

# The News-Journal

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## Co-Op Board Returns, Branch Quits

By Sherry Matthews

After a year-long battle, that climaxed Tuesday night with three of four Lumbee River Electric Membership Cooperative (LR-EMC) directors being re-elected, LREMC Action Group leader Carl Branch said he was "finished" with the fight.

"The members had a chance to voice their feelings tonight, and they did. If they prefer evil over truth, then so be it," Branch said.

"I will support any action that my group or any group decides to take against the board members, but personally, I am washing my hands of the entire mess," Branch added.

Branch, who was "disappointed" in the less than 1,800 people who showed up for the annual election, said he had no regrets over what he and his group had done.

"We did not get the board ousted, but we showed that we had the guts to stand up in the face of overwhelming odds, and show some members that tyranny exists in the coop," Branch said.

"I have no regrets about what has been done, Branch said. 'I apologize to no one.'

For Branch, Tuesday night's election marks the end of his action group involvement.

"I am going back to selling peanuts. I am not devoting the rest of my life to this thing," Branch said.

Other action group members are not as eager to disband entirely.

Some members indicated the desire to "re-group" and start again.

"I have no idea if the action group will continue to fight for what is right," Branch said.

"I honestly believed that the

fight for right would have been won by now. I simply felt truth would prevail," Branch added.

"I am sorry to say, I was wrong," Branch said.

Although many of the members present Tuesday night were "upset" over the "board's victory," some were pleased with the election results.

"I don't think they did anything wrong. They just got a lot of bad publicity that blew up out of proportion," one LREMC member said. "I am glad they are going to get a chance to prove that action group wrong."

The action group, headed by Branch, has tried since early January to get the 12-member board ousted. The members' group has alleged that the directors misused funds, and that they wrongfully fired former general manager Derl Hinson.

Two petitions calling for a special meeting of the membership were denied by the board. Coop lawyers cited a lack of clarity in the petition charges as the reason for the denial.

Shortly after the petitions were denied, Branch and his group went underground to "re-group" and prepare for the annual meeting.

"We were expecting some 2,000 people to turn out and vote for our nominees," Branch said.

"Those who chose to stay home helped vote those board members back in, just as much as those here tonight with a pencil in their hand," Branch said.

"I am very disappointed that our supporters chose to stay home," Branch added.

LREMC spokesman Lane Hudson said the "less-than expected" turnout was "really a shock."

"We were expecting at least

2,500 people here tonight," Hudson said.

Although crowds were small, the vote went in favor of three board members. No action group members were elected.

Incumbents J.W. Hunt from District two, Timothy Strickland from District four, and Gus Bullard and at large director were all re-elected.

District Eight Director Davis K. Parker of Fayetteville lost his seat to James Hardin. Hardin, another Fayetteville resident, heads the Cumberland County Association for Indians.

"The consumers spoke," Parker said, refusing to comment further on the election.

"It leaves a sour taste in my mouth to think that these people here are the only ones who were concerned about this coop," Branch said.

"The consumers spoke to me tonight when they voted. Their vote tells me that they are satisfied with the way things are," Branch said.

"It is sad that they want to allow tyranny to continue, but that is their choice. I refuse to feel sorry for their increased rates when they chose to stay at home and ignore the situation," Branch added.

LREMC General Manager Ronnie Hunt was also "surprised and disappointed" that member turnout was less than expected.

"I assumed the interest of the members would be greater than the turnout indicates. I guess they were just tired of the entire situation," Hunt said.

Now that the ballots have been cast and the board members returned to their positions, Branch, too, admits that he is "fed up" with the situation.

## Around Town

By Sam Morris

The State Fair started last Friday and the rain came a few days before that date. It still could rain before the fair ends, as it does most years.

We had either four-tenths or five-tenths of an inch last week according to where you live in the City of Raeford. Eugene Williams, who lives on the Red Spring highway near Faberge, told me that the official rainfall was four-tenths and later in the day Robert Gatlin of the National Weather Service, who lives on the Laurinburg highway, said that the rainfall was five-tenths. So take your pick.

The weather has been perfect with warm days and cool nights. The forecast for the same for the remainder of the week.

