

Editorials

A secret society

The Secret Society of Hoke County Commissioners met again Friday in a two-hour closed door session.

The private meeting was not unusual, in fact since its new members were sworn in on December 6, the board has spent a great deal of its time together in secret sessions.

In December, just after the swearing in ceremonies, the commissioners met for an hour and then adjourned into executive session for an hour-and-a-half.

During January, the commission met twice in open session with more than an hour of each of those meetings spent out of the public's view.

Board members have spent over three hours in two meetings in February discussing matters which the commissioners apparently considered to be too sensitive to be heard by their constituency.

Friday, the commission decided in executive session to draw a new contract with the Hoke Ambulance Service and to raise the firm's tax paid subsidy by 63.3%. The service will be receiving almost \$41,000 more per year from the county as a result of the decision.

After the private session, some commission members also admitted that the county was going to look into the feasibility of starting its own ambulance service.

The financial problems facing the ambulance service are important to all Hoke County residents, and perhaps the solution arrived at by the commissioners was a proper one.

However, voters may never have a clear picture of why the decision was made, and they have been deprived of knowing how the commissioners reached their conclusions.

Despite three open meetings of a committee studying the woes of the ambulance service and the airing of a recent audit of the firm's finances, the commissioners apparently felt that there were still matters which needed to be kept secret.

It is difficult to imagine what facts about the negotiations with the service had not previously been made public.

It is equally as difficult to imagine what ambulance matters were so delicate, that the commissioners felt compelled to go into a two-hour executive session in order to hide them.

Earlier, in its first February meeting and during an executive session, the commission also decided to pay \$128,062 for the Pilot Building on Main Street.

The decision was no surprise because the building had been a topic of closed door sessions which began in October and continued until the deal was inked last week.

Commission members were probably representing the county's best interest when they kept the financial figures of the contract quiet, but it is unfortunate that the public was not allowed to be present during discussions of how the building will be used.

A committee of commission members analyzed the feasibility of purchasing additional space for several months before the final decision was made, unfortunately all of their reports back to the full body were private.

Although they may have said it in private, the commission has never laid its plans for the building out for public consumption.

In a time when every county resident is feeling the effects of the current depression, county taxpayers are still licking the wounds of last year's rate hike, federal and state governments are cutting funds earmarked for the local level and county employees are wondering about a long-promised pay raise, it may be difficult for voters to understand why the commission decided in private to spend almost \$170,000 of unbudgeted public funds.

Although the expenditures may have been justified, commission members may find that their decisions are easier to explain to their constituents at the time they are being made, rather than later before an election.



AS A SHOW OF GOOD FAITH TO OUR MEMBERS I PROPOSE THAT WE MOVE OUR NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING FROM MONTE CARLO TO HILTON HEAD ...

Letters To The Editor

Coop defended

To The Editor:

Over the past 12 years, I have served with approximately 25 different directors. Some of those years have been turbulent just as integration has been in all facets of our lives. I feel that my re-elections have been because I took my job seriously and served as a fair, level-headed, informed director.

Education is enlightenment, and it is imperative that leadership in any \$25 million business be informed.

Energy sources and the resources to finance them have been major problems world-wide.

Certainly, an electric company is in the center of this difficult situation. Institutes and seminars have been scheduled throughout the country to educate and offer new ways to deal with rising energy costs.

Load Management is one way to lower costs. LREM was the first to adopt this and even today we see commercials from other local companies urging, educating their membership to take advantage of this.

Understanding, respecting and doing business with all races has changed significantly in the last 10 years. Human relations workshops have been an integral part of the LREM management - director training. Directors have participated with salaried employees. Peaceful working conditions are necessary for business growth and survival today.

The Action Group seems to me to be a group of concerned citizens of all races who are interested in good, solid, leadership in their cooperative.

Over the past years, I have appealed to many of them to become involved and to not let any "group" take over.

When Derl Hinson, recognized as a national leader in rural cooperatives, was fired, these citizens became concerned. We all did.

