

Editorials

Behind Closed Doors

During last week's meeting, the newly reorganized Hoke County Commission sequestered themselves behind closed doors for over 90 minutes, and spent most of what was the last public meeting of the year in private.

The non-public session was called ostensibly to discuss the county's need for more office space, as well as a contract with the Hoke County Ambulance Service.

There is little question that under the 1979 North Carolina Open Meeting Law that both items are justifiable reasons for an executive session.

The commission has devoted several recent closed door sessions to the acquisition of additional office space, and we recognize that county employees are working in cramped quarters.

And that the sheriff's department has no room to interrogate suspects or to interview witnesses privately.

The "Open Meetings Law" allows public bodies to go into private session when negotiating contracts for the purchase, sale or lease of real property and when public airing of negotiations would jeopardize a transaction.

However, when public bodies go behind closed doors for extensive sessions, it leads one to wonder if more than contract negotiations are being discussed.

Over 60% of last week's meeting was conducted in private, and for a body which is elected to serve the public and is spending taxpayers money, the practice is at least questionable.

The public has a right to know what options are available to the county and what the price tag might be for additional office space.

The public also has a right to know that the county is currently paying the ambulance service more than \$60,000 per year and how that money is being spent.

There is some financial information available to the public about the ambulance service, but even those facts are difficult for an average taxpayer to obtain. Certainly more difficult than if they were aired in an open meeting.

If the ambulance service needs more money, then the public should have the right to know why.

It is hoped that the newly elected commission's first closed meeting will not be a harbinger for future sessions during 1983.

By paying the bills and the salaries of its elected officials, the public has earned the right not only to know what the commissioners decided, but also how they reached their decisions.

We encourage members of the Hoke County Commission to leave the doors open, and allow the taxpayers a chance to see how their elected officials are conducting the public's business.

A Costly Move

During the next month members of the Raeford City Council will be faced with deciding whether or not to forgive sewer fees for two small local industries.

Although the fees amount to little or more than a few hundred dollars a year to the city, a move by the council to eliminate the charges could establish a dangerous precedent and could result in higher water and sewer fees for all city customers.

According to the revenue bond agreement signed by the city and state regulations the Raeford water and sewer system must be self-sustaining financially. Fees charged to the customers must cover the cost of operating the system.

In order to maintain this balance, city officials have charged all customers, industrial, commercial and residential, a flat sewer fee based on water consumption.

Under the present system, customers are charged 109% of the waterbills, no matter how much effluent they discharge into the sewer system. The only exceptions are a handful of residential customers who have special monitoring devices for water that goes on lawns and into swimming pools.

The county's larger industries, who grantedly have contributed to Raeford's sewage treatment difficulties, but who only dump a small percentage of their water consumption back into the city system, have sought relief in the past and have been denied fee reductions.

If fees are forgiven for the two smaller manufacturers, then the council would have opened the door for justifiable complaints from the larger industrial neighbors.

In addition, a vote in favor of removing the fees could also weaken the council's "get tough" position when dealing with the House of Raeford's pre-treatment violations during next month's meeting.

We hope council members will put aside friendships, business ties and personal commitments to fulfill their obligation to serve the entire community when vote is taken on the sewer fee matter during the January 10 meeting.

A vote otherwise could cost us all a great deal.

SHEESH! THEY OUGHT TO LET THAT HOKE COUNTY TURKEY THAT THEY GAVE THE PRESIDENT MAKE DEFENSE BUDGET DECISIONS. ALL THEY WANT TO DO IS GOBBLE, GOBBLE...



It's a Small World

by Bill Lindou

Purgatory Mountain, about six miles south of Asheboro, is the home of the State Zoo now, as everybody knows.

Wild animals roam free and safe out in the open, and some are in a separate petting zoo, for children particularly.

But Purgatory Mountain had some different programs some time before the land was taken up for the zoo about 11 years ago. The programs weren't financed by the state of course, and they were carried out according to the whim of the individuals concerned.