The plans for the Armistice Parade and celebration are shaping up and it is a date you should mark on your calendar. The date is Friday, November 11, starting at 2 p.m. Complete details will appear at a later date elsewhere in the paper.

The parade is under the sponsorship of the Ellis Williamson Post 20 of the American Legion. The post would like for all veterans to march in the parade. This would mean Veterans of World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the war in Vietnam. If enough of the veterans will march, then they can be divided into the war groups. If you are interested you can contact Earl McDuffie, Bob Gentry, Graham Clark, Clyde Upchurch, Randall Ashburn or the writer of this column.

This can be a big event if you will participate. You do not have to belong to the American Legion.

Fulford McMillan of Blue Springs township, stopped me last Friday night and introduced me to a war friend who was visiting him and his wife, Lucy. The veteran was John Gallio of Uniontown, Pa. and along with his niece, Sallie Jeffries were spending the weekend with the McMillans.

The two served together for three years during World War II with Company "A", 308th Engineers of the 83rd Infantry Division. They served for 18 months in Europe and the unit received five battle stars.

Fulford and Lucy attended the reunion of the unit this year at Palm Beach, Fla., and Gallio was among the ten from Co. A in attendance. This is the first year they have seen each other since the war ended in 1945. John Gallio is now retired and said he was going to travel and visit his old war friends.

There is nothing like a reunion and meeting old friends.

While on the subject of reunions, the Btry "F" reunion will be held the first weekend in November the 4th, 5th and 6th at (See AROUND, page 2A)



### Trying to control the blaze

A local fireman attempts to bring the raging fire back under control. The fire, at the Evelyn Parker home, broke out around 2:30 a.m. Thursday. Firemen from the Hillcrest and Puppy Creek departments responded to the call and got the blaze

under control. Firemen were called out once again Thursday afternoon around 2:30 when the wind apparently caused the smoldering ashes to ignite the flames again.

## Hunt Pays Debts, Phone Caper Eyed

By Sherry Matthews

Although Hoke County Commissioner James Albert Hunt is apparently meeting payment deadlines on numerous worthless check convictions, *The News-Journal* has learned that the District Attorney's office is looking into Hunt's alleged misuse of the telephone.

The latest investigation stems from over \$200 in telephone calls apparently charged to Hunt's disconnected number, 12th Judicial District Attorney Ed Grannis confirmed.

Carolina Telephone and

Telegraph apparently disconnected that number in June.

Although no formal charges have been filed against Hunt, Grannis said that an investigation was taking place.

According to Grannis, Hunt could be charged with misdemeanor larceny, but there are no plans to charge the commissioner with fraud.

"That would be extremely hard to prove," Grannis said, noting that investigators would have to prove that Hunt's "intent was to defraud."

In addition to the telephone in-

vestigation, Hoke County Sheriff Dave Barrington, Monday, issued a notice of sale against Hunt's 1970 Cherokee Piper 180-E airplane.

The notice of sale stems from Hunt's failure to meet payment requirements owed on the plane.

Civil charges were filed against Hunt in the Alamance County Courthouse after a \$14,000 check written to Worthy B. Teague Jr. for the plane was returned, an Alamance District Court clerk said Tuesday.

According to the clerk, Hunt (See HUNT, page 2A)

## Food Stamp Stay Granted Hoke DSS

By Sherry Matthews

The Hoke County Department of Social Services (DSS) has been given another three-month reprieve from the food stamp "monthly reporting" program that bogged down client processing earlier this year, state officials said Tuesday.

Hoke and the other 99 North Carolina counties involved with the monthly reporting program, have dropped out of the program until early reporting is mandated by Congress, Assistant Chief of Food Stamp Operations and Improvements in the Department of Human Resources Vicki Jones said Tuesday.

Hoke, one of two test counties for the program, was given a temporary extension in late June after the "endless paperwork" clogged up the DSS system, leaving hundreds of clients waiting for services.

During that time, some 30% of the county's food stamp caseload had fallen behind schedule, according to Hoke DSS Director Ken Witherspoon.

Mounting paperwork and staff shortages were given as explanations for the case backlog.

