poem did. His name was Eugene Field. The poem must have been in a fourth or fifth grade reader. It was about a gingham dog and a calico cat. The farther down the road I drove the more I racked my brain to remember how the poem began. Finally I could repeat the first two lines:

The gingham dog and the calico cat
Side by side on the table sat;

Now how would I be able to get the rest of the first verse or stanza. Mrs. Dot Cameron said that she had poems by Field in the library and would get it for me sometime. She must have been busy as I hadn't heard from her for a day or so.

Then I walked the weatherman, Robert Gatlin, one day and I mentioned the poem to him. He couldn't remember the name of the poem but said he had it at home in a book of poems. He called me later in the day and said he had found it and the name was "The Duel." He also brought me a copy of the poem and I now have it on my desk.

The first verse or stanza goes:
The gingham dog and the calico cat
Side by side on the table sat;

'Twas half-past twelve, and (what do you think!)
Nor one nor t'other had slept a wink!

The old Dutch clock and the Chinese plate
Appeared to know as sure as fate
There was going to be a terrible spat.

[Never mind: I'm only telling you what the old Dutch clock declared is true!]

Of course the dog and cat had a
(See AROUND TOWN, page 15)

Fired As School Custodian

Turley Says His Letter Cost Him Job

Brad Turley, custodian of Scurlock Elementary School, was fired without notice Friday morning by Hoke County Schools Supt. Raz Autry for writing a letter published in *The News-Journal* last week, Turley told *The News-Journal* early Friday afternoon.

The letter, addressed to the editor, questioned the reason for the transferring of Scurlock Principal Floyd Caldwell. The letter also commented on the pending transfer in relation to "equitable reductions" in the school budget.

Turley said Autry told him he was fired for "insubordination," that no employee of the school system had a right to "attack" any member of the school board or its representative. Turley's letter shows no attack on any individual and identifies none but Caldwell by name. "I merely questioned the judgment (of the school board)," Turley said. "I voiced the opinion as a man in favor of another man."

Turley added he did not sign the petition to keep Caldwell as Scurlock principal. The circulating of the petition was reported in the April 2 edition of *The News-Journal*.

Turley said Autry fired him in Caldwell's office in the presence of Caldwell, Joe Soles, head of the county schools' maintenance department, and Frank Richards, Scurlock assistant principal who also teaches a class of the fourth grade there.

He said later Friday he received two weeks' severance pay following the firing.

Turley also said Autry told him he was finished on the job when he



Brad Turley

Turley left the office. Earlier in the incident, he said Autry told him he had no "qualms" about Turley's work.

Friday afternoon, however, Turley said later, he received a letter, delivered by hand, stating that Turley "will be discharged for neglect of duty ... neglect of bathrooms, school grounds, and general maintenance of the school ... inappropriate use of time and possibly criminal violation for use of school time ... Failure to work with county maintenance staff ... Insubordination..." Turley said each of the allegations was not true. He showed the statement of accusation with Autry's signature on it. The complete text of Autry's statement is at the end of this article.

Turley also said that the day

before he had mentioned to Soles that if his letter to the editor was ineffectual, "I could get a lot rougher." Turley said that at the Friday morning "firing" meeting, Autry, to whom he had not made the comment, told him he was going to report the matter to the sheriff's department. Turley said that Autry apparently took his remark to Soles as a threat.

Turley said, "I was hurt not nearly as much by the firing as by the insinuation that I was a violent person." He said he didn't know whether Autry reported to the sheriff's department, but anticipating that he would, Turley went to the department and informed Sheriff David Barrington personally what had transpired, basically, and that Autry had taken the comment as a threat; but he assured the sheriff he was not "that kind of a person" and could give him all the character references he wanted.

Turley said Autry also informed him that Turley could appeal to no one from the firing, since he was not a tenured person. This is a reference to the state's Teacher Tenure Act which specifies the process to be performed in dismissing an educator who has earned career status, and for an educator to appeal from a dismissal or suspension decision against him or her.

A petition was being circulated last week in the Scurlock community asking the school board to keep Caldwell at Scurlock as principal.

The school board, approved Autry's recommendations at its meeting last month to transfer

Caldwell to McLauchlin School as principal, and making other transfers of principals and assistant principals to other positions.

Turley said he did not write or deliver to *The News-Journal* during his school working hours the letter concerning Caldwell.

"I wrote it at home," he said, and brought it to the newspaper's office at about 4:55 p.m. March 30. He said he handed it to Sam Morris, *The News-Journal's* General manager, and Morris said he didn't know Turley at the time.

Turley said that his "school time" ended at 4 p.m. daily but that he usually worked overtime at the school because his wife, who is employed in Job Service at the Hoke County office of the State Employment Security Commission, doesn't get off till 5 p.m.

Turley, 34, and his wife have five children, all in school: Mary, 12, at Upchurch Junior High; Kathi-Jo, 11, at Southern Pines Middle School, Brady III, 10, at J.W. Turlington; Bryan, 8, in the second grade, and Michelle, 5, in kindergarten, at Scurlock.

Turley said he had been Scurlock's custodian since October 31, 1977, and was employed full-time, all year each year.

He started with the federal CETA program as a painter before becoming custodian.

A native of Pt. Pleasant, W. Va., he operated a service station and a produce market there before moving to Raeford, where his parents had retired.