I voted against firing Mr. Hinson and in the Board meeting could not get a reason for the firing.

Unfortunately there are some radicals, some sensationalists in every group who enjoy publicity and/or power.

Some of the charges and expenses printed are misleading and unfounded.

For instance, I have served as Chairman of the North Carolina State Directors Conference (the only LREM Director to ever serve in this capacity.)

This kind of leadership role helps LREM gain respect in the world of cooperative finance where we operate daily.

Institutes, seminars and workshops are the classrooms for cooperative education.

I have been the only white director for the past few years and yes, I have attended these meetings to represent my race and the cooperative chiefly because many of the Action Group people have been unwilling to become involved.

I believe in the cooperative way of doing business. Radicals of any race cannot be allowed to set policy or control a \$25 million business.

The business takes money to operate and education has been part of the operating expense.

Business principles of 20 years ago will not be operative in today's world.

The cooperative is progressive, it is people, it is for the people.
Davis K. Parker, Jr.

Squad's stand clarified

To The Editor:

Reference is made to last week's News Article on Ambulance Bid. There was a statement by Mr. Upchurch that the Rescue Squad was considered as a replacement for Henley's group, but that the squad wanted \$88,000 per year and nothing to do with equipment. Mr. Upchurch stated the Rescue squad operates on the basic EMT level, which is a step below the ambulance service intermediate.

First, let us clarify his first statement. We did not tell this ambulance committee we would take the service for \$88,000.00. We made a suggestion as to how the county could run the service and pay salaries of \$88,000.00, not to the Rescue Squad but to the personnel that were hired to run the ambulance service.

We also volunteered our building to operate the ambulance service from, if operated by the county and we also offered our service to run second out ambulance at night and on weekends at no charge to the county.

We suggested to the committee they use the module ambulance in our base which is fully equipped and certified through the state N.C. as a certified ambulance.

The county would only have to purchase one vehicle and about half the equipment as Henley's present ambulance service has quite a few items belonging to the county which were acquired through EMS grants to stock the additional ambulance.

The squad advised this committee that all money collected for ambulance fees would go to the county to offset expenses and salaries.

We told this committee that if they would get us 30 qualified volunteers we would run the service for expenses only. We were only trying to help the tax payers of Hoke County and were after no monetary consideration of personal gain as we remain, since 1962, an all volunteer organization.

The second part we operate on a EMT basic level, one step, below Intermediate. Let us say EMT is not basic, ask anyone who has taken an EMT course. We are not criticizing the EMT Intermediate IV that Mr. Henley has, and let us clarify what was in the Fayetteville Times to our knowledge the present ambulance service in Hoke County has only two Intermediate (EMT-IV) not 20 as stated in the Fayetteville Times.

We think it great that Jim has two intermediate (EMT-IV) working for him in Hoke County, however, under no conditions would we say the Hoke County Rescue Squad is a step below any ambulance or rescue service in this state. We have worked hard for what we have accomplished and I as the Commander am very proud of this organization. They are fine dedicated people who give up many hours of their own time to help people in need. They even go to the point of losing hours of pay when they are called out during the day to help other people. All we were trying to accomplish when we attended the ambulance committee meeting by the invitation of Mr. Upchurch, was to try and help resolve some of the money problems.

As Mr. Upchurch requested we attend the ambulance committee meetings to offer suggestions on how we could assist the county with present ambulance service:

1. This squad had at this time agreed to run all non-transport calls such as; structure fire, wrecks property damage/minor injuries and if transport became necessary call by radio for ambulance.

2. Run second out ambulance at night and on weekends thereby requiring local ambulance service to have only one team on call at these times.

These were the only two suggestions to assist the present ambulance service in curtailing their expenses. Let us emphasize once more "WE DID NOT ASK FOR \$88,000.00."

At this time we regret we became involved because all we received from this ordeal was bad publicity.

We will continue to operate rescue in this county equal to any in the state of North Carolina with all volunteer personnel.

Thank you,
John D. Melton, Commander
Hoke County Rescue Squad, Inc.
Serving Hoke County since 1962
in a volunteer capacity.