For instance, Purgatory was popular with lovers.

It also served from time to time as a haven for escaped convicts.

One guy lived off the land of the Purgatory wilderness for three weeks and might have spent his life there if he hadn't been captured by the law. The living on Purgatory was good if you didn't mind eating roots and berries and maybe a toad or two every day, and being cold at

times. Of course, you needn't have been cold, if you weren't an escaped felon or other fugitive from justice. You could always build a fire if necessary by the old, hard way, if you weren't a fugitive, who couldn't since he didn't want to attract attention.

Spending some time at the Dog Pound causes a body to recall some dog stories.

Seeing this huge Great Dane type at the Pound (he's been adopted since, by the way), reminded me of a Doberman Pinscher remark I heard in a comedy movie a long time ago.

A man had a Doberman in his house when a woman visitor saw the dog for the first time.

"Is that the kind of dog who bites people?" she asked the pet's owner nervously.

"No," he replied in a reassuring tone, "he's the kind of dog who

pinches Dobermans."

A farmer had a horse he claimed could talk, and he proved it to the satisfaction of the visitors, skeptical or otherwise. He'd ask the horse a question, and the horse would talk, English, that is, not just by pawing with a hoof.

Wherever the horse went, a small dog followed.

One time while a stranger was marveling at the demonstration of the horse making remarks, a farm hand drew the visitor aside and whispered:

"It's a fake. That horse can't talk."

"He can't?" the visitor asked incredulously. "But how..."

"The horse can't talk," the farm hand said knowingly. "See that dog there? Follows him around all the time."

He paused to give the visitor a chance to study the dog.

"That dog's a ventriloquist," the farm hand said.

Letters To The Editor

Thanks Given

Dear Editor:

Actually, I need a thesaurus to find the proper descriptive word for the delicious refreshments served by the Hoke High School food service class at the Teacher of the Year Reception.

In addition to their skill in food preparation, the young ladies who served as caterers exemplified graciousness, dignity, poise and qualities of fine womanhood. Mrs.

Harriet J. Archer, the instructor of the class, is to be commended.

May I also express my deepest gratitude to the Teacher of the Year Selection Committee for such a beautifully planned affair, the lovely corsage and plaque. They are all treasures which I shall forever hold dear.

I am especially appreciative to my counterparts who displayed their cordiality by attending the reception and expressed congratulations. It is a wonderful experience

to be associated with such noble persons. I relish being "given my flowers while I live."

It is with great anticipation and enthusiasm that I prepare my scrapbook and await my interview with the Region IV Teacher of the Year Selection Committee. Knowing that I represent some of the most intelligent, intellectual and caring people in the county of Hoke—those entrusted to educate America's greatest resources—our children.

Sincerely,
Ethelyn H. Baker
West Hoke Elementary

Puppy Creek Philosopher

Dear editor:

I'm just guessing, but it may be that the proposal for a 5-cents a gallon tax on gasoline came about when a Congressman, demanding that "we get this country back on the road," got out on a highway himself and discovered it was full of pot holes and the bridges were shaky.

It's a problem for the Lame Duck session of Congress, as distinguished from a regular session, which I supposed is called a Well Duck session. I've never been to Washington and wouldn't know.

Anyway, the Administration in Washington says the tax isn't a tax, it's a user's fee. Let the people who use the highways pay for repairing them and at the same time give work for the unemployed.

Yours faithfully,
J.A.



Congressional praise

Congress often deserves more praise for the bills it doesn't pass than for those it approves—especially during a lame-duck session.

One such bill was a Senate proposal to relieve price-fixers of millions of dollars in liabilities. The bill had more than passing interest in this area because one company owed some of those millions is Burlington Industries. The bill would have substantially reduced the court-approved award Burlington won against a company it sued for price-fixing behavior.

It is one thing to suggest changing the manner in which such settlements are awarded in future price-fixing cases. But it is quite another to make those changes ap-

ply retroactively to firms that had already won court settlements based on existing anti-trust rules. That's simply unfair.