Despite the loss of the school job, Turley said, "I like it here and want

(See TURLEY, page 15)

The Hoke County Board of Education Tuesday night was given a petition bearing more than 500 signatures asking that Floyd Caldwell be kept at Scurlock School as principal and hearing statements regarding Friday's firing of Scurlock custodian Brady Turley but took no action on either matter.

This left the pending transfer of Caldwell to McLauchlin School next school year as principal and the firing of Turley in effect.

The meeting was attended by about 50 people, primarily concerned about the board's approval of County Schools Supt. Raz Autry to transfer Caldwell, with other principals at other schools in the county.

The petition was presented to board chairman Bill Cameron by John Ramsey, recently resigned as a Scurlock School bus driver, who reported the petition contained more than 500 signatures, all of people living in the Scurlock School area. He added, however, that he and he alone was responsible for initiating and circulating the petition and paid for the expense from his own pocket, and that Caldwell had nothing to do with it.

Questioned about the firing of Turley, Autry read his written statement of five reasons for firing but when why he was fired when he did he replied he fired Turley Friday for threatening the school board.

Autry said he did not fire Turley for writing the letter published in *The News-Journal* edition of April 2.

The letter questioned the school's decision to transfer Caldwell. Autry said, however, people could write letters and, replying to another question, said "Yeah, you can question any decision the board makes, or I make."

He said he did not tell Turley he had no right to question a decision of the board or its agent, but he fired him for threatening the board. The reasons Autry listed in a written statement also are contained in a separate news report on the front page of today's edition of *The News-Journal*.

Turley said none was true, except possibly in part, in that he missed several days because he had to take his father, suffering from cancer, to the Veterans Administration Hospital in Durham. "I took off but they always knew where I was."

Turley also said the board meeting, "If any record is not cleared, there will be litigation. If my stance is said to be a lie then I will take a lie detector test if other principals (in this matter) take it."

The alleged threat Turley made, Autry said, was the remark Joe Soles, transportation supervisor, told Autry that Turley had made. Autry quoted Soles as saying that Turley had been doing extensive bragging about the letter he had written and told Soles in effect that if the letter produced no results Turley could get rougher.

Turley said, however, that he had made the comment jokingly and that he was shocked when he learned that Soles had reported it to Autry.

"I never had anything bad to say about anyone... Never knowingly spoke against the board of education, only its decision."

He said Autry had told him in the presence of Caldwell, Soles and Richards Friday morning that as a

(See NO ACTION, page 13)

County Commissioners Decide At Meeting

Sheriff To Get Surplus Patrol Cars

The Hoke County Commissioners Monday decided to cancel the county's order for four new patrol cars for the sheriff's department and get nine used State Highway Patrol cruisers.

The action leaves the order, for a 1981 Mercury Zephyr, for the Raeford City Police Department, standing.

Under the motion adopted, the county will buy three 1978 Plymouths, two for \$1,450 each, and the other for \$1,500, and the six others as they become available.

The order for the new cars would have had the department getting four 1981 Mercurys, priced at over \$7,000 each.

The commissioners acted after hearing Sheriff David Barrington report on the Patrol's surplus cars and also that shipment of the Mercurys had been delayed several times, the most recent to May 1.

In other business at their regular monthly meeting the commissioners adopted a motion to get Hoke County foxes placed under control of the North Carolina

Wildlife Resources Commission. Officially, State Sen. Sam Noble will be asked to include the county in a special bill authorizing the wildlife commission to control fox hunting.

The motion to that effect was adopted after M.J. Atkinson of Hoke County, a member of the State Wildlife Federation, asked the commissioners to act. He explained that commission control would not mean that the commission would decide when a season on foxes would be open, which would be when the commission found the fox population was large enough to warrant it. The control is wanted for control of disease, Atkinson added. He said rabies is on the increase now in South Carolina, and fox, skunk, raccoon and bat have been found to be the most common carriers.

The shooting of foxes would be allowed when the season also was open for trapping, he explained. A person must obtain a special permit to trap, he added.

At present, a fox can be killed

any way but by shooting, and its hide fur cannot be sold and the dead animal cannot be mounted, he added.

In other business, the commissioners voted to turn down a request they add \$1,650 to the county's present \$4,350 share of the salary of a county Agricultural Extension Service 4-H agent. The state Extension Service pays the balance.

The request for the addition was made by County Extension Chairman Wendell Young earlier in the meeting. He told the commissioners the extra pay was needed for a prospective new agent, Alice Lancaster, presently at Goldsboro. She would fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Anna Peele, who has left to go to the Sampson County Extension Service.

County Manager James Martin informed the commissioners that county maintenance men would try to straighten out the Courthouse heating system. He said a check of the system needed to be made immediately.

Pieces of the ceiling in the office of the clerk of Superior Court fell last weekend because water from leaking radiators in a room above seeped through the floor and onto the interior of the clerk's ceiling.

The commissioners also adopted a motion appointing Dr. Robert Townsend to a new three-year term on the Southeastern Economic Development Commission, of the federal Economic Development Administration. The Southeastern commission covers Hoke and several other counties in the southeastern area of the state.

The opening of bids on a garbage-collection contract starting with July 1, is scheduled for 10 a.m. Tuesday, the agenda for the commissioners meeting advises. (A typing error in a previous reference to the contract in *The News-Journal* specified it "garage.")

The commissioners decided, for budgetary reasons, not to participate with the City of Raeford in employing a city-county professional planner.