Students are unhappy

Dear Editor:

Most of the students at J.W. Turlington School are very unhappy over the fact that we do not have a librarian.

We find this a problem because we can not check out books or go to the library in the mornings to do research to expand our knowledge.

We feel that this is an extra burden on the teachers of our school because now they have to teach us the library skills the librarian would have taught us before.

Although we will be leaving this school next year, we feel that the library is an important part of our school curriculum.

Sincerely Yours
Concerned Students
Will Wright, Candace Cameron
Greg Martin, Kim Colston
Rene McArthur, Donna Brock
Amy Archer, Susan Ragsdale
Melissa Brock, Tom Scarborough
Jeff Semones, Sabrina Holt

Puppy Creek Philosopher

Dear editor:

According to news stories in the papers recently, the OPEC countries can't stick together on the price of their oil.

They meet to set production quotas and a price, then go home and open the valves and cut the price in order to stay in business. Instead of \$34 a barrel, they'll take \$32 or \$30 or whatever they can get. Acting just like farmers.

This, some financial experts say, is going to wreck the oil business
(Continued on page 3B)

CLIFF BLUE ... People & Issues

GRAIN & FARMERS ... Nation's corn and feed grain farmers must idle 20% of their acres next year to remain eligible for federal price support and other farm programs. Agriculture Secretary, John Block, announced recently.

ASPIRIN A DAY ... A study of 1,300 men at 12 Veteran's Administration hospitals suggest that an aspirin a day cuts in half the chances of having a heart attack, according to a report presented at the American Heart Association meeting in Dallas.

SUB-MINIMUM WAGE ... President Reagan plans to propose a \$1.75 an hour subminimum wage for youth in his State of the Union address later this month, it was reported recently. Organized labor is one record as opposing the sub-minimum wage.

PERSONAL INCOME ... Americans' personal income grew a modest 0.6% in December and only 6.4%, the smallest advance in nearly two decades, for all of recession battered 1982, the government said recently.

TRAVELING ... One tenth of Congress traveled overseas at taxpayers expense during the recent recess to visit foreign officials, many in sunnier climates than the United States. Tax paying money is paying for almost all of the business trips, the total cost won't be known until reports are filed when the legislators return.

SOVIETS AND CUBA ... The Soviet Union recently delivered about 130 SAM 3 missiles to Cuba, apparently to strengthen air defenses around Havana, U.S. intelligence sources reported recently.

SOCIAL SECURITY ... The Congressional effort to produce a program to save Social Security began last week in the House Ways and Means Committee amid signs that some big controversies lie ahead.

Ever since a high-level presidential commission last month recommended the outlines of a program to stave off Social Security insolvency, hopes have been high for a smooth, bipartisan approach to the problem in Congress, but testimony by commission members has indicated some major hurdles remain.

The big outstanding issue involves the steps to be taken to ensure the solvency of Social Security through the next 75 years, a period in which the large "baby boom" generation will reach retirement.

The last time the Social Security program was over-hauled, it was supposed to be permanent. Well, that was about six years ago, and we see what has happened!

We think that some of the Commission Members are now becoming shaky about the permanency of the present plan, Ok'd less than a month ago!

FACE TO FACE ... President Reagan has done something I have been in favor of all along.

He asked for a "face to face" meeting with Kremlin leader -- Yuri V. Andropov "wherever and whenever he wants" to sign a disarmament.

Of course Reagan needs well experienced people to further advise him, but he needs to talk face to face to the new head of the communist party and the head-man of the Russian people.

When the two men who can make decisions, if in the interest of people, they have a much better chance of coming to peace terms than leaders who take months of sending messages to each other.

We certainly hope that President Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Andropov, when they sit down together and understand each other, can arrive at a peaceful solution.

CONGRESSMAN HEFNER ... Cong. Bill Hefner of the 8th N.C. District has been appointed Chairman of the Military Construction Subcommittee for the House of Representatives in Washington. The five term Democrat will oversee a \$9 billion construction program in the nation and overseas.

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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