"We simply did not have the staff to handle all the paperwork that was required in monthly reporting," Witherspoon said in an earlier interview.

"They could not get all the paperwork completed and handle their other duties," Witherspoon added.

"The program was causing a lot of problems over the entire state," Jones said.

"The county departments simply did not have, and still do not have, the staff to handle all the paperwork that was required," Jones added.

Hoke and the other 99 counties were expected to return to monthly reporting October 1, but a resolution passed by Congress September 30 suspended the program until January 1.

"Congress passed a continuing resolution that says no funds will be available for the mandatory monthly reporting program until January 1," Jones said.

"At this point, that extension may be continued after the January 1 deadline," Jones added. "No one is really sure where it will go from there."

Although the extension gives Hoke and the other counties a temporary reprieve from the monthly reporting system, both Witherspoon and Jones have doubts about its "true effects."

"We are delighted that they have suspended the monthly reporting program because we will be able to maintain our regular flow of clients," Witherspoon said, noting that there could still be some "drawbacks".

"The failure to stabilize the system, by continuing to suspend the program, could cause almost as many problems as the initial problems," Witherspoon said.

"It is hard to maintain control of the situation when the flow is not stable," Witherspoon added.

"I don't like the idea that we have trained all of our employees to handle monthly reporting, and then we have to tell them that we are going back to the old system, temporarily," Jones said.

"I think it is causing a lot of staff confusion at this point," he added.

In addition to staff uncertainty, Jones and Witherspoon agree that the "on again, off again" program is causing problems for DSS clients as well.

"Our clients are probably not sure what is going on," Witherspoon said.

"One month we are sending out five-page forms for them to fill out, and the next month we don't. I am sure it is confusing to them," Witherspoon added.

"The clients are the ones who are most affected by the constant change," Jones said.

(See FOOD, page 2A)

## County Officials Ordered To Move Here

By Sherry Matthews

Health Director Lloyd Horne was reluctant Tuesday to discuss a move by the Hoke County Commission which would require him to move his residence into Hoke County.

Horne, who lives in Fayetteville, was non-committal about his future plans and refused to elaborate on the new regulation's effect.

"My best comment at this point, is no comment," Horne said.

The new requirement, calling for all county department heads drawing salaries of more than \$15,000 to be residing in the Hoke area by September 1, 1984, was unanimously approved during Monday night's regular board meeting.

Tax Supervisor Larry Holt and Horne are the only two department heads who will be affected by the new regulation.

Holt, who appeared before the commissioners during an hour-long executive session Monday night, was requesting that he be given more time to re-locate.

According to County Manager James Martin, Holt was hired last year with the agreement that he move into the Hoke area by November 1.

"I think it has always been the desire of the commissioners for all department heads to live in the county. Until now it has not been required," Martin said.

"I think that anyone drawing a salary that is paid by the taxpayers

of Hoke County should live within that county," Hoke Commission Chairman John Balfour said.

In other action Monday night, the commissioners requested that county attorney Duncan McFadyen check into the possibility of empowering the Hoke Health Department to confiscate animals they believe are being "cruelly treated."

The decision came on the heels of a request from Hoke-Raeford Humane Society Chairman Jack McGinnis who petitioned the board to appoint a Cruelty Investigator for the county.

According to McGinnis, the investigator would have the power to take animals that were being mistreated into his custody.

"Right now this thing is a circular circus," McGinnis said.

Without a county ordinance, the district attorney and the sheriff cannot "uphold the law," McGinnis said.

"The DA (assistant District Attorney Jean Powell) said she could have the animals confiscated if they were brought to court, but the problem is getting them there," McGinnis said, noting that law enforcement officials cannot get the animals without a court order.

"We need some way to protect those animals that are mistreated," McGinnis said.

According to McGinnis, the county and the Humane Society have had a problem in getting (See COMMISSION, page 2A)



## Inside Today

TMH

Mackie and Earl, two of Upchurch Junior High's TMH 2 students enjoy an afternoon outing. We take a look at the TMH classes at both Upchurch and Hoke High, the students and the teachers in this week's B-section of The News-Journal.