

Editorials

The gleaming reality

The Lumbee River Electric Membership Corporation has come a long way since April 5, 1941, when the switch on "A" Project at the main substation in Red Springs was thrown to bring electric service to rural residents in a four county area.

About the historic day, *The News-Journal* in the April 10, 1941 edition reported that the electric service, "long a beautiful hope and a fanciful dream to hundreds of people living on farms in Robeson, Hoke, Scotland and Cumberland counties, is a gleaming reality to 120 families."

After the switch was thrown, the "powerful energy moved a long, silent step nearer to serving 10 times that many rural customers," the article says.

The idea for the Lumbee Coop was born during the 1930's, after rural dwellers and farmers were told by investor-owned utilities that it was not economically feasible to run the lines needed to provide the electrical service.

These rural families got together and formed a non-profit corporation and received funding for the lines from the federal Rural Electrification Administration (REA).

During the last 42 years the coop grew from a small office in downtown Raeford to five full-service offices spread throughout the coverage area.

The coop has also taken more than that silent step and is providing electrical service to almost 20,000 customers.

However, members are now finding that the "gleaming reality" is a monthly bill which is higher than those received by customers from utilities in surrounding area.

Lumbee coop members are also finding themselves embroiled in the throws of a brouhaha between a membership action group and coop's board of directors.

Backed by over 2,000 member's names on petitions calling for a special March 3 board recall election, action group leaders have questioned the board's ability to make decisions, the knocking down of fat salaries and the padding expenses.

Board members have responded, after a long closed door session, by denying the election on the grounds that it would cost \$20,000 and would not be in the best interests of the members.

At least among the two groups the spirit of "cooperation" seems to have vanished, and the "beautiful hope and fanciful dream" have turned to a sour squabble and appear headed for a battle in the courts.

The real loser in the struggle seems to be the coop customer, who, like most of us, is having a hard time figuring out what is going on, and who sees little more than increases in the monthly electric bills.

Although board members may in fact be worthy stewards of the customers' funds, they have left themselves open for criticism by failing to clearly explain their financial actions.

Less than 3,000 of the coop's membership have signed the recall petition.

Those numbers may grow, if the board continues to mask its actions and to foster misunderstandings among the membership by remaining tight-lipped.

What harm could come from allowing the membership to know how their money is being spent.

If the coop's board of directors is doing a good job managing the funds, they should give themselves a public pat on the back.

On the other hand, if they do not have confidence in what they're doing, perhaps the board should remain quiet.

Grass-roots politics

On March 3, Democratic Party members across North Carolina and in Hoke County, will huddle in precinct meetings which will begin a long chain of important political events.

The leaders selected and decisions made during those "grass roots" meetings will determine the posture of politics here and could have a major influence on the state and national political scene.

Here is how it works:

•Precinct officers and delegates to the county convention in April will be elected during the March 3 meeting. Resolutions and recommendations, which could serve as the foundation for the party's state and national political platform, will also be voted on.

•At the April Hoke County meeting, the delegates from the precincts will elect county officers and delegates to the state convention.

•During the state convention, Hoke County Democrats will participate in the election of officers to steer the North Carolina party during the next year.

This is an off-year for elections, but the policies established and the leaders named at the 1983 party meetings will have a direct influence on next year's national political scene.

Decisions made this year, even at a precinct level, will have a direct bearing on the 1984 Democratic Party nominees for President and Vice President.

In Hoke County, there is little question party politics play a major role in the lives of all residents.

Since before the county was formed, the Democratic Party has had a firm grasp on the winning ticket here.

Even when a public vote is not required by law, party officials and executive committeemen, elected at precinct meetings, have been called on to help replace vacancies on public bodies.

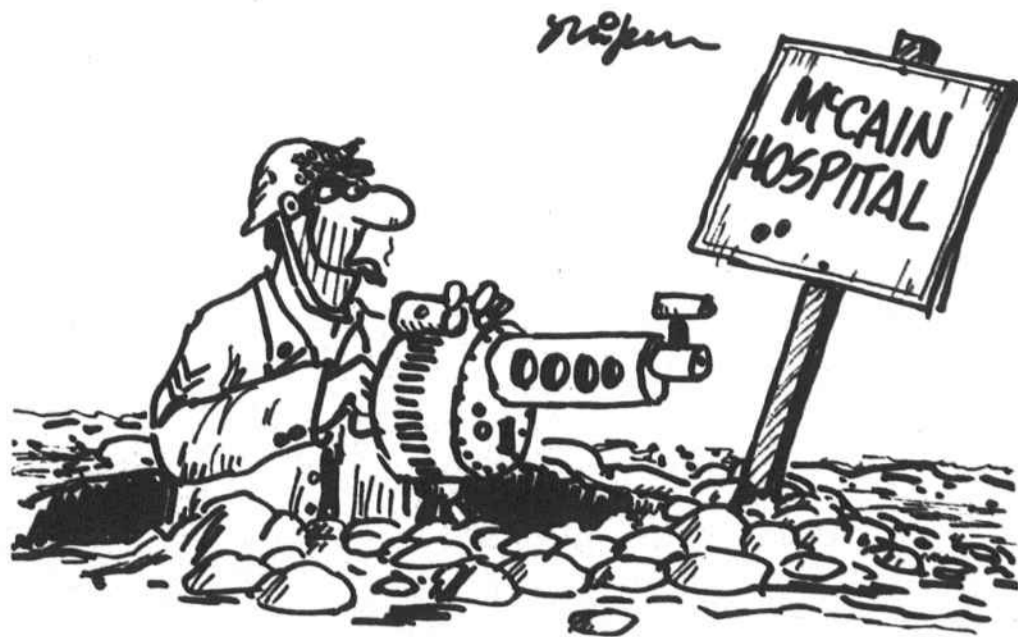
Although two of them have since been elected, three of the five members now serving on the Hoke County Commission were nominated by the Democratic Party's Executive Committee.