But that is what the so-called Anti-trust Equal Enforcement Act sponsored by Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., would have done. Other senators disagreed and organized a filibuster. But on a vote to invoke cloture to limit debate, supporters of the bill lost 44 to 51.

That means the measure won't be considered in the lame-duck session. But supporters vowed to bring it back again in the next session. Eternal vigilance is the price of sound legislation, too.

From The Greensboro Daily News

CLIFF BLUE...

People & Issues

THURMOND...U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond is a most unusual man. He has been a Democrat, Independent, and Republican. He has served as a democrat governor of South Carolina, a third party candidate for President and a republican United States Senator. He is now 80 years old and the people of South Carolina are urging him to seek re-election. Thurmond says he is considering a bid for a sixth Senate term in 1984.

Not many people can get elected Governor; run for president of the States Right Ticket, and lose, and get elected to the U.S. Senate as a Republican.

NUKE PROTESTER...Every few days somebody tries a stunt to get publicity. Last week it was a 66-year-old Miami Beach handyman, dressed in a blue jumpsuit who held police at bay, trapped nine people in the Washington monument for several hours and forced the evacuation of thousands of capitol workers in a reckless bluff. He claimed to have dynamite in his white van, demanding that newspapers and broadcasters devote 51 percent of their time on a "national dialogue on the nuclear weapons question."

Policemen, not knowing what he would do, shot him dead as he started to leave.

UNION?...The Northern and Southern Presbyterian churches are moving in the direction of "union."

The Presbyterian Church was split over the civil war and the Southern and Northern Presbyterian churches have operated separately ever since. About a dozen years ago the Northern and Southern churches began discussing union again.

The arguments between the two churches got pretty hot, so they decided to let it cool off for awhile.

Well, things have cooled off and the two divisions have been talking again and now are preparing for a vote in January.

MAYOR KNOX...We notice that Mayor Eddie Knox of Charlotte received a good home town rally in Charlotte a few days ago. Among the home town leaders listed present at the rally were: NCNB Corp. President Hugh McColl, the party's master of ceremonies; former Mecklenburg County Commissioner Chairman Liz Hair; Charlotte Motor Speedway Board Chairman, Bruton Smith; former School Board chairman, William Poe. Delegations from Avery, Burke, Caldwell, Pitt, and Wilkes counties were in attendance. The take at the rally before expenses was around \$150,000 reported the Charlotte Observer.

Another possible candidate for governor from Mecklenburg is former Mayor John Belk. It could be that the Knox candidacy will make it hard for both Knox and Belk to run, but it now appears that Knox is out ahead.

However Belk is a good name in North Carolina with the many Belk stores throughout the state. Belk is a former mayor of Charlotte, while Knox is the present Mayor.

MINISTER'S SIGNS...The Rev. Ricky James has put up 1,080 street markers in Stanley County during the past 11 months. The sign project was sponsored by the five member board of county commissioners. James, a Baptist preacher in Stanley County, put up all the signs. "I dedicated all my markers to the Lord to thank him for giving me the strength to do this work that will help people in their traveling about." A job well done which took 11 months of hard labor!

REPUBLICAN DEFEAT?...What caused the big defeat for the Republicans in North Carolina on November 4?

People have had time to think about it and come to a conclusion for the set back.

When we have high inflation and unemployment we have lots of people concerned. Pocketbook issues will effect thousands of people. Nationwide, the Republicans were in charge. While Reagan was telling the people that better times were just around the corner, people without jobs just could not see that far ahead.

Letters Policy

Letters to the editor are encouraged and welcomed.

Writers should keep letters as short as possible. Names, addresses and telephone numbers should be included and all letters must be signed. Names

will be printed, however, other information will be kept confidential. We reserve the right to edit letters for good taste and brevity. Letters should be received by the News-Journal by 5 p.m. on the Monday of the publication week.

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