Chairman John Balfour, Neil McPhatter and Wyatt Upchurch were all named as nominees by the party to fill unexpired terms.

On March 3, Democrats will name the leaders who will in fact be the representatives of every voter and every resident here.

The decisions made at those meetings could, and probably will, be as important as the ones made at the ballot box next year.

If you care about the economic and political future of Hoke County, turn out and participate in the precinct meetings scheduled for March 3.



Letters To The Editor

Coop supported

As a member of LREMC, I was concerned with the high expenditures of the board. So I went and talked with a board member and the acting general manager. I also looked at the records.

I learned there were reasons for these expenditures. Reasons not pointed out by the Action group.

Last weeks article stated the groups major complaint is the high expenditures. Why then did Carl Branch (spokesman for the action group) and the group bring name calling and race into this dispute. Such tactics were uncalled for.

A March election could cost some 20,000. I suggest the group attend the regular elections in October.

That way they'll have their opportunity to vote for whomever they wish, without the added cost of a March election.

In my opinion the group has shown poor judgment in the handling of this dispute. And this poor judgment has surely hurt our coop.

Gail Lowery
Raeford

Business as usual

To the Editor:
Bless you!!! Your editorial in the Feb. 10th edition was like a breath of fresh air, when you called the Board of County Commissioners "The High Secret Society of Hoke County."

I tried but failed about two years ago to wave a red flag of deceit being perpetuated upon the citizens of Hoke County by the former board, when you published a short letter I submitted.

Thank God some of that former Board are no longer in office, but the "carry-over" of underhanded method of doing "business as usual" grows obvious and unjustified with each meeting.

First and foremost let me make a strong statement that there is no criticism from me regarding the person the former Board selected to be the new Veterans Service Officer.

From all reports I hear, her work and services are satisfactory.

I do not know the person, and certainly this is NOT an indictment of her ability or work performance. Please understand this!!

My complaint then, as your editorial now, merely tried to enlighten the fine people of this County of what actually is the purpose and reasoning for so much decision making being conducted "behind closed doors" in those Secret Society Executive Sessions by the Board of Commissioners.

Decisions were made that pertain to and directly effect all the citizens of our County.

Three of the five former Board members informed me by phone they had only two main objectives in making their selection of a new Service Officer:

(1) That they had only the interest of the veterans in mind, (which was a crock of horse manure)

(2) That they were going to select the "best qualified person available."

Not to seem ego-centric, but this assurance thrilled me at that time.

Little did I realize at that time the final decision would be made in a matter of minutes in a "closed door" Executive Meeting, and from what I heard were numerous applications (possibly 40 or more).

This was one of the best orchestrated, premeditated, pre-planned for several years, and

smoothly carried out "flim-flam" acts under the cloak of secrecy any elected group of officials could ever perpetuate.

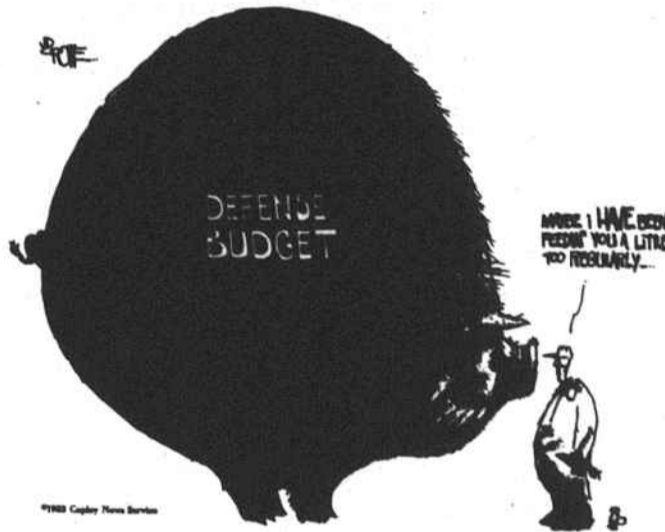
Leaving personalities out of this whole sordid mess, there are federal laws which protect anyone from being discriminated against in employment because of sex, race, age or disability.

My rights were blatantly violated on three of the four above

mentioned grounds; I have a REAL attorney who is eagerly hoping I will take this matter to litigation, etc., but why should I lower myself to the level of the "crum bums" of THAT SECRET SOCIETY?

Jesus Christ said it much better, "...but men love darkness (secrecy) more than light because their deeds were evil." Jn. 3:19b.

Jake Gurley



Puppy Creek Philosopher

Dear editor:
Although it'll be summer after next before anybody is nominated and several months after that before anybody is elected, a lot of candidates are already running for President.

Several Democrats have launched unofficial campaigns and a handful of Republicans have their horses bridled and saddled just in case Mr. Reagan doesn't run for a second term.

Politicians say such an early start is necessary if you expect to have a chance. Another requirement, in addition to having a financial backlog, is that you be unemployed, to be free to devote all your time to running. Or, you can be a member of the Senate where you can be absent and out campaigning as often as you like without even needing a written excuse or having your pay docked.

This is the reason why we'll never have a united world with one government, serving everybody around the globe.

To get elected President of the World a man would have to start running approximately 30 years in advance if he expected to get around to shaking hands in all 200 countries.

He'd have to start at age 21 in New Hampshire and would be 51 before he had every country organized in his favor. I estimate such a campaign would cost around \$2 billion, counting the 14 airplanes he'd wear out, the 300,000 rallies he'd have to attend, the \$10 million worth of postage for mailing his campaign literature, and the \$1 billion it'd cost for television time.

I have no way of calculating the cost of kissing 10 million babies.

One world with one police force and no nuclear bombs or war planes or guided missiles or tanks and with one president is something to dream about, but finding somebody who'd start at age 21 and devote the next 30 years to shaking hands would be, you'd think, an impossible task, but in

that case you don't know how eager some people are to be President.

It's desire, not ability, that produces the itch.

Yours faithfully,
J.A.

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.

CLIFF BLUE... People & Issues

GREAT ART - Several works on temporary loan from the collection of the N.C. Museum of Art in Raleigh are featured in shows now running in major museums around the country and abroad.

A painting by Raphael, for example, is featured in the major Raphael exhibit at the National Gallery of Art in Washington. Other works are headed for France, Atlanta, Texas, and other far-flung spots. For details about pieces from the collection on loans to other museums, call Sharon Broom in Raleigh at 919-833-1935.

DENTAL - February is Dental Health Month observance in North Carolina. The departments of Human Resources and Public Instruction are working together to help parents and children understand the importance of taking proper care of their teeth and gums.

Good oral hygiene at an early age can prevent serious dental disease in later life. To find out more, get in touch with Pat Williamson in DHR's Division of Health Services, 919-733-7321.

TAKES STAND - The National League of Women Voters, after years of avoiding a stance on the issue of abortion, announced recently it officially supports American women's right to have the operation ending pregnancy.

AGENCY STUDY - Homeowners could slash energy consumption by as much as 41 percent by properly weatherproofing their houses, recouping the investment in six years, the U.S. Commerce Department said recently.

OIL REDUCTION - Eight big U.S. oil companies reduced the price they offer domestic crude oil by \$1 a barrel recently, and industry sources said the Soviet Union cut its oil prices by \$2.15 a barrel.

'82 TRADE - With exports sagging, the U.S. foreign trade deficit ballooned to a record \$42.7 billion last year despite a big drop in the nation's bill for imported oil, the government reported recently.

DAVID STEDMAN - We quote from a recent statement by David Stedman of Asheboro: "Social Security taxes taken from you today are used to pay today's beneficiaries - a pay as you go system which in 1981 collected \$172.3 billion and spent \$175.1 billion.

"In 1950, there were 16 workers paying into the system for each recipient. Today, the burden on each worker is over 5 times greater, with only 3 workers paying in for each recipient and when today's children are working adults, 2 workers will support each beneficiary. Taxes deducted today amount to 13.4 percent of taxable earnings, but if young people now entering the work force are to receive the benefits promised, social security taxes will have to be raised 25-33% of their taxable earnings.

Why is Social Security an issue for young people? Because the current program penalizes them most by--

- Burdening them and future generations with enormous debt.
 - Taking their current earnings for today's recipients thus depriving them of money for investment in private alternatives.
 - Threatening them with an ever-growing payroll tax load if they are ever to receive benefits.
 - Stifling the economy in which they must work for the rest of their lives.
 - Social Security must be put on a sound financial basis for their sake.
- Well Mr. Stedman has raised questions that all people should be thinking about!

The News - Journal

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